THE ANALOGY BETWEEN VIRTUE AND CRAFTS IN PLATO'S EARLY DIALOGUES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates Plato's analogy between virtue and crafts, a comparison made extensively in the early dialogues. I first detail the model of technical knowledge that Plato uses as a paradigm of knowledge. An application of this model shows the inadequacies in some claims to know or to teach virtue. Applying the model to the Socratic dictum, 'Virtue is knowledge' enables us to understand what such knowledge is about. Such knowledge is identified as 'self-knowledge' and is the product of philosophy. Philosophy is thus revealed as the craft of virtue, directed at the good of individuals. One problematic aspect of the analogy between virtue and crafts is the possibility of misuse. Virtue conceived as self-knowledge enables Plato to explain both why such a craft cannot be misused and why it alone can be the basis for benefiting others.

ABRÉGÉ

Cette thèse examine l'analogie platonique entre la vertu et les métiers, une comparaison faite fréquemment dans les prémiers dialogues. D'abord, je détaille le mòdele des connaissances techniques qu'utilise Platon comme paradigme du savoir. Une application du modèle démontre des insuffisances de certaines assertions de connaître ou d'enseigner la virtu. L'application du modèle au dicton socratique, "La virtu, c'est la connaissance", nous permet de comprendre en quoi cette connaissance consiste. Elle est identifiée comme la 'connaissance de soi' et est le produit de la philosophie. La philosophie est ainsi révélée comme étant le métier de la vertu, visée au bien des individus. Une aspect problématique de cette analogie entre la vertu et les métiers est la possibilité de l'abuser. La vertu conçue comme la connaissance de soi permet a Platon d'expliquer à la fois pourquoi un tel métier ne peut pas être abuser et pourquoi lui seul peut étre la base du bien des autres.

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Abbreviations

AJP	American Journal of Philology
APQ	American Philosophical Quarterly
BICS	Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, London University
CP	Classical Philology
CQ	Classical Quarterly
DK	H. Diels and W. Kranz, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, 7th ed.,Berlin, 1954.
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
JHI	Journal of the History of Ideas
JHP	Journal of the History of Philosophy
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
LSJ	Liddell, Scott and Jones, Greek-English Lexicon Oxford,1940.
PAS	Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society
PASS	Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes
PBA	Proceedings of the British Academy
PR	Philosophical Review
PQ	Philosophical Quarterly
RIPh	Revue International de Philosophie Paris
RM	Review of Metaphysics
TAPA	Transactions of the American Philological Association
YCS	Yale Classical Studies

Introduction

"If you chose to listen to Socrates' discourses you would feel them at first to be quite ridiculous...His talk is of pack-asses, smiths, cobblers and tanners, and he seems always to be using the same terms for the same things."(Smp. 221e) Alcibiades' description of the subject of Socratic discourse is a good account of what we find Socrates doing in Plato's early dialogues.[1] Socrates often uses particular arts or crafts in the development of his own arguments. He makes all sorts of appeals to the crafts, for varied purposes, but the most significant of these appeals is the general comparison that he draws between crafts on the one hand and virtue on the other. It is this analogy, the craft analogy, that I will investigate in this thesis. Such an investigation is long overdue. Despite the recognition of the importance of the analogy in Plato's early dialogues, there has been no attempt to specify what exactly it is about crafts that Socrates appeals to, and what inferences he draws from them about the nature of virtue.

The Greek term which I have here translated as "crafts" is technê, (plural, technai) which is also sometimes translated as 'skill'. This is a term of considerable importance in the intellectual life of the fourth century, used as much to legitimise as to describe activities. The proliferation of manuals

[1] I take "early dialogues" to include the Apology, Euthyphro, Crito, Charmides, Laches, Lysis, Hippias Minor, Euthydemus, Ion, Protagoras, Gorgias, and Rep.1. The first part of the Meno addresses problems that these dialogues deal with, and the Alcibiades 1, though thought to be spurious, is also a good source of Socratic doctrines. By 'Socratic' I mean only that these doctrines are held by the character Socrates in Plato's dialogues.

purporting to teach one or the other technê can be seen from a cursory glance at the extant titles of many works of this period. The importance that this term gains is reflective of a shift from a more traditional and aristocratic notion of merit according to rank, to the view that human excellance can itself be the result of personal effort. The appeal to technai that is common to both Socrates and other contemporary teachers, whom we may generally refer to as the Sophists, is an appeal to the possibility of self-improvement by the acquisition of some appropriate skill. The technai themselves collectively represent the sum of man's technical accomplishments, and seem by their progressive mastery of nature to assure human welfare. Sophocles' paean to man's technical achievements (Antigone, 332-364) catches the note both of personal endeavour as well the sense of successful progress that characterises the notion of human excellance and welfare as one which is based on knowledge.

Knowledge, (epistemê) is what characterises every technê. This is what makes a technê, very generally, a term for any intelligent and purposive activity aimed at a particular result. In the early dialogues epistemê and technê are used interchangeably. Epistemê in its varied uses preserves the close relation between knowledge and practical interest that makes it, for Socrates, equivalent to technê. In so far as the Sophists offered to teach a technê for ensuring success, they claimed to be in possession of some form of specialised knowledge. This is a claim that Socrates takes seriously and devotes attention to in his discussion of their programme. In many ways their claim resembles the Socratic thesis, 'virtue is knowledge', for the

Sophists too, by claiming to teach men an art of success, held that human excellence, could be the product of some learning.

In drawing out the relationship between technai and virtue, both being species of knowledge, Socrates makes use of what we have identified as the craft analogy: the analogy between the knowledge and skill of craftsmen and the knowledge which (it is suggested) should be the basis for ethical decisions. The crafts provide Socrates with incontrovertible and acceptable examples of knowledge. Socrates' appeal to the crafts in his discussions of virtue, lead us to suppose that he thinks that virtue is like or should be like a craft in relevant respects.

While this indicates the general area in which the analogy works, it is not normally easy from isolated occurrences of the analogy in one dialogue or another to determine exactly what Socrates is up to when he draws inferences about virtue from the evidence of different skills. Even if we see the analogy as centrally concerned with investigating the nature of moral knowledge, it is not evident what conclusions we are to draw from Socrates' employment of it. Commentators are divided in their understanding of what conclusions about the nature of moral knowledge we are to draw from it. Some think that the main reason why the analogy is attractive is that it emphasises the intellectual element in knowledge, others because it emphasises its practical features. There is some truth in both these positions, and we shall see why the appeal to the crafts may lead us to

believe that virtue is like a skill in that it involves both knowledge as well as practical ability.

Plato himself provides us with no discussion of the role that the analogy plays in determining the nature of moral knowledge. It is my contention, however, that attention to the way in which the analogy is used reveals an overall programme whose aim is to characterise the nature and importance of virtue, to distinguish it from what rival teachers offered to impart under the same name, and to give some indication of the means by which it is to be acquired. While Plato does not in any single passage spell out in detail what we call the craft analogy, the chief evidence that we have for its importance as a method is its extensive use in the early dialogues. It is this use which is to be investigated before we can determine what is to be inferred from it.

This I do in the first chapter where I offer a list of five criteria which Plato abstracts from or applies to genuine crafts. For Plato all forms of craft-knowledge are expected to satisfy these criteria. For him this is an uncontroversial claim in that the examples of genuine crafts that he offers are not themselves subjected to scrutiny to see whether they satisfy the criteria in question. These criteria are themselves very general and seem to require little or no argument. Every <u>technê</u>, he thinks, i. must give us knowledge of some particular subject which thereby forms its special area of concern. Every <u>technê</u> will ii. have its own experts, whose expertise consists in their knowing the special area of their <u>technê</u>, and being able to

iii. produce the specific product that it is the business of the technê to produce. Such experts can, as a result of their knowledge, iv. give an account or explanation of their own subject when called upon, thereby proving that they have the knowledge in question. They can also regularly produce the particular product that their craft aims at. This is what their expertise in fact consists in. As a result of their knowledge, they alone can teach those who do not have their skill. So far as those who would learn a particular skill are concerned, they need to be taught by one who has the requisite expertise. This of course does not guarantee that they too will become experts, but this is the only way, it is suggested, that they can acquire the knowledge in question, unless they discover it on their own.

Skills for Socrates form the paradigm of knowledge. This paradigm emphasises what we would call theoretical knowledge in its insistence that every skill must have an understanding of the nature of its subject. But it also emphasises what we would call the practical aspect of knowledge in that every skill has a product, and the specification of this product is as much a part of identifying the skill as its production is evidence of an understanding of the subject. While such understanding will give the craftsman knowledge of better and worse states of the object of his concern, his practical ability will enable him to produce these states as a result of his knowledge. But Plato does not simply say that skills must make something; he thinks that what they in fact make must fulfil human needs. Skills make beneficial products. The expertise that characterises a craftsman disintinguishes him from those who lack knowledge, and, so far as his subject is concerned, this expertise gives him authority over them.

The paradigm of knowledge that the crafts yield is used by Plato to explicate the Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge, but it is also forms the basis for investigating alternative claims to knowledge, as well as claims to teach virtue. This forms the negative aspect of the analogy. Using the model of craft knowledge Socrates investigates controversial cases, and rejects the claims of rival teachers. I detail this rejection in the second chapter, by an examination of four early dialogues, the Euthyphro, Ion and the opening sections of the Protagoras and Gorgias.

Socrates' examination of his interlocutors in these dialogues is conducted on the basis of his prior conception of what constitutes knowledge. This is revealed in the sorts of questions that he asks of them, and the implications that he draws from their answers. Their inability individually to satisfy these conditions is seen as sufficient grounds for rejecting their claim to practice a technê at all. In the Ion and the Gorgias Socrates offers an alternative explanation in order to account for one aspect of their skill which both the rhapsode and rhetor point to: successful practice. He also questions what they actually achieve on the basis of any possible benefit that they confer on others. While Sophistic teaching fails the formal conditions for knowledge that Plato distinguishes as features of all technai, it further fails to grasp the notion of virtue itself, as essentially concerned with the self

This leads, Socrates thinks, to the lack of real benefit that is common to all these practices. Their failure to grasp the content of virtue as well as their

failure to satisfy the conditions for normal technai results in a rejection of their claim to have knowledge or to teach a technê at all, let alone one whose special subject is virtue. The rejection of Sophistic claims on the basis of the criteria for crafts that I distinguished in the first chapter is further proof that these criteria form the basis for the paradigm of knowledge in Plato's early dialogues. This paradigm can therefore be used to explicate the meaning of Socrates' own problematic claim, "virtue is knowledge." In so far as Socrates claims this, virtue for him must satisfy the criteria for knowledge in general, or at least be measured against such criteria.

The rejection of the claims of the Sophists is important for Socrates because they are so much like his own. The Sophists offered to teach an art of excellence. Both therefore appeal to some sort of knowledge as making for human excellence and well-being. Both, in different ways, reject the conventional picture of virtue, and replace it with some form of skill. The crafts serve Socrates with a useful model by which he can reject Sophistic claims as well as explore his own notion of virtue. While the Sophists claimed expertise in what they taught, Socrates is famous for his denial of knowledge and his claim not to be a teacher of morality. This seems to be in conflict with his insistence on the importance of knowledge in human affairs. An examination of the Socratic dialogues makes it clear that it is a special sort of knowledge that Socrates was concerned to demarcate, one which, while it is comparable to ordinary crafts, has also to be distinguished from them. The Socratic claim that virtue is knowledge does not place an equal premium on all kinds of knowledge. Indeed Socrates is

concerned to distinguish this special Socratic virtue-knowledge from various other kinds that it might be mistaken for.

It might be supposed that what Socrates has in mind when he compares virtue to a craft is the notion of moral expertise, analogous to the expertise that is found in ordinary crafts. Perhaps for Socrates experts should decide in matters of right and wrong for those who lack such specialised knowledge, for only the knowledge of such experts could be certain and reliable. It might even be supposed that in the Republic the philosopher king appears as the moral and political expert who lays down the law for everybody else.

Such view has some element of truth in it, and so may seem to describe the Platonic programme well. But while it may be partially true, it is also importantly false in several respects. Here what we have is an inference from the analogy of expertise in the crafts which doesn't hold for virtue. The application of the analogy to the realm of moral knowledge will show that there are no such experts to be found. This should lead us to place less weight on the notion of moral expertise than on the nature of virtue itself which would make for such expertise. That Socrates undertook such a (figurative) search for a moral expert cannot be doubted, though his reasons for doing so are not always the same. Usually it is to show that someone is not a moral expert, at other times while acknowledging the need for such teachers of virtue, he points out that what is first needed is to determine what constitutes virtue.

Of course, Socrates does not believe that conclusions about what is right or wrong should be decided by the many because they are more numerous. Morality for him is not a matter of numbers, and neither is politics. But how exactly questions of moral conduct are to be decided, what criteria one must appeal to, is by no means a settled matter. While crafts are paradigms of activities where knowledge produces precise practical results, it is doubtful that this is the sort of precision he is looking for in matters of conduct.

While it is true, then, that the analogy between crafts and virtue suggests that there must be teachers of virtue, it neither follows that those who claim to be teachers of virtue really are, or even that there are any such teachers at all. The point is that unless we first determine the nature of virtue, we will not be in a position to determine whether it has teachers, like the crafts, and if it does, whether it is also to be taught like them.

Emphasis on moral expertise leads to another mistake in understanding the analogy. It is sometimes felt that for Socrates there is an 'art of living', a body of knowledge that can be learnt, and which indeed it is necessary to learn in order to live well. This too is a consequence of a certain reading of the analogy, one which is sometimes taken as the main point of the analogy itself. What this art is, and how it is to be learnt is, however, conditional again on our being able to identify the content of the knowledge which, according to Plato, such an <u>technê</u> will be of. We may, however, find that this knowledge is such that it does not admit of an 'art of living' which will

enable someone to live well by following a set of rules, in the way that (it might be supposed) one could cook a dish by following instructions from a cook-book.

Admittedly those who think that the point of the analogy with the crafts is to suggest that there is an art of living need not necessarily think that such an art will make everyone virtuous. They might well believe that such a body of knowledge which guarantees moral expertise is too difficult in practice for everyone to learn. The analogy would still be seen to emphasise the importance of a moral expert who had authority over us as a craftsman does by virtue of his special knowledge. But we find that while Socrates does emphasise the importance of the moral expert, he does so because he thinks that only such a person will be able to teach us to be virtuous. This is not the same as to claim that such an expert must make our decisions for us. It becomes crucial therefore to specify the nature of the knowledge which, according to Socrates constitutes virtue, and thereby is the basis for moral expertise.

In chapter three I look at how an understanding of the Socratic thesis, 'virtue is knowledge' in terms of the criteria for craft knowledge enables us to give specific content to Socrates' claim. The analogy bridges but does not close the gap between virtue, which Socrates paradoxically claimed was knowledge, and other crafts which he regarded as non-problematic examples or instances of knowledge. The first thing to do in identifying Socratic virtue-knowledge, is to specify its subject. We have already seen

that the primary feature of ordinary crafts is that they are all about something. As one shall see, in the early dialogues, Socrates himself attempts more than once to specify the content of virtue-knowledge. I suggest that 'self-knowledge' as the content of virtue best fits the requirement that every form of knowledge have its own specific subject. At the same time this is a difference in content which distinguishes virtue from every other form of craft-knowledge. Self-knowledge formally fulfils these features of craft-knowledge and, at the same time differs from it in important ways. This allows Socrates to guard against two sorts of errors: from either thinking that some one or the other of the crafts could fill in for the sort of knowledge that he advocates, or even that the pursuit of one of these crafts could lead to the acquisition of virtue. For Socrates, despite the fact that he uses the analogy to characterise the nature of moral knowledge, thinks that crafts are neither to be identified with nor do they contribute to the acquisition of virtue. Socratic self-knowledge alone is identical with virtue.

Further, such self-knowledge is to be contrasted with the radically different notion of virtue that the Sophists offered to teach. On the Socratic account, what is fundamentally wrong about these Sophistic claims is their lack of recognition that an understanding of the self or soul is essential to an understanding of how to live well. By identifying the self as the subject of virtue, we can see at once how attempts to construe virtue as identical with the ordinary crafts are mistaken.

The role that the moral expert has for Socrates is as a teacher rather than as someone who must make our decisions for us. Such an expert, however, is not easily found: the Socratic search for him ends in failure. Socrates himself claims that he is not an expert because he lacks the knowledge in question. This might lead us to suppose that no such knowledge is possible, and that virtue cannot be a matter of instruction after all. While the aporetic nature of many of the early dialogues might lead us to suppose that virtue is not teachable and hence not knowledge, such a conclusion would be premature.

The solution to this problem is to regard virtue as teachable, but to deny that it is taught as crafts are taught. This is in fact the solution that Socrates adopts. In chapter four I show how the problem of virtue is solved by seeing it as the result of the art of philosophy. Philosophy thus appears to be for Socrates the only way of acquring genuine virtue. As such philosophy is to be distinguished from all other crafts both in terms of its subject, and in terms of the particular product that it aims to produce: the best condition of the subject himself, as well as by the manner in which it is to be taught: by co-operative inquiry. The subject of philosophical investigation, virtue, is the knowledge of himself that each person who practices it is led to discover. In aiding such discovery, Socrates can claim not to be a teacher in the sense of one who imparts what he knows to someone who lacks it, but at best as someone who points the person who would learn in the right direction.

In so far as the product of the art of philosophy is the best condition of the person who pursues it, this product is to be regarded as the most useful of all products that the technai produce. Philosophy as the art of virtue, and therefore as the art which produces the best condition of the soul, is to be valued over all other pursuits. That Socrates conceives of philosophy in this way is supported by his consideration and rejection of the charge of uselessness that is typically brought against philosophy. This charge is taken seriously and countered by his arguing that philosophy is, in comparison with other technai, the most useful and beneficial pursuit for individuals. It alone leads to that ordering of the individual which is identified with psychic health. Philosophy in the early dialogues is viewed as the craft of the soul, both in what is said about it by Socrates and the way in which he is depicted as practising it.

Such a conception of philosophy, as modelled on the paradigm of the crafts shows that Socrates' claim about virtue does not divorce it from practice. If virtue is knowledge, then it will have both a specific subject as well as its own typical product which will distinguish it from other forms of knowledge each of which have their own subjects and products. The production of this product is as important to the craftsman as is his knowledge of the subject of his craft. Philosophical knowledge is then as much a way of doing something as it is of knowing it. Given that philosophy as the craft of virtue has the self as its subject, its product, which is the best condition of the self, will be manifested in its most accomplished exponents. The happiness or eudaimonia of philosophers is a well known if suspect feature of Plato's thought. Its roots lie in a conception of philosophy which,

as a form of knowledge, is based on the model of crafts that is developed in the early dialogues. Philosophy thus appears as both an investigative as well as a productive discipline. Its subject being the practitioner himself, it is for Socrates the only knowledge which will lead a person to virtue and this is why it is to be recommended above all others.

We see thus that both virtue, and the art that provides us with it, are modelled on the notion of craft knowledge. But this model has at least one problem, which leads to paradox if it is applied to the notion of moral knowledge. This is the issue of misuse. Craft knowledge can be used to produce a particular product, or it might be used to produce its opposite. If crafts normally produce beneficial products then there could be abnormal situations in which they produced an opposite effect and therefore something harmful. If virtue too is knowledge like crafts then the virtuous man must be able to do or make the opposite of what he customarily does. This would mean that the man who had knowledge of justice would be able to perform unjust actions. This seems to be counter-intuitive. And even if we say that he would not do so, we have to specify why he would not. If virtue is like a craft in this respect, then it must be able to bring about the opposite of its customary product.

That Plato took this paradox seriously is shown by the fact that he devotes an entire dialogue to it: the Hippias Minor. The paradox is used again in the first book of the Republic, which is certainly late among the early dialogues. Any explication of the analogy between crafts and virtue must be

able to point to a way out of the paradoxical conclusion of the Hippias Minor. By conceiving virtue as self-knowledge, I think we can make better sense both of the paradox as well as the moves that Plato makes to avoid it. I end my thesis with an analysis of the argument of the dialogue and consider what Plato says in offering a solution to it in both the Gorgias as well as in Republic 1. This solution does not consist in denying that virtue is like a craft, but in fact affirms it.

However I see in the problem adumbarated in the Hippias Minor a deeper problem that Plato seems aware of. For self-knowledge is such a radical departure from conventional accounts and expectations of virtue, that it become possible to conceive of situations where one who has self-knowledge might not conform to conventional rules of behaviour. In part Plato attempts to show that one who is psychically ordered will not act in ways that are conventionally regarded as unjust. But he still needs to show why such a person will be interested at all in the welfare of others. Why should philosophical self-knowledge seek to make others better? This will bring us to the very end of our examination of the role that the model of the crafts plays in the early dialogues. Plato's argument about the welfare of others is that only one who has self-knowledge will be competent to benefit others because of his understanding of the nature of what it is to be benefited. The social role of the philosopher is a consequence of his knowledge of himself.

All quotations from Plato are in translations from the relevant volume of the Loeb Classical Library, unless other indicated. All abbreviations used

for Platonic dialogues and other classical works are based on those in the Liddell Scott and Jones Greek-English Lexicon. My style of citation follows in general the guidlines laid down in Kate L. Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations.

Chapter One

Criteria for Technai in the Early Dialogues

Meaning of the term 'technê'

In his comprehensive study of the semantic field of the Platonic terms technê, epistemê, sophia etc., John Lyons offers an incomplete list of 15 hyponyms of technê, each of which, as feminine forms of adjectives ending in -ikos, function as nouns in their own right.[1] The list includes everything from shoemaking to astronomy, from flute-playing to architecture. Further, Lyons tells us that the list must remain incomplete because for Plato the subsystem it constitutes is open-ended and, in the later dialogues at any rate, Plato creates fresh forms of technê freely. This poses a problem for the translator, for the sorts of disciplines that make up the subsystem cannot be covered by any single term in English.[2] The most common translations, 'art', 'craft', 'science' offer a reasonably accurate modern equivalent for some of the disciplines that Plato includes under the term. But because each of these English terms at best only expresses a part of what technê covers, the use of any one of these terms may suggest distinctions that Plato does not make.

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[1] J. Lyons, Structural Semantics (Oxford, 1963) p. 142.

[2] Again, the term kala, used in classical Indian philosophy seems to come close in the range of its application. It too is often inadequately translated as 'art'.

'Art' for us has a specific sense which is quite foreign to Plato; it has, however, as one commentator puts it, become 'entrenched' as a translation of 'technê.'[3] However if we only use the term 'art', it could lead to mistaken views about Plato's theory of 'art'. In fact, as has frequently been noted, Plato does not have a term for what we call art at all. And in our sense of that term, does not have a theory of art.

"Craft" seems worse because it conjures up images of a low level skill although such a sense is to be found in Plato, especially in his use of the term chierotechnê (literally, "hand-craft") which incorporates the sense of the purely manual. But "craft" is attractive and sometimes unavoidable because it has importantly a sense of practical application that 'art' often lacks and which some of the commonly recognised technai certainly were. Yet 'craft' has almost exclusively this practical dimension; and while it is difficult for us to think of mathematics or astronomy as crafts, it was quite natural for Plato to call them technai.

So 'science' is also often used to translate technê in the Platonic dialogues. It rightly focusses our attention on the theoretical aspect of these skills which is important for Plato's conception of them: as systematic bodies of knowledge directed to a specifiable end. But in doing so it misses the practical dimension which is a part of the core meaning of the term.

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[3] J. Barnes, "Scepticism and the Arts," in Method Metaphysics and Medicine, ed. R.J. Hankinson, (Edmonton, 1988), p. 51 n. 2 I would not, however, agree with him when he says that "nothing better is available."

Skill, or 'practical skill' is also used as equivalent to technê and may seem to describe better the sorts of things that the Greeks of Plato's time distinguished as technai, where 'practical' is to be construed quite broadly. There is also a Platonic propensity not to distinguish the technê from its individual practitioners. Plato speaks indifferently and confusingly of 'the art not seeking advantage of itself' when he wants to say that one who practises an art does not, qua practitioner, seek his own advantage.[4]

It seems to me that many, though certainly not all, the senses of and appeals to the technai have to do with a suggested contrast between professional as opposed to 'lay' practice. Hence the thrust of his appeal to them is a contrast between professional and non-professional knowledge where the former accounts for the ability that professionals exhibit and which, because of the absence of the very same body of expertise and skill, non-professionals lack. A phrase such as 'professional skills' used as a translation of technê, draws attention to the comparison between moral skills and the practice of technai in terms of the special knowledge that is required for both.[5] As an example of this suggested contrast consider Socrates' observations at Protagoras 319b-c where he points out that Athenians will accept advice on particular matters from relevant experts but not from anyone who is not a craftsman (dêmiourgos), "and such is

[4] Rep. 346e.

[5] The phrase "professional skills" is adopted by Gulley, The Philosophy of Socrates, (London: Macmillan, 1968) p. 15, as a translation of technê.

their procedure in matters which they consider professional." Only if someone has an analogous moral skill, Socrates implies, should anyone accept advice from him in matters having to do with morality.

Such a rendering would retain a constant ambiguity which pervades Plato's use of the term technê in the course of his work, in that it is sometimes used in a very general sense to refer to any professional practice which is actually practised, whether a particular form of divination or the recitation and performance of epic verse, and at other times is given a narrower, almost stipulated meaning which would preclude these very same practices. We might describe astrology as the 'science of stars' in view of its etymological meaning, and yet without any felt contradiction not regard it as a science at all. Plato's use of the term technê, is somewhat similar, and while it does complicate our task somewhat, it is not impossible to distinguish genuine from non-genuine technai in the Platonic sense.

But while 'professional skill' does carry much of the flavour of the term 'technê' it is difficult to render in all contexts, and we may slip into one or the other alternatives mentioned above, or merely transliterate the Greek. And though the meaning that Plato gives to this term is the subject that will occupy us for the rest of the chapter, we can even offer a tentative definition,

after Dodds, of what is, very generally, to count as a technê: the "systematic application of intelligence to any field of human activity."[6]

What is important to note about the term is that in the Socratic dialogues it is used equivalently to epistemê which is usually translated as 'knowledge'. Every technikos is an epistemôn ('one who knows'). And all technai are regarded as being co-extensive with the class of the epistemai.[7] It is this equivalence that makes possible the analogy from the crafts. When Socrates claims that virtue is knowledge, he can use instances from the crafts as examples of knowledge.

Epistemê too, like technê, while it is translated as 'knowledge' into English, carries a strong sense of practical competence unlike the English term. The Greek word for instance has a plural which the English term lacks, and refers more to branches or forms of knowledge rather than to individual propositions that are known. It combines a sense of 'knowledge of' with a sense of 'knowing how' to do something. The term epistemôn for instance, "has strong connotations of competence in performance, approximating to 'skillful.'"[8] This is indicative of its connection with the term technê. The only area where epistemê goes beyond the notion of technê is when it is used in the sense of 'being acquainted with a person', that is, like gignoskein.[9]

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[6] E. R. Dodds, The Ancient Concept of Progress, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) p. 11. cf. Cra. 414b where Socrates suggests that technê "denotes possession of mind."
[7] Lyons, Structural Semantics, p. 170.
[8] J. C. B. Gosling, Plato, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) p.57.
[9] Lyons, ibid. p. 198.

Criteria for Technai

In characterising professional skills, Plato makes an appeal to specific distinguishable features of these skills. By an examination of the texts in the early dialogues I have isolated five chief features that all such skills have for Plato. This will constitute the premise for the analogy with virtue and hence we need to look at each of these criteria in greater detail to see just what it is that Socrates says about them. Only after this has been done can we investigate the employment of the analogy to determine how virtue is being compared to a craft.

In citing the evidence I will not appeal to statements where Socrates is comparing virtue to crafts, but only where he is characterising crafts themselves. There is considerable evidence in the early dialogues for the criteria which I distinguish, not merely single occurences of them. The recurrence of the criteria gives weight to the belief that they constitute both necessary and sufficient conditions for the ascription of technê-hood to any claimant. Problematic generalisations about crafts are excluded partly on the grounds of occurring in isolated contexts, where they do so occur. The criteria which I list here are both consistent with each other, as well as the very ones that Plato deploys when explicating the Socratic thesis 'Virtue is Knowledge'. Hence in a sense the chapters that follow are themselves evidence that the criteria are the right ones.[10] Finally, it seems to me that

[10] There have been other attempts to list all the criteria for technai that Plato distinguishes in the early dialogues. Terence Irwin, Plato's Moral Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) [henceforth PMT], pp. 71-75, links crafts with teachablity, rationality and expertise. In Fragility of Goodness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) pp. 95-96,

these criteria are all importantly non-controversial. If the analogy between technai and virtue is go through at all, at least one of the terms should be clear in its application. And with the exception of one or two instances which will be discussed later, none of Socrates' interlocutors disputes his claims about the technai. And the sorts of claims that Socrates makes about them seem contrary to his professed ignorance: this may lead us to suppose that either his disavowal of knowledge is restricted or that these features of technai are to be regarded as self-evident.

Every technê, must, according to Plato:

1. have a determinate subject.
2. a chief product.
3. be able to give an account.
4. be teachable.
5. have its own experts.

Martha Nussbaum lists four features of technai stressed by the medical writers and Aristotle: universality, teachability, precision, and concern with explanation. J. Gosling, Plato, (p.60) uses a notion of 'better and worse' to characterise the nature of (technical) knowledge. "An episteme is a theory-supported practical capacity employing centrally some notion or notions of good and bad states of affairs." T. Penner,"Socrates on Virtue and Motivation," in Exegesis and Argument Phronesis Supplement 1, ed. by E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelatos, and R. M. Rorty (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), pp. 145-146 offers a list of nine "conditions ususally fulfilled by arts" the first four of which are derived from R. G. Collingwood (The Principles of Art, chap. 1) and J. Gould (The Development of Plato's Ethics, chap. 2). While the list is offered as a "first shot" it is not consistent, conditions (a) and (d) for instance seem to make contrary claims. And some of the conditions overlap, e.g. (f) and (h), while the most important criteria that need to be distinguished are collapsed, condition (i): "Each art has a specific product or field of application." (p. 146). J. Wild, Plato's Theory of Man (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1946) p. 50, offers."five essential factors belonging to the structure of technê as such" his factors while interesting in their own right, import what are clearly Aristotelian concepts (matter and form) into an explication of Plato's doctrines.

I will discuss each of these criteria in detail so that we may be in a position to better understand what aspects of technical knowledge are used by Socrates in the craft-analogy.

1. Every technê has a determinate subject

This criterion may be thought of as being the most important of those that Plato makes an appeal to in order to characterise genuine technai on the one hand and to undermine all those practices which he wanted to claim were not, on the other. For what was common to these practices that he argues against, was that they claimed for themselves, in one sense or another, mastery of several if not every subject. The fact that every technai has a subject seems to be the least controversial of his claims and is in fact never questioned in the texts by any interlocutor. For Plato there is a one to one relationship between a technê and its subject matter, such that for any techne there is only one subject and for any subject there is properly only one technê that can deal with it, or whose proper business it is.[11] As Lyons has shown, each of these technai are co-related with a type of occupation,

[11]Charles Kahn, "Drama and Dialectic in Plato's Gorgias," (Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 1), p. 77 mentions Ion 357d-358a as evidence for a doctrine which "proposes a principle of individuation for technai based on a one-to-one mapping between an art or science and its subject matter." He notes three independent theses established here which Plato uses against the poets and rhapsodes in the Ion and against other claimants in other dialogues. He rightly notes as well the employment of the first of these theses to determine the unique subject matter of rhetoric in the Gorgias. Kahn appeals to the Ion because he considers it a very early work, pre-dating the Gorgias which he also considers early. I cannot here go into the question of the dates of composition of these dialogues. But in so far as the early dialogues espouse a unified doctrine, we may ignore for philosophical reasons the question of their relative chronology. My claim thus is broader than Kahn's insofar as I see this principle in operation throughout the argument of the early dialogues.

such that given the proper noun designating the type of occupation, there is only one technê which is co-related with it.[12]

In the first part of the Gorgias the discussion largely focusses on the question of what the precise subject of the art of rhetoric is. The inability to arrive at a specific identification of the subject of rhetoric leads to the supposition that there is no such subject at all. This, if true, will undermine the claim of its practioners to be able to teach it. In the Ion the inability to identify a distinct area of expertise is used as grounds for denying that Ion has the mastery of a technê. In both the Ion and the Gorgias, Plato offers an alternative explanation of what it is that these practices are, if they are not properly professional skills. Rhetoric is a practice that imitates a genuine technê: the art of politics (politikê technê), and is assimilated to the category of "imitative skills" (mimitikê), while the art of the rhapsode (rhapsodikê)is a power of the gods (theia dunamis), which is neither teachable, nor can its principles be explained by its practitioners, and is the result of inspiration ('enthousiasmos'). Both these technai, which were in fact paradigms of technai, are denied determinate subjects that could constitute their field of specialisation. Later in the Gorgias when it is admitted that there could be a genuine technê of rhetoric, it becomes identical with philosophy.[13]

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[12] Lyons, ibid. p. 147.

[13] Grg. 503a-d. We will see later just how this fulfils the need for a technê to have a specific subject as well as what knowledge of it is, which the rhetoric that Gorgias taught, self-confessedly lacked.

But in each of these dialogues Socrates refers to this feature of crafts as uncontroversial. In the Gorgias, this question is raised even before Socrates and Gorgias meet, in the introductory conversation with Hippocrates. Later Polus too finds it difficult to specify its subject.[14] Notice here that these statements do not form the basis of any inductive argument, nor is Socrates making any claims about virtue on the basis of what he has says about technai having specific subjects. This claim is made quite generally against the sophist's and rhetorician's claim simply to teach excellence.[15]

Every subject is distinct

In the Charmides when Socrates responds to Critias' complaint that not all technai have specifiable products, Socrates, in order to get his elenchus to go through, appeals to this criterion as the most general and least dubitable

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[14] It is true that what Socrates wants to know is what name is to be given to Gorgias, analogous to the names 'doctor' and 'painter' that are given to those skilled in medicine and painting. But while this is true, Socrates is not, as usual, interested in names: for once given the term 'rhetoric' as the name of the subject that Gorgias is skilled in (449), he still wants to know what this is about. Again, by way of example, he offers different skills, each of which are concerned with some determinate subject "as, for example, weaving is concerned with the manufacture of clothes...and music with the making of tunes" (Grg. 449d). While here peri with the genetive is used to refer to the object or class of objects with which a particular technê is concerned, as in Charmides 165c,166b, and peri with the accusative is used at Grg. 449b 1-5, Plato standardly uses the preposition epi with a dative to identify the object of a technê; cf. G. Santas, "Hintikka on Knowledge and its Objects," in Patterns in Plato's Thought, ed. J. M. E. Moravcsik (Dordrecht, 1973.), p. 36. He also uses the indefinite 'tinos' when the subject is not being specifically characterised, as in Chrm. 166a. R. K. Sprague, Plato's Philosopher King p. xv n. 2 draws our attention to these 'tinos-words' although she sees them as features of second-order arts. However, as Van der Ben, The Charmides of Plato: Problems and Interpretations (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1985), p. 47, points out " the normal sense of the Greek word epistemê...implies an object or content, it being necessarily tinos."

[15] A similar claim is made in Prt.318c, although in terms of becoming 'better at' the subject in question, in response to Protagoras' claim that anyone who came to him would become better every day. Socrates does well to ask him, better at what? Socrates' demand to know what precisely a particular teacher teaches is quite general and made frequently, e.g Euth. 272d, where the wisdom of the sophists is equivalent to the technê that they undoubtedly teach.

of claims about craft-knowledge "...I can point out to you what is the peculiar subject of each of these sciences, distinct in each case from the science itself"[16]

In what sense is the subject 'distinct' or different from the knowledge of we have of it? Here again, the fact that all technai are seen as branches of knowledge, enables Socrates to move from a discussion of one to the other. Socrates himself gives examples in the Charmides: odd and even numbers while the subject of the art of reckoning, are different from it, as are heavy and light from the art of weighing. I take this in a minimal sense of independent existence for the subject of the art. While the art may or may not be employed, objects will continue to be either heavier or lighter than each other. The shoemaker may not make any shoes, leather will continue to exist. It is true that technai like weaving, whose object is clothing, bring these into existence themselves, but there are more fundamental materials that they deal with to which they apply their skill. What this emphasises about the notion of technical expertise, is that its raw materials lie outside the art itself, and are something given on which the art must be applied. Plato does not here draw the conclusion that the craftsman is limited by the nature of the material that is given to him.[17] What he does suggest is that the art is governed by the nature of what it deals with: the standard for success has to do with the nature of the thing itself. This makes sense of the importance that Plato places on every professional skill being concerned

[16] Chrm. 166a.

[17] Such a view is taken in the Timeaus (37d) of the limitation imposed on the demiourgos in the making of the world.

with a distinct subject and the mark of everyone who has this skill being an understanding of the nature of that subject. The primacy of the subject of the craft in determining the knowledge of the craftsman is central to Plato's conception of the relation between knowledge and what it knows. It is incidentally the precise opposite that he ascribes to the Sophists: for them the skill itself is important. That is why each of them is unable to identify the subject of their expertise. And all of them are shown to have no genuine understanding of the nature of what they profess to know. Gorgias in fact boasts that rhetoric "comprises in itself practically all powers at once."[18]

Every subject forms a unity

The subject is not simply distinct, but itself forms a unity.[19] Plato needs a mid-point between specialisation and generality. On the one hand there is the narrow interest that Ion has in Homer which Plato is not willing to call a craft, on the other hand the broad claims of Gorgias or Protagoras. According for Socrates the subject with which any technai is concerned must form a conceptual unity. Its parts linked by their common focus or concern which determines their relationship to it and to each other.

There is no more than a suggestion of this in the early dialogues, but this prefigures the natural kinds of the later dialogues which themselves make possible division along the joints.[20] In the Philebus Theuth claims that you

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[18] Grg. 456a.
[19] Ion.532cff "When one has acquired any other art whatever as a whole, the same principle of inquiry holds throughout."
[20] cf. Phdr. 265e, R. 454a.

cannot know or learn only a part of what he demarcates as the 'science of grammar' (grammatikên technên).[21] This is because of the unity of the entire subject makes it impossible to learn only a part--because the part has no separate identity. This is not to suggest that someone could not actually learn only a part of what is a unified whole, only that this learning might be more like Ion's (by rote) than through the principles of the particular technê. This criterion has a role to play in the conception of medicine as well. In the Charmides Socrates suggests that the art of medicine should not look at parts in isolation, but should, following Thracian practice, look at both body and soul as parts of the same whole in order to cure defects in one or the other.[22] Crafts bring order into the wholes that constitute their subjects.[23]

The unity requirement for the subject of technai will have an important role in the Socratic conception of virtue and in the rejection of the Sophists claim to teach it. We will examine this in detail in chapter 3. But before we look at two consequences of the unity requirement, there is one question that needs to be addressed, can two different technai deal with the same subject or have the same subject as their special concern? One is inclined to think that Plato would deny this. But it depends on what we take to be the subject of a particular technê. If we see it as in some sense 'the matter' which it deals with, as a carpenter works with wood and a sculptor with stone or some related material, then it is clear that different skills could work differently on the same material. In the Euthydemus (289) Plato suggests that all

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[21] Phlb. 18c-d.
[22] Chrm. 156b-d.
[23] Grg. 503e-504a.

technai either make something or use something that is made by some other technê, and that no technê can both make and use the same thing. This seems to be an important addition to the criterion that every technê have a distinct subject. It shows that it is not enough to say that the subject be in some sense independent of the skill which forms or transforms it, but that the way in which the skill does this will thereby constitute the subject of the skill in question. Both the art of wood carving and carpentry will work with wood, but these are distinct technai because each of these produce different things with the same material. Where the technikos or craftsman makes something that some other skilled user uses, then we will have two different skills which have as it were the same subject. Rather than upset the distinct subject criterion, these remarks in the Euthydemus seem to support it. Plato, for instance is not suggesting that in order to use the product of any particular technê, one needs to be in possession of a skill that knows how to use this product. If a doctor makes his patients healthy, the patient doesn't need any special skill to use his health. Similarly shoemakers may make shoes because of a skill that they have, but it does not require any special skill to use the shoes that the shoemaker makes.[24]

One further consequence that the distinctness of the subject of each technê has for Plato's conception is that technical knowledge is regarded as mutually exclusive. What is known by one craft is not known by another.

[24] R. 601c-602a. It does not belong to the smith or harness maker to know what a bridle or bit ought to be like, but this is knowledge that a horseman has. (cf. Cra. 389b). J. Tiles, "Technê and moral expertise," p. 56 rightly remarks that this does not mean that the unskilled customer decides what the skilled craftsman makes; rather that the "horseman and flute player have their own technai and it is this which qualifies them to dictate to their various suppliers."

Knowledge of health is given only by the art of medicine, of shoemaking only by the craft of the shoemaker. This is clearly seen as identical with the idea that each subject is distinct, and as a result so is the knowledge which apprehends their distinct natures, and the result or product that these distinct technai produce.[25]

This aspect of the unity criterion is used to offset the claim of poets and rhetoricians rather than that of polymaths, for though Plato hardly looks at it with any favour, there is nothing here to rule out the possibility of comprehensive knowledge.[26] What the distinct nature of the subject of each of the professional skills rules out is the claim that a single sort of knowledge can range over a variety of subjects, and this is just what sophists, rhetors, rhapsodes and poets claimed, according to Plato. But note the numerous dismissals in the early dialogues of the need for such comprehensive expertise,[27] culminating in the Republic's argument for specialisation: an argument admittedly based on a rejection of the desirability of polypragmasune, if not on its impossibility.[28]

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[25] Ion 537c-538a, Euth. 13a-b, La. 195e, Grg. 512c, Cra. 416d.

[26] cf. Phlb. 19c, 62c d for Socrates' grudging admission that a wide knowledge of specialist techniques might be practically useful to his philosopher. In the Euthydemus (294c) polymathy appears as the ludicrous consequence of the denial of falsity.

[27] Chrm. 174a, La. 182d-e 9 suggest that Socrates does not think much of much learning. Certainly the basis for the Republic's emphasis on specialisation lies in the belief that a person can only do one thing really well.

[28] Polypragmasune can carry this sense of 'knowing many things,' in the bad sense of, 'curious after knowledge' (LSJ s.v. 2). Indeed at R. 434b the term occurs twice, 'when one man takes all these functions at once' or 'interferes with another's business or function,' then this "is the greatest injury to a state and would most rightly be designated...injustice." Misplaced expertise is found to be ultimately the same as injustice.

The mutual exclusivity of technai will become important when we consider possible relations between technai themselves. It has been suggested that Plato sometimes has a notion of super-ordinate crafts, those that have as their subjects other crafts. [29] The coherence of such a conception becomes problematic unless this condition of distinct and exclusive subjects for different technai is either modified or abandoned.

2. Every Technê has a chief product

This is also quite a general claim, as it is initially made, for example in the Euthyphro.[30] Socrates takes common examples of technai: medicine, building, military strategy and farming; all these, he says, produce or are concerned to produce some result: health, houses, victory and food. As we may observe, 'ergon' ('product' or 'effect') is used quite generally to refer to any determinable product whether abstract or not. Most obviously it would refer to the artefacts that common technai produced. It is not necessary that there be only one product that each technê produces, as long as it is agreed that there is one chief product.[31]

This claim is not peculiar to the Euthyphro among the early dialogues; even Ion agrees with Socrates that communicating the thought of the poet to the spectators is the major effect (pleiston ergon) of his art.[32] In a sense this

[29] Irwin PMT p. 76, for a discussion of virtue as a superordinate craft; p. 229 n. 46 where he says that R. 333d10-e3 doesn't necessarily show doubts about the craft analogy, only that justice must be a superordinate craft. For Irwin this is not merely so for virtue, but even Gorgias 452d, he says, implies that rhetoric is a superordinate craft as it directs the other crafts. (T. Irwin, Plato's Gorgias (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) p. 117.

can constitute the defining feature of the technê in question, and in so far as every technê is a deliberative procedure consciously directed to some identifiable aim, the specification of this product will constitute in part the definition or description of the technê in question.[33]

There are some distinctions that should be kept in mind when dealing with the term ergon in Plato. While it is used in the sense of work or product of a craft, it also occurs frequently in its principal sense of 'deed' or 'action', usually as a doublet with logos.[34] These two senses should be kept apart. Yet while ergon may refer to the product of a craft, it may also refer to the activity itself rather than what is made or achieved by the activity. Thus the ergon of the eye is seeing. Typically, however in the craft analogy ergon is used for product rather than process.[35] There is another use of ergon that is related to emphasis on process rather than product where the term is sometimes translated as "function."[36] This is to my mind best kept separate.[37]

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[33] This end or aim may be given by the noun ergon or by the relative article with a verb such as apergazetai, as in R. 477c-478d. cf. also R.353a, Euth. 292a.

[34] Prt. 325d, Phd. 100a, Cri. 52d, Grg. 461d, R. 382e, 389d. cf. M. J. O'Brien, "The Unity of the Laches," in J. P. Anton and G. L. Kustas, eds., Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy. (Albany: State University of New York, 1971).

[35] cf. Jaakko Hintikka, "Remarks on Praxis, Poiesis, and Ergon in Plato and in Aristotle," in Studia Philosophica in Honorem Sven Krohn, (Turku: Turun Yliopisto, 1973), p. 62. Hintikka suggests that ergon has the same sort of ambiguity as 'work' does in English. D. S. Hutchinson, The Virtues of Aristotle (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) chap. 2, shows the importance of this dual role in Aristotle's ethics.

[36] e.g. at R. 353d; cf. Aristotle EN 1106a15-24. This use is best kept distinct from the conception of ergon as a product. As "function" ergon applies not to crafts but to a class of objects, and the examples that Plato gives, e.g. of a pruning knife, or an eye, suggest an parallel account of the conception of aretê. See further, H. S. Thayer, "Plato: the Theory and Language of Function" PQ 14 (1964): 303-318.

[37] LSJ gives this under 'special phrases' (s.v. IV).

The ergon of a craft is to be distinguished from its subject matter, although often these may be given the same description. Thus medicine is about health and has health as its product or effect as well. Strictly speaking the subject of medicine will be the body and its product will the best condition of the body, which is health. In the first part of the Gorgias, for instance, Socrates' questions are designed to elicit the precise subject matter of the art of rhetoric, while much of what Polus and Gorgias say seems to be about what on their claim it does.[38]

But the claim that every technê has a product is one which is itself challenged in the early dialogues. In Charmides Critias objects to this, and offers examples of numbering and geometry as technai that do not have a product. Socrates seems to agree with him, but, by appealing to the fact that these technai have subjects, secures agreement from Critias for the purposes of his argument.[39] The elenchus goes through and the question of whether all technai have products is not re-opened until 174e where again the inability to specify the product of temperance is seen as problematic. We need to consider how cogent Critias' objection is and whether it might be thought that there were technai which did not have products. Only when we have done so will it be possible to determine if, for instance, the aporia at Euthydemus 292a-e is a genuine one or not. For there too it is the inability to

[38] Although the term technê is primarily applied to activities that produce a definite product and, as Gorgias points out (450b), are largely concerned with manual work, Socrates is willing to apply this condition to non-manual practices, like 'calculation', geometry and 'many other practices', all of which, by contrast, are concerned with some determinate activity, and so have some one thing of which they can be said to be of.

[39] Chrm.165e.

specify the chief ergon of the monarch's craft that leads to the inconclusive results of that dialogue. [40]

It is worth noting that the examples of technai that Critias offers are two of Plato's favourite ones, which come especially into their own only in the Republic and the later dialogues. So Critias' observations should not be dismissed too lightly. Further in the Gorgias Socrates mentions these very arts as requiring little or no 'action' (the term used is ergon).[41] While it does not have there the specific sense of 'result' or 'product' it is suggestive of ways in which Critias' objection may be understood.

This objection is put very strongly by Critias: he in fact claims that no branch of knowledge is like any other, "whereas you are making your

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[40] Irwin PMT p. 75 with nt. 44 thinks that Socrates does not accept Critias' objection and in fact offers the ergon of the mathematical arts--the right answer, which is the result of the relation in which particular numbers stand to each other. Irwin seems to think that the demand for a product is in fact accepted at Euth. 291d7-292a5 This is not strictly true, for while it is accepted there that technai like medicine and agriculture have products, it is not at all clear whether the basilikê technê which is identified with virtue, has an identifiable product or not. I will discuss this below in chapter 4. G. Vlastos, "Socratic Knowledge and Platonic Pessimism" in Platonic Studies. 2nd edn. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) p. 207 nt. 7 seems to agree that the answer Socrates expects in the Charmides "will distinguish areas of knowledge (by their specific object and use)". I take what he says in this note about Critias as an unclear thinker as evidence that he does not think the objection is one which Plato thought important, and that a product could be specified. J. Gould, The Development of Plato's Ethics, p. 38, thinks the objection valid. "It is the first hint that we are at last brought up against the inherent limitations of a specific professional skill, and therefore of the analogy between moral skill and such techniques." R. K. Sprague, Plato's Philosopher King curiously ignores this passage, citing 164b, where Critias attempts to deny that temperance has a distinct subject. Paul Shorey, What Plato Said (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933) p. 104 refers us to Plt. 258DE and EN 1094 a 4-5.

[41] Grg. 450d.

inquiry as though they were all alike."[42] This is important so far as Critias recognises the strategy that Socrates has adopted. Further, in denying that numbering and geometry have products, he raises his objection by way of analogy. He doesn't explicity say that they have no product, but that they do not have a product "in the way that a house is of building, or a coat of weaving" and he asks Socrates if he can point to any such product (toiouton ti ergon). In effect what Critias is denying is not that these technai have products, but that they make something. This is in keeping with his distinction between making and working as well as with his subsequent claim that even the subject of temperance, unlike that of the other technai, is not one which is external to it.[43]

In order to specify what might be considered the result or product of the mathematical skills, it is important to reconsider the way in which the ergon of crafts is characterised by Plato. It is not merely that crafts have results, but that they have beneficial results. For the whole point of having skills is that they benefit or are to the advantage of human beings.[44]

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[42] Chrm.165e.

[43] Chrm. 165e-166a,166c.

[44] There are two terms that Plato uses which are translated as 'useful' and 'beneficial', chrêsimos and ôphelimos and their opposites are achrêston and anophelimos. Plato also uses the term sumpheron 'advantage' or 'profit' to refer to the benefit that is to be derived from some practice or the other. In Republic 332a, for instance, the doctor and navigator are best able to benefit (ôphelein) friends and enemies with respect to their respective areas of expertise, but are useless (achreston) when matters are outside their special area. And when Thrasymachus first enters the discussion he says that he does not want Socrates to define the just either as "that which ought to be, or the beneficial, or the profitable, or the gainful or the advantageous" suggesting that for Socrates these were all synonymous terms so far as the question of the benefit or use of something was concerned (R. 336d).

The usefulness of technai is brought out in the account that Protagoras gives in his myth of the creation of man. In it Prometheus steals the arts as well as fire from Hephaestus and Athena, and gives them to men who, use this skill to invent "dwellings, clothes, sandals, beds, and foods that are of the earth." In Protagoras' version these skills are still insufficient to save man from wild beasts or from each other. He needs in addition civic sense (the very thing that Protagoras offers to teach) in order to live together in communities. Protagoras, when he characterised his own teaching, said that he did not waste his student's time by instructing him in a variety of skills: he saw Sophistry as an alternative to all the other skills. It could only be a viable alternative if these skills were considered as being especially useful in the first place. And the technai are useful because what they produce is useful.[45]

If we ask what the beneficial result of geometry or arithmetic is, we find that we have asked the question which Plato asks and answers in Republic. VII when the question of just how practical and beneficial the arts of calculation and geometry should be in order for them to be studied is dealt with at length. [46]

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[45] At Laches 181e Nicias praises the usefulness of an art like 'fighting in armour', and when Laches doubts it is an art he does so on the grounds that the Lacedamonians do not have any use for it. At times of special distress, during sickness or war or when even making a journey, we look to and depend upon the special knowledge of craftsmen, generals, doctors and pilots (Euth. 279c). We may indeed have no use for any craftsman except in times of distress, when that is, they can be useful to us (Ly. 217a). The Gorgias offers a summary sketch of the way in which crafts are related to and relieve deficiencies their subjects may have.

[46] R. 526c-528a. There are two distinct levels of benefit which are distinguised here. The first, which requires "a slight modicum of geometry and calculation" makes a person sharper and quicker in all other studies and is useful to him in matters relating to war. But

The usefulness and the benefit that is to be derived from the technai is identified by Plato. We could say that the usefulness of a technê was that it provided benefit. Usually this can be identified with the product of the technê, but as we have seen, it may not always be easy to identify the product in question. But the fact that a beneficial product is difficult to identify does not mean that there is no such product at all.[47]

The question of benefit derived from the technai raises another issue that Plato considers in more than one early dialogue: whose benefit? In the Charmides (163b, 164b) Socrates says that a doctor benefits both himself as well as his patient. At Euthydemus 280b Socrates says that only a craftsman who uses his knowledge will benefit himself. This seems a truism if we add 'by his knowledge'. But at Republic 342b benefit to oneself is ruled out as being extraneous to an art. Taking Republic 431 with Gorgias 477e we may characterise the nature of this 'improvement' in terms of removing a lack or a deprivation. But while such a description may be acceptable for a certain class of objects, it might be hard to show

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at a higher level of both expertise and consequent benefit, it prepares the mind for more abstract studies.

[47] Do all products have to be useful? Could they not, say in the case of music, be pleasant? Plato says at Gorgias 475 that a thing may be called fair or good either because it is pleasant or useful or both. This could give him a way of dealing with the products of the 'fine' arts. But it is not a option that Plato makes much use of. The distinction made in the Gorgias is limited to the purposes of the argument there and cannot be taken as a general characteristic of a sub-set of the technai, that is, that some of them are not beneficial but only pleasant.

how a cobbler improves a piece of leather, or as Thrasymachus points out, how a shepherd benefits the sheep he fattens for slaughter.[48]

What we can conclude from what has just been said is this: that the criterion that every technê has a product is not undermined by Critias' objection, and that while it is often difficult to determine what the particular product of a craft is, Plato continually attempts to identify such products. Further these products may very generally be classed as beneficial, that is, as serving a useful function for people. It is this last point which is particularly important, the product of a technê is something that is useful.[49]

3. Every Technê can give an account

To give an account (logon dounai or logon didonai or logon labein) is a Platonic formula familiar in the middle dialogues.[50]In the early dialogues it is introduced as a general condition for technai. In the Gorgias, for instance, Socrates contrasts genuine from pseudo-arts on the basis of the account which the former can and the latter cannot give.

> And I say that it is not a craft, but a knack, because it has no rational account (logos) by which it applies the things it applies, to say what they are

[48] In Republic I (335bff and 341dff) Plato offers a new way of dealing with the problem which he has to face in respect of his account of virtue: of trying to show how a virtue, while in a person's own interest, at the same time is sufficiently 'other-directed' to make it congruent with conventional claims.

[49] Irwin, PMT sees the product as essentially external and different from the craft. This is important for his instrumentalist reading of virtue.

[50] Phd. 74b, 78d. Symp. 202a. Shorey (n. on R. 531e) calls it "a commonplace Platonic plea for dialectics." The demand is made as late as the Laws (966b, 967e, 968c).

> by nature, so that it cannot say what is the explanation of each thing; and I don't call anything a craft which is unreasoning (alogon).[51]

When Critias offers his definition of temperance as self-knowledge, he says that he wants to give an account (didonai logon) of this. And Alcibiades uses the same phrase when he describes Protagoras' circumlocutary method of discourse as one in which he is unwilling to give an account. Later, Protagoras himself indicates what, in his view, a mark of education is, and while this mainly concerns knowledge of the compositions of the poets, it includes judgements about right and wrong (we presume he means 'better and worse') compositions, the ability to distinguish these and "to account for these when questioned."[52]

The phrase thus most generally seems to mean, the giving of reasons or explanations for one's statements. It seems to have been a demand especially made by philosophers.[53] In the Gorgias, where Plato refers specifically to this as a distinctive feature of craft-knowledge, it seems that 'giving an account' is a consequence of an understanding of the whole which the particular art is concerned with. Later, when this passage is recapitulated, contrasting medicine with cookery again, Plato says, "medicine...has investigated the nature (physis) of the person whom she treats and the cause of her proceedings, and has some account to give of each of these things." In both passages the term physis is used of the real

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[51] Grg. 465a trans. Irwin (Plato's Gorgias).
[52] Chrm. 165b, Prt. 336c, 339a.
[53] Aristophanes, Clouds 659ff.

object of the genuine art of medicine. The art of medicine is one that understands the nature of the body and thereby knows how to treat it.[54]

Giving an account is thus the consequence of understanding the nature of the subject of which an account has to be given. Plato's point here is quite simply that in order to be able to give an account, one must have understanding of the subject. Only one who has such understanding can be expected to give an account, and the absence of such an account would in effect be an admission of lack of understanding. The account may now be taken quite generally to cover cases of explanation (why, for instance, a particular procedure is adopted at a particular time). The point seems to be that we cannot decide between particular procedures until we have knowledge of the object towards which these procedures are directed.

Medicine is a good example of a technê that does aim at knowledge of the nature of its subject, and by looking at what Plato says about medicine we can give greater content to the claim that knowledge involves the ability to give an account. In the Charmides we have a reference to the comprehensiveness that the doctor needs:

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[54] Dodds, Gorgias (A revised text with commentary), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) p. 229 notes that the sharp contrast between empeiria ('habitude') and technê is probably due to Plato himself. He also points out that in 501a "the medical art is said to study both the nature (physis) of the patient and the grounds for the treatment." (ibid. p. 230) This is surely right and can be extended to other forms of technical knowledge as well And understanding the nature of the subject would be prior to the 'grounds for treatment' which would be a consequence of such understanding.

> I daresay you have yourself sometimes heard good doctors say...when a patient comes to them with a pain in his eyes, that it is not possible for them to attempt a cure of his eyes alone, but that it is necessary to treat his head too at the same time, if he is to have his eyes in good order; and so again, to expect ever to treat the head by itself, apart from the body as a whole, is utter folly. And on this principle they apply their regimen to the whole body, and attempt to treat and heal the part along with the whole; or have you not observed that this is what they say, and is done in fact?[55]

It is this comprehensive understanding which gives the doctor his explanatory power. It is precisely this which rhetoric is said to lack. In the Phaedrus a technê like medicine is distinguished from mere experience (empeiria) or a rule of thumb (tribê), because of its understanding of the nature of the object that it deals with.[56]

It has been pointed out that 'giving an account' as a necessary condition for knowledge can either be a plea for a definition or for a proof in the sense of having grounds for the proposition concerned; and that reasoning of this sort distinguishes knowledge from correct belief at Meno 98a.[57] The former sense is seen as the more likely as the question and answer procedure mentioned in the passage, recalls the Socratic interest in definitions, and is typical, of 'dialectical inquiry.' But the latter sense accords well with the demand that is made of those who claim to have knowledge either of what they are doing, as Euthyphro does, or of what they offer to teach (as the Sophists do).

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[55] Chrm. 156b-c.

[56] Phdr. 260e, 270b, c. That such understanding may involve seeing what is not apparent to everybody else is explicitly said in the Gorgias (464a): "...many people seem to be in a good bodily condition when it would not be easy for anyone but a doctor, or one of the atheletic trainers, to perceive that they are not so."

[57] David Gallop Plato's Phaedo. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) note on 76b4 & 78d1-5

We should, however, note that the criterion is one that begins initially as a requirement for technai, and is subsequently applied to the notion of philosophy. This is entirely appropriate, for philosophy as a form of knowledge must conform to the conditions for knowledge in general. And to determine the meaning that Plato assigns to the ability to give an account for knowledge in general may aid in determining how this criterion is later applied to dialectic. We may use an observation of Gallop's who says that the definitional sense and the existential sense are not unrelated. When Socrates wants to give an account of a form, he wants to be able to answer the question 'what is F'. And that is precisely the point that is being made about technical knowledge: only where there is an understanding of the nature of the object concerned can an account be given of it. But while Gallop holds that the definitional sense is a condition of the existential sense, that is, in order to know the nature of an object, one must be able to give a definition of it, I think, on the basis of what Plato says about technical knowledge, that it is just the other way around: in order to give a definition one must have knowledge of the object concerned.

Plato's point is not simply that one who has an understanding of the nature of an object, is a better technikos than one who doesn't. Rather, that one who doesn't, is not a technikos at all. We may want to know, what is involved in such understanding, and what role if any does experience have to play in it. In a possible debate between 'rationalists' and 'empiricists' this criterion suggests that in the absence of accurate knowledge of an object any attempt at producing a result will have to be by trial and error

miss affair: what Plato calls an empeiria.[58] But does Plato rule out such a hit and miss method as a way of gathering knowledge of the nature of the object? How is a doctor to make discoveries about which treatment will be good for which sort of person? Plato's point here seems to be that if you have understanding of the nature of the object (theory), then, the method which searches for empirical evidence will not be a hit and miss affair, but a genuine practice that is guided by knowledge. In the absence of such guiding principles all accumulation of experience will at best give you only a knack. But the evidence for this is not conclusive, though in the Laws, Plato does contrast two ways in which medicine is taught and practiced.[59]

The ability to give an account seems to be an aspect of the first of the conditions that we found a feature of craft knowledge: the distinct and specific nature of one subject for one technê. If technical knowledge is of such a particular subject, the demand that a technikos have understanding of this subject, of its properties and structure, is an understandable one. Emphasis of this criterion is important for the intellectualist

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[58] "For the state of the empiric, see R. 516c-d: he can predict only on the basis of customary conjunctions." Vlastos, Platonic Studies, p. 212 n. 15.

[59] cf. D. S. Hutchinson, "Doctrines of the Mean and the Epistemology of Skills," p. 23-25. In the Laws (VI and IX), Plato distinguishes between two kinds of doctors, free-men and slaves. The latter "acquire their skill by experience and by watching and obeying their masters, not from nature itself (kata phusin) which is how free men learn their skill and teach it to their pupils" (720b2-5). Hutchinson says "when Plato stresses the 'Hippocratic' model of ancient medicine that one sees in Regimen and which Plato describes, he is implicitly rejecting a particular strand of thinking about medicine, that it is imperfectly refined experience." (p. 27). It is true that Plato does not think that any art can be imperfect. But it is not clear that he gives much thought to how medicine acquires knowledge of the nature of health and disease in the body. But it is true, that if it is knowledge then it must get its practice right every time. We might minimally say that mere experience will not give one technical expertise, but such expertise will be (importantly) confirmed by experience.

understanding of the Socratic conception of knowledge. It is here, I think, that the distinction between subject and product becomes important--for the theoretical understanding of the nature of the subject, which is a condition of the ability to give an account, is also a condition of the practical ability of bringing about (without fail) the particular product which that technê is designed to bring about.

4. Every technê is teachable

So far as the technai are concerned, this is a non-controversial claim. For Socrates, it is because they are forms of knowledge, that they must be teachable.[60] This is a Sophistic claim as well, for insofar as the Sophists offered to teach virtue, they were claiming, or so Socrates argued, to be in possession of knowledge.[61] At the end of the Protagoras Socrates says that if it [i.e. virtue] was not knowledge, as Protagoras claimed, it would be unteachable. But in claiming to teach virtue, Protagoras was implicitly claiming to be in possession of knowledge.[62]

But the practical skills are non-problematically taught. Pericles and Thucydides had their sons taught various skills.[63] So far as the skills are concerned, Socrates assumes that one who has knowledge will be able to teach it to another. That is, he does not think that the ability to teach is

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60 "If as a matter of fact it turns out to be entirely knowledge, as you urge, Socrates, I shall be surprised if it is not teachable" (Prt. 361b)cf. also Aristotle EN 6. 3. 1139b25-26.
61 Men. 91b.
62 This was of course problematic for Protagoras given his epistemological relativism.
63 Prt. 319d-320b, Alc.1 118c-119e, Men. 94b-c.

something over and above the knowledge which the technikos has. But Socrates is not necessarily commited to this position: for all he needs to claim is that only one who knows can be a (qualified) teacher. His examples from different skills suggest that those who learn skills can do so only from those who know them in the first place, although in the Alcibiades I he allows for the possibility of self-instruction through self-discovery. This suggests that it is possible to learn something without there being experts from whom one must learn, and will become important when we consider the question of the teachability of virtue.

Plato has little to say directly about how technai are to be taught. The evidence for the way in which they are taught is sparse. What does seem minimally clear is that a technê has to be learnt from someone who is skilled. While technical knowledge is either handed down as Protagoras in the myth outlines, from Prometheus to man, or as Gorgias in his defence of Palamedes claims, from an especially gifted individual, Plato himself does not join in the controversy over the divine or human origin of the arts.[64] For him professional skills are to be learnt from professionals. This may seem a banal observation, but it will acquire importance once the analogy with virtue is spelled out in chapter three. Further, the learning of professional skills is non-controversial because there is plenty of evidence that people have such skills in the first place, and communicate it to their pupils as well.

[64] Prt. 321d, DK 82B 11a. 30.

How are technai taught? There is some evidence that, in the first place, the profession of skills is found within families.[65] There is other evidence for the existence of a complex guild system in the practice of various professional skills where students served as apprentices to masters who were usually their fathers.[66] But while this tells us something of the milieu in which the crafts were taught, we still need to try and determine the procedure that Plato thought appropriate to teaching in the crafts.

The Meno begins with a question about the teaching of virtue, Meno asks Socrates "whether virtue can be taught, or is it acquired by practice, not teaching? Or if neither by practice nor by learning, whether it comes to mankind by nature or in some other way?"[67] Socrates sidesteps the question, and suggests an inquiry into the nature of virtue instead .But we may note that the alternatives that Meno offers can be applied to the question of how the technai might be taught.

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[65] At Euth. 272c Socrates tells us that Connus the son of Metrobius the harper is his harp teacher. In the Protagoras (326b, 328a), Protagoras suggests that in the crafts, in so far as they have the aptitude (which they often do not, cf. 328c), sons learn the skill from their fathers. G. E. R. Lloyd, Magic, Reason and Experience, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 96 n. 199, quotes the Hippocratic Oath, which specifies that instruction can be given, "to my sons, to those of my master and to those pupils duly apprenticed and sworn and to none other." All this suggests that instruction into the crafts was restricted, and while this may be very true, the point that Plato makes more often than not, is that anyone who is willing to pay the price of instruction may have access to it.

[66] cf. Nehemas, 'Socratic Intellectualism' p. 299 n. 43 & 44 citing Burford, Craftsmen in Greek and Roman Society p. 82 & 89. cf. my previous note for Platonic references for the same point.

[67] Men. 70a.

Firstly, Meno suggests a broad contrast between acquiring virtue either by learning or by nature If something was acquired by nature it would imply that it was not to be acquired at all by learning. If we retain this contrast and apply it to the question of the acquisition of technical expertise, we can rule out nature as the means of acquiring such knowledge. Protagoras emphasises this difference between virtue and skill: while skills are given to a few, virtue is shared by all.[68] And the skill that the few have is a matter of talent, training and practice all of which together constitute its teaching.[69] This contrast between nature and skill which Protagoras sees as the chief difference between skills and virtue was frequently made in Greek writings of the fifth and sixth centuries.[70] As we shall see, by contrast, Plato stands in opposition to this traditional claim that virtue cannot be taught.

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[68] Prt. 321d, 322c It is true that the myth suggests that technical expertise is something that men possess by nature. But I think we will not be doing Protagoras an injustice if we interpret this to mean that the natural ability to excel at one or the other skill is something that only a few have. This is a sentiment that Socrates shares. He alludes to this contrast at Euthydemus 282c when he raises the question of the teachability of virtue, "if wisdom is teachable and does not present itself of its own accord." (Italics mine.) The alternative to teaching is here seen to be something happening 'naturally or by chance' as the LSJ (s.v. 3), translates the phrase apo tautomatou.

[69] Prt. 324d-324d.

[70] e.g. by Paul Shorey, Phusis, Meletê, Epistêmê TAPA 40 (1909) p. 187, who also notes parallels between Isocrates (Antidosis 194ff) with Plato (Phaedrus 269dff) on the importance of natural ability as well as training and study to all kinds of learning. In all this there seems to be no suggestion that the contrast that Meno has made is a valid one. D.S. Hutchinson, "Doctrine of the Mean", p. 29-30 holds that the three part theory of practical skills (ability, training and education) was the view of Isocrates which "was opposed to all that Plato and Plato's Socrates stood for, and so Plato needed to oppose the Isocratean method of training by experience which, inevitably, he thought, reinforced the conventional." Hutchinson also seems to take Meno's question as "Plato's way of asking whether Isocrates is correct in his three part educational philosophy." (p.31).

The other contrast in Meno's question is between what is taught and what is practised. Now clearly the fact that something is taught does not mean that it is not practised. The verb askeô can be used quite generally to mean to practice or to train, and the early dialogues record such a general use.[71] Nor does it mean, that the teaching does not involve practice or application. Indeed so far as many skills are concerned, this is how teaching must take place. It is not suggested that learning a craft is by any means easy. Quite to the contrary[72]

But Plato does have some conception of what makes genuine teaching possible, and the previous criterion, that of giving an account, sets the stage for a description of the proper method of learning a technê: it involves an understanding of the nature of the object of the technê.[73] Firstly, a technê is taught by someone who has understanding of the nature of his special object, and can give an account of it to another, can explain the procedures that he adopts and thereby instruct the other. Such teaching may still require ability on the part of the student, and stress the importance of practice. For successful practice is as much evidence of knowledge as the ability to give an account. The one who has genuine technical knowledge will be able to do both. His ability to bring about the product of his particular

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[71] e.g. Grg. 500c rhetorikên askounta, we also find the verb epimelein used with aretê. What is called into question is not that something is practised, but whether it is learnt exclusively by practise.

[72] Thus the brothers in the Euthydemus are ridiculed for the speed at which their learning can be picked up. At the very begining of that dialogue Socrates points out that despite being old, they themselves have learnt their wisdom only recently as "they were without this science last year." (272c). Socrates himself admits to being a poor learner on the harp, and suggests that he has be practising it for a while (272c, 295e).

[73] cf. e.g. the comparatively full account offered in the Phaedrus (272dff).

skill will be open to repeated confirmation, and as such may be demanded of him.[74] It is such an understanding of the nature of technical ability that lies behind Socrates' remarks in Republic 1 that the real craftsman will never, qua craftsman, make a mistake.[75] Socrates' general line of reasoning about the teachability of the technai is the observation that they are in fact taught, and hence must all be teachable. And they are teachable only by those who have the particular knowledge.

5. Each technê has its own experts

The frequency with which Socrates names specific teachers of specific skills is important to his ability to secure agreement about the nature of these skills. Medicine may be the sole exception in the Platonic dialogues of a skill in regard to which Plato takes sides in a contemporary debate. So far, however, as skills in general are concerned, their respective exponents give the analogy a secure foundation.[76]

The expertise of the expert will be marked by his having the characteristic abilities that we have just described. The expert has knowledge of the nature of his special subject or body of knowledge such that he can

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[74] Grg. 514a-c.

[75] R. 340e-341a.

[76] Thus at Meno 94c Eudorus and Xanthias are mentioned as the best (kallista) exponents of the art of wrestling, Damon is mentioned as the teacher of Pericles (Alc.1 118c) and of the sons of Nicias (La. 180c), Connus as the teacher of Socrates (Euth. 272) Pheidias and Polycleitus as expert sculptors are mentioned at Men.91d, and at Prt.311c. Zeuxippus the painter and Orthagoras the flutist are examples of experts in their respective fields (Prt. 318d) each of whom teach that which they are skilled in. The general principle is found in the Gorgias, (460b) "anyone who has learnt a certain art has the qualification acquired by his particular knowledge."

regularly and unerringly bring about or accomplish the aim which that knowledge is directed at. In fact Plato assumes that one who has craft knowledge will have the same aim as the craft. Any special motivation of the craftsman to help others, or himself or to do a good job, is not taken into account in the employment of the craft.[77] His special knowledge of the nature of his subject enables him, on occasion, to give an account or explanation of this nature to anyone else, and this ability makes it possible for him to instruct others so that they may become experts like himself. The expert or professional is distinguished from the average or lay person not merely by the claims made on his behalf, but because of his ability to back these claims in a variety of ways.[78] Socrates brings out the contrast in his characterisation of the Athenian assembly which seeks advice on specific technical questions only from those who have that expertise.[79]

In consequence of their knowledge, which makes them what they are, Plato thinks that all experts will agree with each other.[80] Where there is a disagreement, it can be settled by agreed upon procedures; there do not seem to be for Plato any disputes of the sort that he mentions in the Euthyphro about matters concerning right and wrong.[81] The agreement of experts is contrasted with the disagreement of non-experts (the many); but the disagreement of the non-experts is restricted to subjects where everyone thinks that he is an expert, that is, about virtue. The disagreement of non-

[77] Grg. 512b.
[78] The possibility of deception was by no means limited to claimants of virtue, but was possible for any of the special skills (Chrm. 173c).
[79] Prt. 319b-c. Grg. 455b-c.
[80] R. 350a.
[81] Euthphr. 7d.

experts follows from their ignorance of the nature of that which they claim or pretend to have knowledge of.[82] But the many do not always agree with the acknowledged experts of different technai either, and that on some matters at any rate, while the opinion of experts is considered authoritative it is not always followed.[83] However, with regard to virtue, where experts are more difficult to find, everybody considers himself an expert without being so.

Expertise in the professional skills seems to be a non-controversial claim, so long as there are clear ways of identifying these experts. Plato does not seem interested in investigating disagreements within the technai. Even on the question of the proper method that sciences like medicine should follow, his remarks are few and limited in their general scope. This seems futher indication that he was not explicitly interested in outlining an epistemology of skills in the early dialogues. For Plato all experts in so far as they have the same object, if they are to have knowledge of it, must have the same knowledge and identical abilities. These abilities involve the ability to teach, explain their procedure and to bring about the special result of their craft. The subject and product of the technê that experts have is not itself determined by them: it is something which is in a sense given to them. This

[82] Prt. 313d, both customers and merchants are ignorant of what is good or bad for the body.
[83] In the Gorgias (517e), Socrates suggests that while many technai cater to the body, they are nevertheless ignorant of its real needs and have therefore to be in some sense ruled by those genuine technai which have the body as their subject, viz. the arts of gymnastics and medicine. But that people often do not take heed of what is in their own interest, preferring to pursue what is pleasant. Gorgias himself, earlier, had commended his own pratice of rhetoric in a case where he had successfully persuaded his brother's patient to take a painful course of treatment whereas his brother, a doctor, had been unable to convince him (Grg. 456b).

is sometimes expressed by the observation that the ends of the different crafts are given, and the only thing that has to be determined are the means by which these ends are to be achieved: that the craftsman, does not choose his ends, only the means to them.[84]

What can experts do, that other men cannot, in virtue of their expertise? What distinguishes the expert from non-experts? For one thing, and this is important so far as the debate with the sophists is concerned, they can speak about their subject better than non-experts.[85] More importantly, however, they can bring about results unerringly. And, in consequence, they can help their fellow men. This is an important feature of crafts and craft knowledge which I have already called attention to, but which needs to be emphasised in the consideration of what craftsman do with their skill. The paradigm crafts of medicine and helmsmanship have this in common: that they benefit people, and the craftsman does not, as Plato puts it, give himself airs on that account (implying that he certainly could). Now this is clearly directed at the rhetorician's claim (as it is explicitly made in the Gorgias, of being able to save a person's life. Callicles reminds Socrates that if he finds himself in a situation where somebody brings a false charge

[84] e.g. G. E. R. Lloyd, Polarity and Analogy, p. 390. Lloyd sees this as especially problematic for the analogy with virtue: while in the crafts there is general agreement about ends (e.g. health), in questions of right and wrong the ends themselves are in dispute. Irwin takes this feature of crafts as the basis of his instrumentalist account of virtue as directed to an undisputed end.

[85] Grg. 449e-450b "it is the same...with all the other arts; each of them is concerned with that kind of speech which deals with the subject matter of that particular art." Prt. 312d-e "...the harp-player makes one clever...at speaking on the matter of which he gives one knowledge, namely harp-playing." All instruction is at once persuasion. Plato seems to think it a truism that one who has a skill is more persuasive than one who doesn't. The person who knows can both speak better than one who does not as well as best judge the merits of others who may happen to speak on the same subject (Ion 538b).

against him in a court of law, then the art of rhetoric could be instrumental in getting him off. In the myth, Protagoras' claim on behalf of Sophistry is that it is the survival art par excellence because its subject is virtue, which is itself the condition of co-operative existence. The benefit that each of these technai claimed is again on analogy with non-controversial crafts.

But not only can an expert benefit his fellow men by producing the product of his craft, he can also refrain from producing this product. This claim is made unequivocally in the early dialogues and is treated at some length because it is seen to lead to problems for the analogy with virtue. Indeed it is this feature of craft-knowledge which seems to make it an unlikely analogue for virtue. The craftsman as a specialist in his field, is alone competent to produce that product which his knowledge enables him to. It is this which distinguishes him from those who lack his specific knowledge. But Plato draws a further consequence from this: only the craftsman can deliberately produce the opposite effect as well.[86] So far as his claim on behalf of the technai are concerned, this is seen to be an uncontroversial claim. It is when he draws the analogous conclusion for aretê that his interlocuters begin to have some doubt. Doubts that are shared by modern commentators as well.[87]

[86] Hp. Mi.373d-375c (cf. further, Cri. 44d, Prt. 344cff, Rep-333e).

[87] Hippias voices his objection twice at 375d and at 376b when Socrates himself expresses misgivings. For the doubts of more modern commentators cf. chapter 4 where I discuss this paradox at greater length.

The point is often put thus: all forms of knowledge confer a special power on the person who has the knowledge and this power enables him to misuse that knowledge as well. A doctor can turn into an expert poisoner, a fireman into a successful arsonist. In fact we can see this as a consequence of Plato's characterisation of technai as having as their particular aim an identifiable product as well as its opposite. This itself seems to be the result of the nature of their comprehensive knowledge of their subject: knowledge which gives them an understanding of its real nature and which thereby enables them to know both what is its better and worse condition and how to bring that about.[88]

The expert emerges as the only person who can act deliberately with regard to the product which knowledge of his particular subject enables him to accomplish. This will lead us to suppose that the expert can both benefit or harm others as the result of his skill. For Plato expertise is, at least initially, seen as an ability which can be misused. This naturally creates problems for the analogy with virtue and we shall see later on how Plato attempts to solve this problem. The problem that is, that the virtuous man is the only one who can act unjustly.

With these five criteria we have then Plato's conception of what it is for anything to be a technê. We have to some extent seen and should again

[88] That as concerned with health, medicine must at the same time know what disease is. It is the same knowledge which gives us the ability to produce either cf. Aristotle EN Bk VI. 4. 1129a14.

emphasise that the different technai that Plato uses as examples are not themselves in each case scrutinised with respect to whether they completely satisfy these criteria or not. Nor does Plato ever suggest that we should seek to gain knowledge of any or all of these skills., rather the pursuit of virtue will be contrasted with technical knowledge as a whole. What Plato does with this paradigm is look at controversial cases of claims to technê-hood and by applying these criteria, attempts to show just how these either are or are not to be regarded as proper technai. Note that some of these controversial cases are controversial only from the Platonic point of view. Thus the claim of either rhetoric or poetry to be a genuine technai was not one under any special doubt.[89]

If this conception of technical knowledge is really a conception of knowledge for Plato, and if these five criteria are jointly employed in the identification of technai, then they will together constitute the paradigm of knowledge that Plato is working with in the early dialogues. This paradigm is used both to undermine rival claims to teach virtue and attendant claims to wisdom such as rhapsodes and poets enjoyed, as well as to explicate the Socratic thesis, 'virtue is knowledge.'

So far, what we have shown about technical knowledge is that it demands a special subject of its own as well as a product or result that it alone produces. These two features of skills give us the theoretical and practical

[89] But this is not to say that such doubts could not be used to undermine a claim to technê-hood. Thus the author of "On the Art" is responding to such doubts in his defence of medicine.

aspects of knowledge. Their close association shows that this conception of knowledge is both practical as well as theoretical. Craft knowledge is also characterised, as all professional practices are, by teachability. Expertise in the crafts is a privilege of a few: and such ability as this expertise provides can be communicated to others. The fact of such teaching, from available evidence, makes it clear that habituation and experience are expected to have a role to play in instruction, but that such instruction is conditional upon an expert instructor: crafts are learnt only from experts. This will become important in the Socratic conception of virtue and the possibility of its teaching, for Socrates, typically, did not accept the role of a moral expert.

Before we examine the Socratic doctrine, however, it is important to look at some technai in which individuals did claim expertise and, in one way or another, offered instruction in what they claimed to know. We will find that Socrates' examination of such experts and an evaluation of their claims uses the paradigm of knowledge which we have distinguished in this chapter to dismiss their claim to have and to teach a genuine technê.

Chapter Two

The Rejection of Pseudo-Technai

Plato in the early dialogues devotes considerable attention to depicting the Sophists of his time, constructing their thoughts and arguments with care, often presenting them in a powerful and persuasive way, at other times ridiculing them wonderfully. But he does not recount their doctrines with a view to presenting us with a history of philosophical thought, rather the teachings of his contemporaries that Plato focuses on have a role to play in the unfolding of his own arguments. Their doctrines and their role as adversaries of Socrates aid us in grasping both the nature of Socrates' own claim as well presenting us, by way of contrast, with what he thought were some alternatives to it. In this chapter I will look at the rejection of four claims to knowledge that are dealt with at length in the early dialogues, in particular, at the Euthyphro, Ion, Protagoras and Gorgias.

In each of these Socrates' adversaries are reputed to be experts in their own fields, each of them claims to be in possession of or to be able to impart a technê. In each case, Socrates uses the conception of craft knowledge that I have distinguished, and applies it to what he considers their dubious knowledge claims. Socrates' dismissal of these claims, apart from confirming the negative use to which the craft analogy is put, will help us, by contrast, to understand the nature of his own doctrines. Hence the application of the craft analogy in the dismissal of Sophistic and other claims to know, is an important adjunct to Socrates' own postive doctrine.

In the case of the Ion, Protagoras and Gorgias, the ultimate rejection is not simply of an individual's claim to know, as it is in the Euthyphro, but leads to the rejection of the art of the rhapsode, rhetor and sophist (rhapsodikê, rhetorikê and sophistikê) as genuine technai.[1]

While the Euthyphro belongs to the aporetic definitional dialogues (which include the Laches, Charmides and Rep.1), certain aspects of Socrates' argument make it useful to consider it here and to look at the Charmides and Laches in the following chapter.[2] The Ion, Protagoras and the Gorgias are like the Euthyphro in that each of these dialogues are refutative of particular knowledge claims, each interlocutor in them claims to be in possession of a technê, and each of these dialogues incorporates a Platonic critique of central Greek ideas.[3]

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[1] These three practices are assimilated by Plato. At Grg. 502d poiêtikê is identified with oratory, oratory with rhetoric; rhetoric itself is identified with sophistry. By contrast, divination is regularly coupled with other technai cf. R. J. Hankinson, "Stoicism, Science and Divination," in Method, Medicine and Metaphysics, ed. R. J. Hankinson (Edmonton, 1988), p. 128 It is clear from the Peri Technês that such an attack would not have been entirely unprecedented. However, Plato's arguments to undermine rival technai are far more systematic and well grounded than anything else that we encounter at the time.

[2] Of course, both the Protagoras and Gorgias are concerned with defining the nature of sophistry and rhetoric, and it might be thought that Socrates actually comes up with acceptable definitions of each of these, which he doesn't do for the virtues. However the ability to define or characterise the subject or nature of the activity in question is by itself not sufficient to guarantee it legitimation as a technê.

[3] This has been shown for the Euthyphro by L Versenyi (Holiness and Justice, Washington 1982), and for the Ion by Alan Bloom, "An Interpretation of Plato's Ion," in T. Pangle ed., The Roots of Political Philosophy: Ten Forgotten Socratic Dialogues, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987): 371-395. The critique of rhetoric and sophistry in the Gorgias and Protagoras is clearly an examination of contemporary trends by Plato.

The central examination in these dialogues concerns the demarcation of the particular subject that each of these technai are supposed to be of. As we have seen this is a fundamental feature of crafts according to Socrates. If Socrates' interlocutors claim to be experts of their respective technai then they must be able to specify what it is that they have special knowledge of. Specification does not of course mean merely being able to mention the subject of their expertise, but demands rather that they be able to give an account (or logos) of the nature of the subject. I will in what follows see how this requirement for craft knowledge is applied by Socrates in his examination of each of his interlocutors in these four dialogues. The failure of each of them to satisfy this demand will form the basis of a rejection of their claim to have knowledge, and consequently, in the case of those who claim this, to teach it as well.

Specification of the subject

While the Euthyphro is about piety and thus about a virtue, Socrates does not discuss his own claim about the nature of virtue in this dialogue.[4] At best he tells us that piety is a part of justice, hinting at the unity of the virtues. What we do have, however, is a detailed examination of Euthyphro's claim to know what is and what is not pious. This examination reveals Socratic assumptions about what constitutes knowledge. Euthyphro's inability to adequately answer Socrates' questions, or the dialogue's inability to record a satisfactory definition of piety does not, however, mean that no such definition is possible, and that piety cannot be

[4] As he does in the Laches and Charmides as well as in the Gorgias and Protagoras.

regarded as knowledge, only that Euthyphro cannot be thought to possess it.[5] By contrast Ion's inability to give an account of what he knows is taken as evidence that there is no such account to be given, and in that dialogue Socrates offers an alternative explanation of one feature of Ion's practice which he shares with a genuine technikos: being able to successfully produce a result. In the case of Gorgias as well, Socrates will offer an alternative explanation of what accounts for the power of rhetoric. It is, he realises, not enough to claim that these are not genuine crafts. He needs to be able to explain their apparent success, even if it is initially in terms of duplicity and ultimately in terms of ignorance. Euthyphro too is going to act, but the difference between what he is going to do, and what Ion publically does, is that his prosecution of his father is not an action which will meet with public approval.[6] Euthyphro may well be doing what is pious, but he has no way of knowing this. What is wrong with Euthyphro is not that he is going to prosecute his father, but that he does this with the conviction that he knows that this is what one ought to do. Euthyphro like Ion expresses no doubt about his proposed course of action.[7] And this is entirely appropriate for someone who claims to know what he is doing.

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[5] The question of the knowledge of virtue is thus left open; it is not suggested that such knowledge is not possible; at best what might be supposed is that prophets are not the ones who will possess it.

[6] Socrates does not either approve or disapprove of the action itself:What he does repeatedly emphasise is that if Euthyphro indeed knows what piety is, then what he does will be right.

[7] I do not, however, contrast this self-assurance with what Bloom calls 'the radical self-doubt of philosophy' (Bloom, "Plato's Ion," p. 371). It seems to me that so far as Socrates is concerned, philosophy, like any other form of knowledge has no room for self-doubt. Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is not, for instance, the result of his inability to come to understand himself, but rather with his not yet having grasped his own nature. Socrates' conviction about his wisdom (knowing that he does not know...), shows indeed that he is as far from self-doubt as could be expected.

The introductory conversation of the dialogue (2a-5d) makes it clear that the problem is that of determining whether a particular action is either pious or impious.[8] While Socrates expresses some surprise that Euthyphro should be prosecuting his own father (itself construed as an act of impiety by many), it is clear that in principle he agrees with him, for he says "the only thing to consider is whether the action of the slayer was justified or not, and that if it was justified one ought to let him alone, and if not, one ought to proceed against him, even if he share one's hearth and eat at one's table."[9]

But while Socrates accepts the general principle that wrong-doers ought to be punished, he is not entirely sure that this is a case of wrongdoing.[10] Is your knowledge about the holy and unholy so certain, he asks Euthyphro, that you do not fear that what you are doing may be something unholy rather than holy? And Euthyphro answers,

> "I should be of no use, Socrates, and Euthyphro would be in no way different from other men, if I did not have exact knowledge about all such things."[11]

Euthyphro has thus made three claims about the knowledge that he has:

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[8] Fully spelled out at 4c-e by Euthyphro and later at 9a by Socrates.

[9] Euthphr.4b-c. For a similar sentiment expressed by Socrates cf. Gorgias 480a-d (noted by Verseyeni, Holiness and Justice, p.36). Euthyphro's prosecution, however, is done by him for his own rather than for his father's sake.

[10] In his review of the problem at 9a Socrates mentions what might be mitigating factors absolving the father of intentionally causing harm to the slave. On Euthyphro's reading of piety, however, intention has little or nothing to do with the question of pollution.

[11] Euthphr. 4e-5a.

that it is exact (akribôs), useful (ophelos), that it distinguishes him from other men in that he can act rightly.[12] Euthyphro thus claims to be an expert in the art or science of piety.

Socrates asks Euthyphro about the nature of piety. As someone who knows what piety is, Euthyphro should be able to give an account of what it is that he knows. But before he actually poses his question "what is piety?" Socrates gets Euthyphro to agree that:

i. Holiness is the same in every action.

ii. Unholiness is opposite to holiness.

iii. The presence of each characteristic quality will make an action either holy or unholy. [13]

If Euthyphro is to rightly know what holiness is, he must, in virtue of this knowledge know what unholiness is, and together, holiness and unholiness must form the special subject of his expert knowledge. Socrates here has insisted on the unity requirement: that every technê deal with one specifiable subject. Just as medicine will deal with health and disease,

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[12] On akribôs cf Nussbaum Fragility of Goodness p. 96 where, identifying akribôs as belonging to the vocabulary of technical knowledge, she says, "Technê brings precision where before there was fuzziness and vagueness" The word occurs again at 14b, but saphôs, used equivalently in this sense occurs often in the dialogue (5c, 9b5, 9b9 and 15d). Aristotle, EN 6. 7. 1141a 9-10, discussing wisdom, says that it is "employed in the arts to denote those men who are the most perfect masters (akribestatos) of their art."

[13] Euthphr.5d (iii). is not actually stated in this way, but seems to be implied by the language of this passage; nor is it stated that holiness and its opposite cannot co-exist, but this is assumed in the refutation of Euthyphro's first definition. For that refutation would not work unless both Socrates and Euthyphro were agreed that the same action could not be both holy (loved by some gods) and unholy (hated by others) at the same time. R E. Allen, Plato's Euthyphro and the Earlier Theory of Forms, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) p.35 notes that all that Socrates has pointed out is that Euthyphro's definition will make some things both holy and unholy. Allen says, "It is not self-evidently false that some holy things are also unholy, and if Euthyphro's peculiar theology is sound, his definition implies that this is true."

piety, if it is truly a form of knowledge will deal with the holy and unholy. He who has this expertise will be able to give an account of the nature of this subject. For Socrates this is a condition for establishing Euthyphro's claim to know that what he is doing is pious. For if he knows that, then he must know what piety is, and if he knows that, he must be able to give an account of its nature. The unity of the subject is what makes such an account possible. It is this which Socrates asks Euthyrphro to provide.

Euthyphro's first definition of piety as what the gods love is rejected by Socrates as providing only the pathos or what is brought about and not the ousia or nature of piety.[14] Socrates' argument against Euthyphro's amended definition has been seen as central to the dialogue's discussion of piety. The logic of the argument is not always easy to understand. Nor is it clear what precise relation between 'holiness' and 'being loved by all the gods' Socrates assumes must hold.[15] But the point of his rejection of Euthyphro's definition is that it does not give us the nature of piety, even if it does say something true about it (that it is loved by all the gods).

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[14] I take the first definition of piety to include both the formulations that Euthyphro offers. The first formulation, after Socrates tells him that he wants a definition and not examples of piety, Euthyphro makes at 7a (what is dear to the gods is holy, what is not dear to them is unholy). The second formulation is only an amendment to the first, once Socrates allows the assumption, which he actually agrees with, that the gods do not in fact disagree about matters of right and wrong. This Euthyphro makes at 9e ("Well, I should say that what all the gods love is holy and, on the other hand, what they all hate is unholy."). In effect the first definition is examined from 5d-11b.

[15] cf. John H. Brown, "The Logic of the Euthyphro 10a-11b" PQ (1964) 1-14.

If Euthyphro could offer an account of its nature, then we might be in a position to understand why it was loved by all the gods. In this section, however we are not given any positive account as to what piety is, only some reasons for believing that Euthyphro's definition, even if true, would tell us little about it. The account that Euthyphro offers is thus not explanatory of the nature of piety, as it should have been if he genuinely knew what it was. The conclusion that we may derive from this section is not that Euthyphro's claim that the holy is what all the gods love is false, but that he does not know what piety really is.[16] And if we begin to doubt this, we may well wonder whether in prosecuting his father, Euthyphro really knows what he is doing.

Ion fares little better than Euthyphro. Offered at the very end of the dialogue a choice between being considered a liar or divinely inspired, he has some room in which to honourably retire. But both of these interlocutors are shown to lack knowledge. While the Ion is not 'definitional' like the Euthyphro, there may be a reason internal to Socrates' argument why Ion is not asked to answer a question such as 'what is poetry?' Indeed there is no specific thesis that Ion puts forward. It is Socrates who accosts and lures him into conversation. Ion merely reports how it is with him. He expresses some surprise and puzzlement at Socrates' conclusion that he cannot claim any skill. His response is to appeal to the fact of successful performance. Socrates offers him an alternative explanation of how he is able to do what he does, which by the end of the dialogue he is happy to

[16] In the Phaedrus (273e), for instance, the ultimate goal of dialectic is "to speak and to do everything, so far as possible, in a manner pleasing to the gods."

accept. Socrates here denies that the rhapsode's art is a genuine one. He also denies by implication that the poet's art is genuine, but assimilates it to the same sort of inspiration which causes the rhapsode to excel at what he does. While there may have been an antecedent tradition about the divine source of poetic inspiration, Plato really undermines here and elsewhere the possible claims that it might support on behalf of the poet.[17] For in the Ion the charge against the rhapsode, and through him of the poet is an epistemological one.

In the first part of the dialogue (530-533d) Socrates examines Ion's claim to only know the thought of Homer. He seeks to prove that in so far as he only knows the thought of Homer, Ion cannot be said to have a technê at all. In doing so he relies on the notion that the proper subjects of knowledge themselves form a conceptual unity. If poetry is a whole, as he claims it is, then to be said to know it one should have knowledge of all sorts of poetic compositions; and the principles of the craft should enable one to expound the thought of all poets.

Ion claims in this section to speak about Homer better than anyone else, and only about Homer. He uses a variety of terms in this connection (speaking best (kallista legein) about Homer at 530c. "No one has so many fine thoughts to offer about Homer" (epein...pollas kai kalas dianoias peri

[17] cf. E. R. Dodds The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 81 Eric A. Havelock, Preface to Plato (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 162-163 nn. 28 & 29.

Homerou at 530d4. "How well I have embellished Homer." (eu kekosmêka ton Homeron) at d8. Apart from his echoing Socrates' term dianoia ("thought,") introduced at 530d1, Ion has little to say that seems controversial. He does of course refer to his technê (530c), but in doing so he is using the term very generally to signify what he does. However, he does in all this imply that what he is doing is important. His fame and the fact that he is the best of all rhapsodes is continually emphasised in the course of the dialogue.[18] And this is because it is the work of Homer that he is conversant with.

Socrates observes firstly, that where Homer and other poets share the same subject and agree about it, Ion should be able explain or expound (exegeomai), what both say. Ion agrees with this. He needn't have done so. If all that he had claimed on his behalf was an ability to recite Homer, then he would not need to claim to 'know' (remember) the work of other poets. In fact, Ion, only remembers Homer's verse, and he is eager to give demonstrations of this on more than one occasion. But by 'knowing' a poet, Socrates has already indicated that he means something more than merely remembering his words. That Ion in some way is expected to know the truth of Homer's statements, just as Homer himself will be required to show that he has knowledge of what he writes if he is to claim to have a techne.

[18] e.g. at 530d, 533c, 535d-e, 539e etc.

Secondly, Socrates says that where Homer and the other poets share the same subject but disagree about it, that is, say different things, Ion should be able to interpret what they say, just as a mantic (one versed in the art of divination) would be able to interpret (exêgeomai) these poets when they speak of his art, both when they agree and when they disagree. So far Socrates has emphasised that poets may agree and disagree about certain things. He is clearly interested in a specific aspect of poetic composition, its claim to truth.

Thirdly, and this rounds off the points made earlier, Socrates claims that in fact Homer speaks of the same things as the other poets. This completes the argument against Ion. The poets share the same subject, and say things about it which are either in agreement or in disagreement. If Ion is skilled in the interpretation of one of them (Homer) he should be skilled in the interpretation of the others as well. Ion's attempt to suggest a difference between Homer and the other poets fails to point out a relevant characteristic which would justify his knowing only Homer. The fact, even if true, that Homer is better than all the others, in no way helps him. For better and worse with respect to one subject are to be judged by the same person, one who knows the subject in question. The general rule is formulated at 533e, but it should be noted that the question is not one of speaking well or badly, but of knowing what good and bad speaking is. Only the one who knows one will know the other. Socrates has here undermined the praise and fame that Ion enjoys. For Ion has all along been claiming to speak well, but in this his judges are the many, who are in no position to know whether he speaks well or ill. Ion himself is like them in his relation

to Homer, lacking knowledge of what Homer speaks, he is in no position to judge the truth of Homer's remarks. By pointing out that poets may in fact disagree with each other, Socrates has brought poetic wisdom in general into question. And by introducing the notion of expert knowledge he has covertly undermined the notion of poetic authority. What is questionable is of course the way in which he has conceived of the nature of poetry, as if it were a (poor) compilation of technical know-how, designed to inform its listeners.[19]

Socrates' conclusion is one with which Ion agrees. Ion is unable to point to any instance of someone being able to comment on the work of one painter, sculptor, musician and not on that of others, because each of these technai are wholes.[20] Ion offers the only evidence that he can: "I excel all men in speaking about Homer and have plenty to say, and everyone else says that I do it well; but on the others I am not a good speaker."[21]

In both these dialogues what we find is that the initial requirement that every technê have a determinate subject is used to investigate the claims of Socrates' interlocuters to know: in the case of both so far considered,

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[19] Bloom, "Plato's Ion" (p. 375) holds that Socrates here "is testing the Greek understanding of things, particularly of the gods". While Bloom is right in the importance of Homer as the real target of Socrates' attack, he reads a lot into some of the specific moves that Socrates makes. Socrates' chief claim in the Ion, as I see it, is to demonstrate that both rhapsode and poet lack genuine knowledge.

[20] Ion. 532d. Socrates seems to suggest here that there might be a class of professional critics, but elsewhere he denies this. The only one who is competant to judge a craftsman is another craftsman.

[21] Ion. 533c.

Socrates has attempted to show that their respective inabilities show that they do not have knowledge of their subject. In the case of Ion we should note that Socrates does not deny that there could be an art of poetry; he says that poetry is a whole and therefore anyone who can be said to have knowledge must be able to speak well about poetry as a whole. However, speaking well is not, prima facie, a sufficient condition of knowledge. For this depends on whom one is speaking before. Both Protagoras and Gorgias offer to teach the art of speaking well on a variety of subjects. Again, with these interlocuters, Socrates asks them first to specify the precise nature of their subject. In the Protagoras the search for the subject of the Sophist's teaching begins with Socrates' initial conversation with Hippocrates about what he expects to learn from Protagoras.[22] Using examples from other professional skills he determines that while Protagoras is to be called a Sophist, it is not clear what exactly he professes to teach. Hippocrates does indicate something of the technique that he hopes to learn from Protagoras, that of becoming a clever speaker. But Socrates counters this by saying that any learning will make one a clever speaker about that subject, but the question of what it is that he will make one a clever speaker about remains unanswered.

> [Socrates]: "Now what is this thing, of which the sophist himself has knowledge and gives knowledge to his pupil? [Hippocrates]: Ah, there, in good faith I fail to find you an answer."[23]

When they finally meet Protagoras, Socrates asks him rather bluntly this very question. Protagoras replies that he will make one who comes to him better every day. Socrates persists, appealing to professional skills like

[22] Prt. 311b-313a.
[23] Prt. 312e.

painting and fluting, he wants to know what it is about (peri tou) which Protagoras will make one better. Protagoras now defines the subject of his skill, in contrast to other technai. He claims further, that this is precisely what people want to learn:

> "That learning consists of good judgement in his own affairs, showing how best to order his own home; and in the affairs of his city, showing how he may have most influence on public affairs both in speech and in action."[24]

Socrates immediately identifies this with the 'politikê technê'. I have detailed the steps that lead to this description of the subject of Protagoras' art at some length to draw attention to the importance that Plato himself gives to the specification of what it is that Protagoras wants to instruct others in. It is only when the subject is demarcated that the question of whether this can be taught and the means by which it must be, will be determined.

With Gorgias too, Socrates declines to have a special display arranged for him but wants to know "what is it that he professes and teaches?" Polus initially offers to answer Chaerophon's question, about what Gorgias is to be called, as other professionals are called shoemakers or doctors because of their respective skills. Polus replies that Gorgias partakes in the finest of the technai. Socrates intervenes saying that this does not answer the question. Gorgias himself answers and specifies that he is skilled in rhetoric, and is to be called a rhetorician.[25]

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[24] Prt. 318e.

[25] Grg. 449a. Dodds, Gorgias, p. 194 notes that Gorgias is here called a rhetor primarily as one who knows the theory of rhetoric, but the term is more generally applied to anyone who

Socrates, however, is not interested in merely being given the name, he wants to know what exactly it is that Gorgias teaches. For like Protagoras, he too will make his students like himself.[26] But what is the subject in which he will instruct them? It takes some effort to get Gorgias to specify the precise area of his concern (449e-454b). Only at the end of a lengthy examination does he specify what it is he teaches men to speak well, or to be persuasive about; the professed subject of rhetoric is identified as that which "deals with just and unjust."[27] Socrates says that he had suspected all along that this is what Gorgias meant. He adds, "I ask my questions with an orderly completion of our argument" showing that the specification of the subject is of importance to the argument that follows.

We notice that in each of these dialogues a long peroration is necessary in order to identify the nature of the subject that each of the so called experts claims to be expert in. Naturally, their inability to even understand, let alone unambiguously answer Socrates' questions, is an indicator of how little they may have thought about the scope of their own skills. But such skills as they claimed, and this is true particularly of Ion, Protagoras and Gorgias, might make it seem natural that it would be difficult for them to

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practiced public speaking and so came to mean 'politician'. Irwin, Plato's Gorgias p. 113 observes that the dialogue does not distinguish between the craft of the orator (who produces effects) from that of the rhetorician (who teaches others to produce effects). This with good reason. For Plato, the condition of someone teaching another is that the teacher himself be able to do what he teaches. If the rhetorician teaches public speaking, he should be able to speak (if permitted) in public.

[26] Grg. 449b, c.

[27] Grg. 454e, 460e.

identify what they did apart from claiming to speak well. For it is precisely their ability to speak well about very different things that they prided themselves on, and it is precisely this that Plato would rule out by appealing to that condition of knowledge which holds that it must be of some specific, unitary subject. And that in consequence such knowledge is exclusive of knowledge of any other subject.

Ion, for instance, initially claims only to speak well about Homer. Socrates takes this to mean that Ion is able to expound or explain the thought of Homer. Ion admits that this is the most laborious part of his art.[28] For Plato speaking well about something is a consequence of being skilled in that particular subject. Any one who knows a particular skill is able to speak better about it than anyone who does not.[29] Presumably, if two people both know the skill in question, both will be able to speak well about it. In fact, as it seems, both will say the same thing in the sense that they will both agree in matters concerning their skill. And being skilled for the rhapsode will not mean being able to recite without stumbling, or with a deep voice, but is to know 'the thought' of the poet. This phrase 'the thought' for which Plato uses the term dianoia consistently through the Ion, does not however tell us much about what exactly he expects the rhapsode to know. We might

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[28] Ion 530c. It is, Ion says, "emoi goun touto pleiston ergon paresche tês technês."

[29] I take this feature: Ion's claim to be able to speak well, as in no way a special claim, so far as Plato is concerned, about the nature of his art. R. K. Sprague, Plato's Philosopher-King: A study in the theoretical background (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), chapter 1 has a detailed argument which claims that Plato is here and elsewhere making a distinction between first and second order technai. She thinks the art of the rhapsode is properly a second-order one, that is, one which does not have distinct subject of its own, but has the subjects of other arts as its subject. I find no evidence that Plato thought that there could be genuine technai that had no specific subject matter. The criterion of the mutual exclusivity of knowledge rules that out.

suppose that it is being used to refer to the meaning of a particular passage, or the possible point of a metaphor or something like that. We are given no clarification of this. But what we find is that Plato shifts from using phrases like 'speaking well' to those like 'knowing the truth of'.[30] We may then suppose that knowing the thought of the poet has come to mean that the rhapsode is expected to know what the poet knows.

The claim that Socrates makes about the nature of poetic (or Homeric) verse has to do with its encyclopedic content, exemplified by those passages which are descriptive of some skill or the other.[31] He is not concerned at all with either the fine recitation of Homer, which was all that Ion initially laid claim to, or with the poetic diction of Homer himself.[32] His undermining of Ion's claim to be skilled is at once an attack on Homer's work to be in any sense authoritative or able to provide knowledge. Initially this attack, as in the Ion, is limited to questions of technical expertise, but it will later become a full blown critique of Homer as the 'educator of all Greece'. Plato's

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[30] Thus at 537e Socrates begins the argument with Ion's claim to 'speak well' (eu legeis), and assumes that at least within the technai, only those who know speak well (537a-d). He then takes this to mean that the one who is skilled will be the better judge of whether Homer speaks rightly or not (eite kalôs legei Homeros eite mê, 538b,c). R. K. Sprague, Plato's Philosopher King, discussing the Ion holds that here "the point that is essential is that not all arts occupy the same level; there are some that involve speaking about other arts, and some that in turn speak about these. Plato keeps this distinction clearly in mind." (p.7). The ability to speak, however, is only a consequence of knowledge, and this is surely Plato's point right through the dialogue If indeed, as she claims, he was attempting to distinguish between technai, he would end up approving of Ion's practice and would not need a theory of poetic inspiration to account for what he does. Nor would Plato be able to use this criteria against the rhetoricians and sophists who also claimed to be able to teach the ability to speak well on any subject.

[31] cf. Eric Havelock, Preface to Plato, p. 80-84.

[32] While Ion says that "..it is worth hearing, Socrates, how well I have embellished Homer." (Ion 530d), Socrates shifts the discussion to "Apprehending his thought and not merely learning off his words" (530c).

argument here is simply that anyone who lacks knowledge himself (i.e. is not an expert) cannot teach another.[33]

The attack on rhetoric and Sophistry lacks this two-tier structure, where we have a case of repeating what someone else has already initially composed or written.[34] But the Sophist's claim to comprehend all the other special skills by own special skill is similar to the claim of encyclopedic knowledge that the poets claimed.[35] This leads to problems of specification of the subjects that each Sophist will teach, but eventually Socrates seems to have no difficulty in fixing the subject in question. Now the identification of the subject of a proposed technê is only the first step in determining whether it is a genuine skill or not. In each of the dialogues that we have considered we have found that this is in fact the first step that Socrates takes in his examination of his interlocuter, especially where the claim is to teach or have knowledge of virtue, as it is in the Protagoras and Gorgias.

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[33] That practical skills could be learnt from Homer and other poets cf. A. W. H. Adkins, Aretê, Technê, Democracy and Sophists," JHS 93 (1973): 3-12, p. 8.

[34] The logopoious mentioned at Euth. 289d may be an exception in that here we have reference to a class of persons who write what they do not themselves speak and there is another class which speaks the words that someone else has written: this would be analogous to the situation in which someone who did not actually practice speaking in court or assembly, taught the art to someone who did. Presumably, Gorgias and Protagoras as foreigners could not address either the Assembly or use their skills in legal cases in Athens. However, note that Ion makes a vain attempt to show why he does not fight battles for the Athenians by appealing to the supposed fact that the Athenians do not employ foreigners as generals. Socrates gives examples of non- Athenian generals who led Athenian armies (Ion 541c-d).

[35] Prt. 318e, Grg. 456b-c. Gorgias claims that it will become unnecessary to study any of the other skills because one who has this will be more persuasive than any specialist in his own field (Grg. 459c). Protagoras admittedly contrasts the technê that he teaches from the common technai that other Sophists make students study again. But this contrast, as both the myth and the following logos emphasise, claims that the skill that Protagoras imparts is much more important than any other, and in fact is a condition of the very possibility of community life.

Ion claimed to know what poetry was, on the basis of his success as a rhapsode. Euthyphro claimed to know what piety was perhaps because he was a seer (mantic), certainly because he was attempting the prosecution of his own father. Protagoras claimed to teach aretê, which he identified with some form of wisdom or knowledge, Gorgias claimed to instruct people about matters of justice and injustice. Each of their claims to know the precise subject of their supposed technai is controverted by Socrates. Ion admits not knowing any poet other than Homer, Euthyphro is unable to give an account or definition of piety. Protagoras is unable to distinguish knowledge from other virtues, though he claims that they are distinct (and hence that he does not teach them all), and Gorgias while he claims to instruct men about justice, also thinks that he is not obliged to make men just as a result. Each of these so called experts are thus shown to lack knowledge of what they claim to be experts in, and hence are not found to be in possession of a technê.

Specification of the product.

The next step will be to determine what the craft produces or makes, what in short it does or effects. In the Euthyphro, once Euthyphro has typified his skill as that which has to do with the gods, Socrates can ask him what result or effect it produces as medicine produces health and ship-building ships.

> "What is the glorious result (pagkalon ergon) which the gods accomplish by using us as servants?"[36]

[36] Euthphr.13 e. Note the verb apergadzontai with its relative pronoun as a typical Platonic formulation of the requirement that technai have products cf. Chapter 1 nt 33.

Euthyphro makes no real attempt to answer this question, and begs off on grounds of lack of time. Socrates formulates his question in two rather different ways. In the first, cited above, the supposed result is the product of co-operative activity on the part of gods and men.[37] In the second formulation, Socrates suggests that the product is one which is produced by the gods themselves.[38] What does remain constant is the demand that Euthyphro indicate the product of the art which he claims to have. He failure to do so is on par with his failure to specify the nature of the subject of this art, and to give an account of it. In view of this his inability to point to the product is not surprising, for having lost his way in the beginning, Euthyphro can only go around in circles.[39]

But in fact I think that there is a hint here about what the product of such an art might be, in something that Euthyphro says just as he begins again to repeat his original assertion and to wriggle out of the discussion. One

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37 "Adam, Burnet...found the real point of the dialogue in a hint thrown out but not followed up (13e) that religion should be thought of as the co-operation of man with God toward some noble result (pankalon ergon) which is left unspecified. It is at least certain that the making of this point is one of the main objects of the discussion" A. E. Taylor, Plato the Man and his Work, 4th edn. (London: Menthuen,1937) p.148.[henceforth PMW] J Burnet, Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates and Crito (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1924) p. 57 note on 13e10, sees the lack of a product as being the major difference between aretê and the technai He writes "If there were any definite ergon which the gods could produce with our help, it must indeed be something 'mighty fine'. But in fact there is none, since hosiotês is no specialised art but a condition of the soul (hexis psuchês) that is the positive result that the Euthyphro is meant to suggest to those who know the true Socratic doctrine, though it is no where explicitly stated." cf. also J. Burnet, Greek Philosophy (London· Macmillan and Co., 1950), p. 175

38 Euthphr. 14 a "How about the many fine results that the gods accomplish? What is the chief result of their work?"

39 Note the number of times in the dialogue that Euthyphro returns to his original thesis. As he puts himself rather poignantly at 11b ouk echô egôge, hopôs soi eipô ho voô.

which in fact we find characterises what Socrates thinks is the product or effect of virtue in general. While reiterating that holiness is doing what is gratifying to the gods, Euthyphro adds "such things bring salvation to individual families and to states...and the opposite...overturns and destroys everything."[40]

If we would look for a possible product for the art of piety, then it seems to me that this could be an excellent candidate. It focuses on saving individuals as well as cities, and seems to neatly characterise the Socratic enterprise. And there is I think at least one hint in what Socrates says in response that should lead us to think that a product had been adumbrated if not specified.[41] Such a product would clarify the sense in which piety could be regarded as beneficial. When a little earlier, Euthyphro had characterised the relationship between men and gods in terms of therapeia, (service or tendence), and Socrates asked him how the gods can be made better by men, it seemed that Euthyphro missed a fruitful line that he could have taken: If piety is indeed a technê and like all technai must benefit that which it is directed to, then perhaps the real subject of the art is not the gods, who cannot be benefited or made better, but the person himself who would be pious. Piety would thus be the art of self-benefit or improvement, its sphere of action would concern an individual's relation to the divine. The real subject of the technê would not be something external to the agent,

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[40] Euthphr. 14b. Protagoras claims that it is this which he in fact teaches, giving a man good judgement in his own home and in the affairs of his city (Prt. 318e) and "assisting people to become good and true." (pros ton kalon kai agathon genesthai; Prt. 328b). Socrates, too holds that this is what one ought to learn. (Grg. 520e).

[41] "You might, if you wished Euthyphro have answered much more briefly the chief part of my question." (14b)

but like all the virtues, would be concerned with the agent himself. And the useful product that it would produce would be the pious individual: one who would act rightly and would be loved by the gods for that reason.

The supposed product of the art of the rhapsode is less easy to identify, especially if we look for external products like those of house-building or shoemaking. But if we ask the more general question, what does the rhapsode do or achieve, we may find that not only is an answer easier to conceive, but that this is a question that Socrates devotes some time to in the course of his conversation with Ion.

We noticed in the determination of the special subject of the art of the rhapsode that Ion was in agreement with Socrates that if he had a genuine technê then he should be able to expound the thoughts of poets both where they agreed and where they disagreed. He himself was unable to point to any instance of someone being able to comment on the work of one painter, sculptor, or musician and not on that of others because each of these technai are wholes. Ion offers the only evidence that he can: "I excel all men in speaking about Homer and have plenty to say, and everyone else says that I do it well; but on the others I am not a good speaker."[42]

[42] Ion 533c.

Ion thus appeals to successful practice in the performance of Homer's poetry. This is in fact a powerful appeal for anyone claiming to have technical expertise. Elsewhere Socrates himself challenges opponents to cite cases where they have successfully done what they claim to know; and Plato ridicules those whose supposed technical know how is not exhibited in their practical displays.[43] The opening remarks of the Ion are designed to draw attention to Ion's success as a rhapsode. Later he offers us a description of just how successful he is in affecting his audience:

> "for I look down upon them from the platform and see them at such moments crying and turning awestruck eyes upon me and yielding to the amazement of my tale "[44]

It is in order to explain his obvious success that Socrates introduces the notion of the divinely inspired poet who is not in his senses.[45] The spectator is himself at the end of a chain of possession, and neither the poet nor the rhapsode are responsible for the state in which the spectator is put. Hence while they may seem, like other professionals to be producing effects, they are not really responsible for the effects that they produce. In any case the state that they are in and in which those who listen to them are put is not one of knowledge at all, but is a sort of mania. In the Ion Socrates does no more than hint that this may not be in the best interest of either the rhapsode or his fans. In the Gorgias, Socrates describes the end or aim of

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[43] As he challenges Callicles (Grg. 515b). At Euth. 183d Stesilaus with his scythe-spear is ridiculed for the practical inability of one who professed expertise in the art of fighting.

[44] Ion 535e.

[45] There is no doubt that such a view of poetry is much older than the account we find in the Ion, though the image of the magnet is probably Plato's own; but the important thing here is to note how using the traditional view of the divine origin of poetry, Plato undermines the poet's claim to authority, the very thing that the traditional view no doubt re-inforced.

poetry as pleasure, rather than instruction.[46] We have seen how poets lacking knowledge of their subjects cannot be regarded as instructing others, hence their aim or effect will not be knowledge but something else, a state of pleasure or 'possession' which is seen as the cause not of knowledge, but of 'speaking well'. Plato's account of inspiration thus turns out to be not an alternative to knowledge, but a means to being able to speak or compose poetry.[47] And again in this section, inspiration notwithstanding, the truth of poetic accounts are to be best judged by experts in each of the fields that the poet speaks about.

When Socrates asks Gorgias what the subject of his art is, he also asks him what its dunamis or power is.[48] While Gorgias has difficulty in specifying its precise subject, he has no problem in listing the sorts of things someone

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[46] Grg. 501e.

[47] This enables us to see how attempts to solve for Plato problems that he does not have are misplaced. W.J. Verdenius, "Plato's doctrine of Artistic Imitation," in Plato II, ed. G. Vlastos (Indiana: University of Notre Dame,1978), pp. 259-273 thinks that there is a problem in supposing that poets are divinely inspired (Ion 534c-d) and that the poet makes mistakes. He attempts to solve this for Plato by supposing that something is sometimes lost in transmission from Muse to poet (p. 261-262). But if possession is not a route to truth, but to artistic excellence, then, there is no need to have recourse to such maneuvers. Nor is this account of inspiration at odds with Socrates' palinode in the Phaedrus. There (Phdr. 245a-b) he says of possession and madness that comes from the muses, that it "takes hold upon a gentle and pure soul, arouses it and inspires it to songs and other poetry, and thus by adorning countless deeds of the ancients educates later generations. But he who without the divine madness comes to the doors of the Muses, confident that he will be a good poet by art, meets with no success." In all this Socrates has said nothing to suggest that the good poet is good at anything other than writing well (kosmousa). That is, possession remains unconnected with technical expertise or knowledge. Indeed, so far as poetry is concerned, mere technê is of no use. And by this we suppose Socrates here means not that one who knows a particular skill, is not thereby good at composing verse, but that such composition is not to be learned, as technai are, by learning rules, or practicing a great deal In the rating of lives (Phdr. 248d) the mantic and the poet are placed fifth and sixth respectively.

[48] Dodds, Plato's Gorgias, p. 204 refers to Socrates' double-barrelled question,' (at 453b9, e6 and 454a8). The two questions as I understand them are firstly what is rhetoric about (peri ti pragmatôn,) and secondly, if the answer to the first question is 'persuasion', what does such persuasion do?

who has the art can accomplish. Gorgias claims, so Socrates puts it, that his "art is the cause of greater good" than that of recognised goods like health, beauty or wealth, each of which have their own specialists who thereby claim to produce the greatest benefit for men. When Socrates asks him to specify what it is that he claims is the greatest good for men of which he is the craftsman,.Gorgais replies that what he teaches is "responsible for freedom for a man himself, and at the same time for rule over others in his own city."[49] With such an ability, he says, you will be able to make other professionals work for you.

Right through the dialogue, we find that the efficacy and power of rhetoric is continually emphasised. Gorgias describes it as the ability to persuade. Later he itemises the power that having such an ability can confer on the rhetorician.[50] All this is to show that rhetoric has a useful and beneficial result for the person who has the knowledge to exercise this skill. Behind this claim lies the assumption that the product of an art must be beneficial and useful.[51] So, for Gorgias, as well as for Polus and Callicles as his successors in the argument, the product of the art of rhetoric, what it does, is to make a man powerful and important in his community, and that is the reason why it is desirable to pursue it.

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[49] Grg. 452d (trans. Irwin, Gorgias)

[50] Grg. 455d-e. Dodds, Gorgias (p. 209 nt. on 455d7) observes that dunamis is one of the key words of the dialogue. "Whether the orator really excercises "power" will be questioned by Socrates further on."

[51] Such a requirement seems to have become a part of the claim for technai in general and rhetoric in particular. Thus Jonathan Barnes, "Is Rhetoric an Art?" d.a.r.g. Newsletter 2 (1986): 2-22 notes that for Sextus Empiricus "every art refers to a goal which is euchrêston tôi bôi." Barnes adds that this may be surprising condition, "but it is securely present in the text." (p. 6).

We find similar moves made in the Protagoras. The introductory conversation is briefer than that in the Gorgias, but the progression of ideas is remarkably similar: both subject and product of the sophistic art are distinguished as they were for rhetoric in the Gorgias.[52]

Hippocrates blushes when he thinks that if he studies with Protagoras it must be in order to become a Sophist. Socrates points out to him that he need not necessarily do this, he may study the subject as is fitting for a free-man and not in order to become a professional himself.[53] While Hippocrates is unable to specify the precise knowledge that Protagoras has. Protagoras describes himself as "A foreigner who comes to great cities and persuades the best of the young men to abandon the society of others, kinsmen or acquaintances, old or young, and associate with himself for their improvement."[54] And he specifies the nature of this improvement as being concerned with ordering oneself and one's city. Socrates had already indicated to Hippocrates that the sophists dealt in logoi (arguments or

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[52] I do not for purposes of the argument here differentiate between rhetor and Sophist. In the Gorgias, Socrates himself says that they are liable to be confused (Grg. 465c) and may even be usefully identified (520a). Of course in that dialogue, Socrates distinguishes them on the basis of their precise area of concern. In any case, given Protagoras' remarks about the ancestry and extent of Sophistry, we may be justified in using it as a generic term to include rhetoric.

[53] Prt. 312b. Later (Prt. 315a), Antimoerus is described as "taking the course professionally with a view to becoming a Sophist." So far as the education of young Athenians were concerned we do not find, despite Socrates' use of the craft analogy, any suggestion that the crafts should form the content of education. Even where music and gymnastics make up the curricula of education, they are 'studied' with a view to their salutary effects on the person.

[54] Prt. 316c.

words: perhaps speech in general) Yet the Sophistic arts claim to be eminently practical. They do not produce an artefact like some of the more familiar technai, but may be seen rather as techniques of self-transformation. To take an example from the second book of the Republic, the arts that Protagoras and Gorgias offer to teach are like Gyges' ring, they enable anyone who has it to take advantage of his newly found powers. Gorgias in fact claims that he teaches a technique that can be put to any use and that as a teacher, he is not to be blamed for the uses that it might be put to. The example of Archelaus in this connection is of interest, he is in many ways like Gyges, one who is able to take advantage of situations, and therefore, according to Polus, to be admired for not only this ability, but the success that accompanies it. The product of this skill, what it in short does, is to be identified with the benefits that it can bring about for the individual.[55]

For the Sophists then, their technê has a beneficial product, that of improving a man's ability to make his own circumstances, enabling him to make a mark in the life of his city. Socrates does not deny that Sophists can achieve such ends, though he does deny that they do so by means of a technê. He also questions what they achieve or teach as being really advantageous for a person. He does this by questioning the effect that such teaching has upon those who learn it.

[55] In the Gorgias especially, this is identified with power. Wealth will result from possession of power, as will the means for continual desire satisfaction.

Teachability.

So far, however, what we have seen is that the specification of the subject and product of any proposed technê is used by Socrates to investigate the claims of his interlocuters that they have knowledge. The rejection of such claims is based on their inability to specify a determinate subject, or where such a subject can be specified, to give an adequate account of it, and this leads to the conclusion that they lack expertise and hence cannot be regarded as genuine teachers.

But it might be objected that not all of these adversaries claimed to teach a technê. Ion for instance presents himself as as a performer and not as a teacher of his art. At least this is not part of a claim that Socrates examines. Now while it is not always necessary that each time Socrates undertakes an examination of an adversary he will use explicitly each one of the criteria that I have distinguished, it does seem to me that these in general form the background of assumptions that Socrates uses in the rejection of pseudo-technai. To take the example of Ion, it is clear that Socrates' attack on both poets and rhapsodes is not unconcerned with their role as teachers. Ion, in so far as he uncritically imparts the thought of Homer, is really imparting education. But the manner of this teaching is different from the way in which a technê is taught. And even if we accept that Homer is sometimes credited with the teaching of practical skills, it is surely not this that Socrates is objecting to although some of his objections depend on the claim that the poet does not have a comprehensive technê.

When Ion, trapped into a corner at the end of the dialogue claims in some desperation that he knows the art of the general, Socrates asks him why he hasn't been practicing it. Mere ability to speak or recite verse is no proof of knowledge. And it is implied that Ion could neither have learnt this from Homer as he claims (541b) nor can he teach it to anyone else. What he does teach, is not taught as a technê is taught, it is more of an infection and disease than instruction. It is as irrational (alogon) as the empeiria (habitude) and tribê (knack) criticised in the Gorgias. And this pseudo-technê because it is not a genuine one, does not have a beneficial product. But it does do or effect something. This was agreed upon by Ion at the very beginning of the dialogue, when he agreed that communicating the thought of the poet was the chief aim (pleiston ergon) of his art. It is not easy to summarise Plato's position on the effects of poetry. That most kinds of poetry disorder the soul is a theme that Plato elaborates in the Republic, but there the possibility that some kinds that could really be beneficial is not ruled out. We might suggest here, that poetry teaches, but poorly, because the poet (and rhapsode) themselves do not really have knowledge. Even Euthyphro, while he does not set himself up as a teacher of piety, is continually asked by Socrates to instruct him in it. Socrates here is assuming that since he claims to know what piety is he must be able to teach it to one who doesn't.[56]

[56] Euthphr. 5a, 6a, 9a. In fact whenever Socrates asks Euthyphro to tell him about piety, he uses some form of the verb which means to teach or to instruct. At 9b he describes himself as a dusmathesteros (one who is slow at learning). He even goes so far as to suggest that as his teacher Euthyphro will have to assume some blame for any charges of impiety proved against him.

Protagoras in his Great Speech contrasts the teaching of virtue with the teaching of special skills. In the special skills, the aptitude to learn is not common to all, but is dependent on talent etc. In the case of the other, everyone is equally capable of being virtuous, because virtue (or justice) is not a matter of individual excellence but a condition for social existence. This of course does not mean that everyone is equally virtuous, if they were there would be little use for teachers like Protagoras. For him virtue is to be learnt as Greek is learnt, from everyone, and by practice. Socrates had objected that virtue was not thought teachable because it was thought that all men had it, Protagoras accepts his premise, but replies that all men have it because all are taught it. For Protagoras, then, virtue is not taught like a technê at all, by experts to a few. Such a view of learning is in keeping with Protagoras' own relativistic metaphysics which denies that the virtues exist in nature.[57] For Protagoras, virtue is only what is conventionally held and hence is to be imparted as conventions are, by everyone. Socrates' point is that if this is so, then Protagoras cannot be in possession of a technê of virtue. Protagoras would probably accept this, what he might have contested was the way in which Socrates has given content to the notion of a technê, such that what he (Protagoras) taught could not be construed as constituting one.

But for Socrates something that is approximately taught is not really taught; only one who is an expert, and knows, can teach. The notion of teaching, and learning, is connected by Plato with the notion of making a

[57] A view that Plato ascribes to him in the Theaetetus (172b).

mistake. Unless it is possible to 'go wrong' or make a mistake, it is not possible to learn from another. This makes it especially difficult for him to countenance Protagoras' position which holds that everybody can be right, and that there are really no experts, because there is no body of knowledge which one person can have and another lack.[58] Protagoras' own claim to be a little better than others, to provide a skill which will enable one to get ahead in the life of the city, does not count as a technê at all for Socrates.

Gorgias too was famous for a sceptical denial of the possibilty of knowledge.[59] Given such beliefs, it would be difficult for him as well to spell out just how he expected to teach the particular art that he professed. But rhetoric cannot be taught, according to Socrates, because it doesn't investigate the nature of its subject. By distinguishing between conviction derived from persuasion and conviction from instruction, Socrates points out that the success of the rhetorical skill derives from its ability to persuade without instruction in matters concerning right and wrong (455a). Gorgias is willing to accept this description and admits that Socrates has correctly shown the way to it (455d). This lack of knowledge of its subject, admitted by Gorgias, is on par with Protagoras' claim that he can teach the art of Sophistry while maintaining that in principle everyone else can as well. For Socrates teaching without knowledge is only a form of

[58] In the Euthydemus (286b-c) the denial of the possibility of false statements is linked to the doctrines of Protagoras. If false speaking is not possible, neither is ignorance, and Socrates wonders, "what in heaven's name is the subject you two set up to teach?' (Euth 287a).

[59] DK B82,3 (I.Nothing exists, II If anything exists it is incomprehensible, III If it is comprehensible it is incommunicable) trans., K Freemen, Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

deception. Only an epistemê is teachable, and as both Protagoras and Gorgias have been shown not have any special knowledge of their subjects, they cannot claim to be able to teach them either.

In consequence of their general failure to satisfy the above criteria, the Sophists cannot authenticate their claim to be experts in their respective subjects. But for Socrates there is a deeper reason for the Sophist's failure to teach virtue: the fact that they are completely mistaken about what it is. Although the term aretê is used by both Socrates and the Sophists to characterise the content of what they would have men pursue, these terms have different meanings for them. We shall see in the next chapter how the Socratic claim, 'virtue is knowledge' is radically opposed to Sophistic claims about virtue. That while both claim the importance of aretê as the real content of worth while teaching, they differ fundamentally with regard to its nature. Once I have outlined the Socratic conception of aretê it will become possible to note the fundamental failing that Sophistic instruction has for Socrates: their inability to benefit those whom they offer to instruct follows as a consequence of their ignorance of the real nature of aretê.

Chapter Three

Virtue is Knowledge

Socratic ethics is dominated by the doctrine that virtue is knowledge. However, even after specifiying the senses of the terms 'knowledge' and 'virtue' the precise meaning of this claim remains mysterious. I will in what follows concentrate on giving an account of Socrates' claim by employing the craft analogy. This is possible because Socrates suggests by his claim, that virtue is like a technê. He could of course be claiming that it is a technê; but this is too strong a thesis to maintain and the evidence does not show that it is true. As we will see shortly, the disanalogy between virtue and technai is almost as important as the analogy between them. What the analogy does do is to present technical and moral knowledge as species of knowledge in general, similar in some respects but distinct in others.

In the first chapter I distinguished five criteria that broadly characterise all crafts. In the second chapter I showed how these criteria were applied to other claims to knowledge and formed the basis for rejecting them. In this chapter I will show how the Socratic thesis is itself to be explicated by means of an appeal to these criteria. I will initially identify the subject of the particular knowledge that Socrates thinks virtue to consist in. This will be found to be the self or soul. Such a subject, however, will fundamentally distinguish this knowledge from all other forms of technical knowledge and

will make the question of how virtue is to be taught difficult to answer. In this chapter I will limit myself to identifying the self as the subject of virtue and will relate this claim to others that Socrates makes about the content of virtue-knowledge. I will then consider the problem of identifying experts of it, in order to determine the manner in which it is to be taught. Only in the final chapter will I identify the craft that will provide such knowledge. Because of its subject such a craft is to be distinguished from all others. The craft analogy will lead to the Socratic conception of philosophy, which will thereby appear as a special sort of craft. Once we have identified philosophy as the craft of virtue we will be in a position to distinguish its special product.

The Notion of Aretê

I claimed at the end of chapter 2 that both Socrates and his Sophistic opponents emphasised the importance of knowledge in the acquisition of virtue, in the sense that both seemed to think that virtue could be taught. Yet they differed fundamentally about what they regarded as constituting virtue. Before we can begin to explicate Socrates' thesis, we need to give a summary account of aretê, the Greek term which is translated as 'virtue'.

Aretê signifies success in a very general sense.[1] It is in this sense that the Sophists are presented as offering to teach it, and they variously identify it

[1] Alexander Nehemas, "Socratic Intellectualism," p. 294, writes, "Generally speaking, I take aretê to concern the capacity for achieving a justifiably high reputation among one's peers and the achieved reputation as well, as success in a very broad sense."

with the means whereby success in the life of the city may be attained.[2] Aretê becomes identified with eristic in the Euthydemus, with the art of speaking in the Gorgias, and with political wisdom in the Protagoras.

While it does mean excellence in general, such excellence is regarded as relative to the person who possesses it, as a result of his social position: either from his lineage or from the specificities of gender and age. It is in this sense that Meno attempts to define it, claiming that it is different for different people. That the virtue of a child is different from that of a man, and that of a woman different from both.[3] In an important sense Socratic theory accepts the traditional view articulated by Meno, but broadens it so that a person shares in a common function simply as a result of being human.[4] For Socrates the possession of virtue enables a person who has it to live best, or most in harmony with his nature.[5] In Rep.1 Plato says that for every object that has an ergon (task/work) there is some excellence or aretê which enables it best to perform that work. Such a view is compatible with the Socratic account of virtue as consisting of wisdom, courage, justice and temperance. These are what the term aretê is said to range over in the

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[2] cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, History of Greek Philosophy,Vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) [henceforth HGP], p. 255. Guthrie points out that the claim that virtue could be taught was the basis of the Sophist's claim to a livelihood. At Men. 91b Socrates says that Meno should be sent to those sophists who advertise themselves as teachers of virtue (tous hupischnoumenous aretês didaskalous einai.)

[3] Men 71a1-5. Socrates does not always reject this restricted sense of aretê defined by the role a person must play. Thus at Ap.18a, Socrates says "that the virtue of a judge is to pay attention to whether what is said is just or not (and not whether it is said better or worse) while the orator's virtue is to speak the truth." And elsewhere Socrates refers to his own commitment to the job assigned to him above all other considerations.

[4] Thus in Rep.1 justice (as a stand-in for all the virtues) is found to be the specific excellence of man.

[5] cf., Cri. 47d-e where virtue is conceived as something which the soul has and benefits from in much the same way as the body has and benefits from health.

with the means whereby success in the life of the city may be attained.[2] Aretê becomes identified with eristic in the Euthydemus, with the art of speaking in the Gorgias, and with political wisdom in the Protagoras.

While it does mean excellence in general, such excellence is regarded as relative to the person who possesses it, as a result of his social position: either from his lineage or from the specificities of gender and age. It is in this sense that Meno attempts to define it, claiming that it is different for different people. That the virtue of a child is different from that of a man, and that of a woman different from both.[3] In an important sense Socratic theory accepts the traditional view articulated by Meno, but broadens it so that a person shares in a common function simply as a result of being human.[4] For Socrates the possession of virtue enables a person who has it to live best, or most in harmony with his nature.[5] In Rep.1 Plato says that for every object that has an ergon (task/work) there is some excellence or aretê which enables it best to perform that work. Such a view is compatible with the Socratic account of virtue as consisting of wisdom, courage, justice and temperance These are what the term aretê is said to range over in the

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[2] cf.W. K. C. Guthrie, History of Greek Philosophy,Vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) [henceforth HGP], p. 255. Guthrie points out that the claim that virtue could be taught was the basis of the Sophist's claim to a livelihood. At Men. 91b Socrates says that Meno should be sent to those sophists who advertise themselves as teachers of virtue (tous hupischnoumenous aretês didaskalous einai.)

[3] Men 71a1-5. Socrates does not always reject this restricted sense of aretê defined by the role a person must play. Thus at Ap.18a, Socrates says "that the virtue of a judge is to pay attention to whether what is said is just or not (and not whether it is said better or worse) while the orator's virtue is to speak the truth." And elsewhere Socrates refers to his own commitment to the job assigned to him above all other considerations. [cite]

[4] Thus in Rep.1 justice (as a stand-in for all the virtues) is found to be the specific excellence of man.

[5] cf., Cri. 47d-e where virtue is conceived as something which the soul has and benefits from in much the same way as the body has and benefits from health.

Socratic dialogues.[6] The Socratic conception of virtue isolates these as alone constituting moral worth. Such a conception if not entirely unique to Socrates, is certainly given an importance by him which makes it uniquely his doctrine.

But Sophists and others could also hold that wisdom, courage, justice and temperance were to be regarded as virtues, without agreeing with Socrates about what exactly such virtues were and how they contributed to the life of an individual. For instance, Meno can characterise aretê as ruling a city or a household well, and also agree with Socrates that such administrative ability will require temperance and justice.[7] But the means to such aretê might well be seen as requiring injustice and intemperance. This is how Thrasymachus conceives it, and so he can call injustice a virtue and justice a vice, in so far as one helps and the other obstructs a person in his attempt to improve his lot.[8] For Meno aretê seems to be a capacity or a skill. He defines it as a man's capacity to take part in politics, and thereby of helping his friends and harming his enemies.[9] Now Socrates, as we shall see, does not in fact hold such an instrumentalist view of virtue himself. For him virtue is not to be recommended for the benefits which we can get from it,

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[6] cf. Vlastos, "Happiness and Virtue in Socrates' Moral Theory." Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Association. 210 (1984):181-213, see p. 181 with nt. 6. Irwin, PMT p. 32 refers to these as the recognised virtues and rightly points out that where they differ from other recognised aretai is with regard to their voluntary character: "Socrates assumes that real virtue depends on a man's own actions."

[7] Men 73a, cf. A. W. H. Adkins, Merit and Responsibility (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 228. Irwin, Plato's Gorgias, n. on 457c observes, "Socrates' contemporaries refer to a wide range of conditions as human virtues; sometimes they think of strength, courage, wealth, and the other qualities of the traditional aristocrat; sometimes of the qualities of the good citizen who is just and law abiding."

[8] R. 334b.

[9] Men. 71e.

benefits which are distinct from the possession of the virtue itself. Virtue is thus aptly compared to health, as an end that is desirable for its own sake rather than for anything else that it makes possible.

Socrates' claim that virtue is knowledge is designed to give content to his notion of aretê. By insisting that it is a form of knowledge, Socrates links aretê with the crafts and thereby implicitly claims that it can be taught. This will distinguish aretê as he conceives it from more traditional senses of the term where its possession was not something that could be acquired by learning. Further, Socrates explicitly contrasts aretê with the other things normally considered goods, just as he contrasts knowledge with these so called goods.The so called goods include not only the virtues, but also all those things like wealth health and beauty which are said to be desirable. For Socrates these goods are only contingently good, the only intrinsic good being some form of knowledge.[10] The claim that virtue is knowledge forms the core thesis about aretê that Socrates holds, and distinguishes it from all the various things with which aretê was associated. Hence the explication of this formula is necessary for any understanding of what Socrates himself thought virtue to consist in.[11]

[10] Ap 30a-b. I agree with Vlastos, "Happiness and Virtue," p.193 that this does not mean that he rejects these 'so called goods' but rather that he thinks them good only if accompanied by virtue in his sense. Socrates says as much in the Euthydemus 281b. But here he does not speak of virtue but of knowledge, using the terms phronesis, sophia and epistemê interchangeably.

[11] Vlastos, Platonic Studies, p.205 n. 4 says that the formula does not occur as such in any Socratic dialogue, and that the nearest thing to it is Prt 361b4. He, however, does not deny that it is a Socratic thesis, or that it is one which Plato is concerned with in the early dialogues. One might say that though the formula is not to be found frequently or unambiguously in the early dialogues, it is almost exclusively their focus.

Aretê and Technê contrasted

In an attempt to understand the nature of Socrates' claim about aretê we may apply to it the notion of crafts that we have distinguished because he himself identifies aretê with knowledge, and craft-knowledge forms the paradigm of knowledge that he is working with. If aretê too is a form of knowledge then it must satisfy the conditions for knowledge that Plato distinguishes. This is legitimate because crafts offer us the only incontrovertable examples of knowledge. In those dialogues which are directly concerned with the virtues, each virtue is at sometime or other, identified with knowledge.[12] But while the analogy with crafts can be and is applied to explicate the nature of moral knowledge such knowledge is not to be confused with any one of the crafts. The point is that 'virtue is knowledge' does not mean that all knowledge is virtue. The pursuit of any craft whatsoever will not thereby make a person morally worthwhile. Socrates explicitly makes this point more than once. The possession of one does not entail the possession of other.[13] The reason for this is that the

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[12] e.g. Laches 194c-d where Laches identifies bravery and goodness with wisdom (sophia), ascribing this to Socrates. Charmides 164d where in his examination of Critias' thesis, Socrates connects it with some form of knowledge (epistemê tis an eiê). Euthyphro 14b-c where piety is defined a a form of knowledge(epistemê). Protagoras 361a-b. Socrates summarises his own position, "having said at first that virtue cannot be taught,you are now hot in opposition to yourself, endevouring to prove that all things are knowledge (ôs panta chrêmata estin epistemê)." He goes on immediately to add that 'all things' here refers to the virtues (justice, courage and temperance). Gorgias 509e "No one does wrong of his own wish, but that all who do wrong do it against their own will." Socrates goes on to claim that unless one has some knowledge one will do wrong. Suggesting that virtue is the product of some form of knowledge.

[13] In the Laches (196d) Socrates says "and it is not everyman that knows it [courage] since neither a doctor nor a seer can be courageous unless he add this particular knowledge to his own?" In the Charmides he asks "Of what is this knowledge? Do you mean of shoemaking?...[or] of working in brass?...or in something else of that sort?...for these workers, though they live according to knowledge, are not acknowledged by you to be happy: you rather delimit the happy man, it seems to me, as one who lives according to knowledge about certain things." (173d-e)

knowledge provided by the special or professional skills is restricted in scope. A doctor's knowledge is restricted to matters relating to health and disease and not for instance "whether it is better for a man to live or die."[14] This, however, is not an uncommon mistake. For Euthyphro, the art of the mantic is that which gives us knowledge of piety; Nicias approves of the art of fighting in armor and claims "this science will make any man individually a great deal bolder and braver in war."[15] And Critias' account of temperance turns out to be primarily related to the knowledge of crafts.[16] But for Socrates learning any or all of these crafts would not make a man morally better at all.[17] Detailing the specific difference between Socratic virtue-knowledge and other skills thus becomes a major theme in the early dialogues.

Similarly, one who has the requisite moral knowledge will not as a result become better at any other particular skill.[18] This follows from the exclusivity condition of knowledge whereby each form of knowledge has its own special subject; what one knows by one cannot be known by any other.

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[14] La.195c, Chrm.164c. In the Gorgias (511d), the pilot is said not to know whether any of the passengers that he has brought safely to shore has really been benefited by being saved.

[15] La.182c.

[16] At least in the way that he understands the claim that temperance is 'knowledge of what one knows and does not know.' See below for a further discussion of this.

[17] Socrates is dismissive of the value of comprehesive technical knowledge or polymathy. e.g. La. 182c, Chrm.174c. The Republic's account of one man/one job is based on a rejection of the real possibility of or need for expertise in more than one discipline. Even as late as the Philebus (19c) Socrates' grudging admission of the value of comprehensive knowledge of practical crafts is qualified as not being by itself (i.e.) without the possession of virtue, of real advantage.

[18] D. S. Hutchinson, "Doctrines of the Mean and the Epistemology of Skills in Fourth Century Medicine, Rhetoric and Ethics" in R. J. Hankinson, ed. Method, Medicine, and Metaphysics, (Alberta,1988) p. 31 falsely thinks that "according to Plato all real practical skills need to be informed by real virtue (or else are not skills at all)."

This limitation of the scope of aretê will create some problems for Plato particularly as he holds that the one who has aretê in his sense will alone be competent to judge the proper use of the different products of ordinary crafts.

This has to do with the public use to which Socratic virtue is put. And we shall see later how Plato attempts to move from his conception of aretê to one which takes into account more conventional meanings of that term. Similarly the Sophists, in offering to teach their version of aretê, claimed it was an alternative to the other crafts, and suggested that by learning what they taught, one could in some sense master the products of these crafts. In so far as they identified aretê with a political skill, this was an important claim for them to make. For example Gorgias reminds Socrates that the decision to build the Long Walls was one which was not made by those who actually built them, the craftsmen, but by those politicians, Pericles and Themistocles whose advice the Assembly took.[19] The sort of aretê possessed by these leaders was what Sophists promised to impart to their pupils. And this is precisely what Protagoras said people came to him to learn. But by such learning a person would not be made clever about any special subject. As we saw in chapter two the problem for the Sophists is just this,to specify the nature of the distinct subject of their craft. And even when they are pushed into specifying it as some sort of virtue, their inability to give an account of its nature makes suspect their claim to actually know what it is.

[19] Grg. 455e. Later (519a) Socrates will have something to say on what he thinks of such decisions. For with no regard for temperance and justice they have stuffed the city with harbours and arsenals and walls and tribute and such like trash."

In the early dialogues then the distinction between crafts and virtue is at least as important as the analogy between them, and Socrates is concerned to detail these differences. His main point is that no technê is to be confused with virtue. That the possession of any particular technê will in no way contribute to the possession of virtue. Nor will the possession of a particular technê even lead to the (eventual) possession of virtue. The term 'technê' here includes all sorts of professional skills on the one hand, as well as purported technai such as the ability to speak well that Sophists taught, or the eristic skills that people like Euthydemus practiced, on the other. All such forms of expertise, for Socrates, are not only unconnected with the acquisition of virtue but are in fact impediments to it. Socrates thus distinguishes virtue from other sorts of knowledge. And by identifying the subject of aretê with the self or soul, Socrates distinguishes it fundamentally from all other kinds of knowledge: aretê is for Socrates the only knowledge which has the self as its subject.

Self knowledge and the knowledge of good and evil

When Socrates says "I go about doing nothing else than urging you, young and old, not to care for your persons or your property more than for the perfection of your souls."[20] He identifies for us the subject of aretê: knowledge of the soul or self. Only one who has this knowledge can be said to have virtue or to be virtuous in the Socratic sense, and it is this which, as a condition of moral improvement, is what Socrates in fact advocated above all else. The soul is identified in the Crito as the possessor of moral

[20] Ap. 30b.

attributes and as that which is injured by wrong and improved by right action, and as the principle of cognition in the Euthydemus. Its importance as that which is affected by education is emphasised in the Protagoras. And in the Phaedrus the real object whose nature the true art of rhetoric must understand, is said to be the soul.[21] In both the Charmides and the Alcibiades 1, self knowledge is identified with temperance and distinguished from particular craft knowledge.[22] The Socratic notion of the soul is not entirely at odds with what is said of it by thinkers who precede him, especially as regards its moral attributes.[23]

But in the early dialogues we find alternative characterisations of the content of aretê. Before I go on to specify the precise way in which Socratic self-knowledge is to be understood, it may be useful to examine these alternative formulations to see if they explicate the Socratic thesis, 'virtue is knowledge' and how, if at all, they may be related with the claim that virtue is self-knowledge.

The knowledge of good and evil' is the most common and indeed the most explicit formulation for the specific knowledge that Socrates identifies with

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[21] Cri. 47d, Euth. 295e, Prt 313a-c, Phdr. 270c.

[22] Alc.1 131a, Chrm.173c-d.

[23] In this connection, Democritus stands out given his conception of the connection between the health of the soul and physical health, even if this ultimately is, at least in Democritus, for the sake of the body rather than for the sake of the soul itself. cf. David B. Claus, Toward the Soul: An inquiry into the meaning of psuche before Plato, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 148 Martha Nussbaum, "psuche in Heraclitus, II," Phronesis 17 no. 2 (1972): 153-170, has shown how Heraclitus' notion of psuche was centrally connected with self-consciousness and reason. Heraclitus, she says, "emphasises the importance of each man for self-seeking and self-knowledge, and teaches the importance of self-restraint." (p. 169) The view that self-knowledge forms the core of virtue for Socrates is not without its supporters. Guthrie, HGP III p. 459. Grube, Plato's Thought, p. 216 thinks the Delphic pronouncement is closely allied to the Socratic formula, 'goodness is knowledge'. B. Snell, The Discovery of Mind (New York, 1960), p 179

virtue If we accept this formulation then to say that virtue is like a craft would mean that the one who had this knowledge would have specialist knowledge of good and evil and would thereby know which of his actions were good and which evil. More often than not such knowledge is taken by commentators as the non-problematic content of Socratic virtue-knowledge,[24] for a statement to that effect occurs explicitly in two Socratic dialogues, the Laches and Charmides,[25] However, I do not think that this formula adequately identifies the nature of the knowledge in question. It is too much of a blanket claim, and were it indeed the case that it represented what according to Socrates constituted the nature of aretê, he would not have regarded these dialogues as ending in aporia, nor would he have continued raising the question 'what is aretê?', as he does, in the Meno, and the Republic. By themselves these considerations may not be entirely convincing, but by looking at the context in which this formulation arises and what the formula is expected to do, we may be able to see that it is not to be regarded as providing us with the real content of aretê as knowledge.

In the Laches the formula occurs at the end of the dialogue, in a discussion of the nature of courage. Laches had defined courage as knowledge of what is to be dreaded or dared, and Socrates has him agree that one will only dread evil and safely dare (or strive for) good things. Courage on Laches' account is thus linked to the fear or expectation of goods and evils. But if it

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[24] e.g. by Santas, Socrates, p. 125; Vlastos, Platonic Studies, p. 268 seems to accept the notion of a science of good and evil. Charles Kahn, "Plato's Methodology in the Laches," RIPh. 40 (1986): 7-21, esp. p. 19. Donald Watt, "Introduction to the Charmides," in Plato Early Socratic Dialogues, ed. T. J. Saunders, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987) pp.165-174, esp.p. 170.

[25] Chrm 174c, La. 194d

is a form of knowledge, Socrates argues, it will tell us not merely about what is to be feared and dared in the future, but simply what is to be feared and dared (at any t m·). If this is so, then courage will be knowledge of all goods and evils. This Socrates thinks will make courage identical with the whole of virtue.

Now the details of Socrates' argument do not here directly concern us. What is important is to see that the formula, 'knowledge of good and evil' while it is used to characterise virtue, is not intended as a definition of it. Nor does Socrates here discuss what things are good and evil. Socrates says that one who had such knowledge would indeed have all the virtues, and would always behave as is fitting towards gods and men, as a result of his knowing how to procure goods (tagatha Poridzesthai: La. 199e.) Now it certainly seems true that while one who has aretê in Socrates' sense of the term, will know what is good and what is bad, he will only know this in consequence of some knowledge that he already has which will provide him with a criterion for judging between possible goods.[26]

[26] While Socrates admits a variety of 'goods',he thinks that there is finally only one good, knowledge, which makes all other goods good, i.e. good for the agent, and lacking this knowledge, these other goods can be harmful (Euth. 281a). If we were to suppose that knowledge of good and evil was this 'good', then, for Socrates, knowledge of good and evil, would be necessary to determine which of the conventional goods were really good. But in the passage from the Laches just quoted, 'knowledge of good and evil' just is the knowledge of which things are good. This would lead to circularity. In order to know which of the conventional goods were really good, we would have to know which of them were really good. Being able to distinguish between goods is not, however, identical with virtue, but the consequence of virtue. Just as the right behaviour towards gods and men is not identical with justice, but the consequence of justice.

In the Charmides too, it is Critias who offers the formula, 'knowledge of good and evil' as the knowledge by which a man will live well, distinguishing it from other particular crafts, on prompting from Socrates. And Socrates seizes upon this formula: "life according to knowledge does not make us do well and be happy, not even if it be knowledge of all the other knowledges together, but only if it is of this single one concerning good and evil."[27] But once again the formula is not explanatory. Even if we were to have knowledge of all those things that were good and evil, it would still not follow that we would know why they were good and evil. And if we did not know this, we would not be able, on Socratic grounds, to have knowledge of good and evil. For such knowledge involves as we have seen an understanding of the nature of the object itself. So even if 'knowledge of good and evil tells us something true about the nature of aretê according to Socrates it does not give us a criterion for choosing between goods and evils.[28] It is like Euthyphro's definition, of the holy as that which all the gods love. It may be true, but it does not provide an account of why it is so. It does however tell us something about the consequence of having the appropriate knowledge: one who has aretê will know what is good and evil (for himself).[29] Self-knowledge, as we shall see, will be a necessary condition of knowledge of good and evil.

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[27] Chrm147c.

[28] Richard Kraut, Socrates and the State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 258-262, does not regard this as a proper definition of virtue either. I do not think that it is meant to be a definition at all, and I agree with Kraut that we have good reason to believe Socrates when he says, both here and elsewhere, that he has not discovered the nature of virtue.

[29] The qualification is important because of the sense of agathos in Plato's dialogues, on which see Vlastos, Platonic Studies, p. 11 n. 4., G. Santas, "The Socratic Paradoxes." PR 73 (1964), p. 149 points out, "Plato takes it for granted, and never argues, that agatha always benefit the possessor of them, and kaka always harm the possessor of them."

Similar considerations apply, I think, to the measuring technê Socrates outlines in the Protagoras.[30] The technê of measurement of pleasures and pain, is really only the 'knowledge of good and evil'.[31] One who can judge or weigh the consequential pleasure or pain of his actions, will choose only those actions which yield the maximum of pleasure over pain. But who will have this knowledge, and how will he know which will yield greater pleasure and which cause more pain? Such a technê demands the kind of god-like omniscience described in the Laches as a guarantee of perfect behaviour. In the Protagoras Socrates says that he holds by such Promethean foresight, but also adds that the knowledge they are looking for has not been discovered.[32] Again, a technique for measuring pleasures and pains may well be a consequence of virtue-knowledge: one who has the latter will be able to distinguish between pleasures that are really pleasures and those pleasures which are really disguised pains. But until one has a criterion for determining which pleasures and pains are beneficial and which harmful, one cannot decide either between a choice of actions or even rightly chose what one is to learn.[33] It is however important to note that these different formulations are not to be seen as competing knowledge

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[30] e.g. at 356d-e. Socrates says, "..if our welfare consisted in doing and choosing things of large dimensions, and avoiding and not doing those of small, what would be our salvation in life? Would it be the art of measurement or the power of appearance? He goes on (357a), "since we have found that the salvation of our life depends on making a right choice of pleasure and pain...is it not evident that measurement is a study of their excess and defect and equality in relation to each other?"

[31] 'Pleasure' and 'pain' have been brought in by substitution at 355b, ("let us call them by two names--first good and evil, and later on, pleasant and painful.").

[32] Prt 361c-d.

[33] "Since the good serves as a guideline for what we should be, rather than merely telling us what to do, it cannot be defined as a set of rules. On the other hand, nor can the good be identified with the useful or the pleasant. For the notion of self-interest for Plato presupposes a theory about what the self is and should be." J. M. E. Moravcsik, "On what we aim at and how we live," in The Greeks and the Good life, ed. David Depew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980): 198-235, p. 223.

claims, but in fact, are concerned to articulate the same claim. Only one who has self-knowledge will be in a position to know what things are good and evil and in consequence which will cause greater pleasure than pain overall. Only one who has such knowledge will be in a position to decide between alternative courses of action.

Both the Protagoras and the Charmides tell us something about the nature and seat of such knowledge, its real content as it were. Socrates himself suggests to Critias that one who is temperate (sophron) will know that he is. One cannot have virtue and be ignorant of it.[34] In the Protagoras Socrates says that only one who is really ignorant will be "overcome by pleasure." The wisdom which can adequately measure such pleasures and pains is one which he describes as self-mastery, such mastery will itself be a result of knowledge of what is of real importance, while its opposite, ignorance, is being deceived about these very matters.[35]As we have seen that which has the greatest importance for Socrates, is the self or soul. It is this whose care is primary and to whose improvement he thinks one should devote one's whole life. If self-knowledge is what Socrates advocates above and instead of all other kinds of knowledge, we need to determine what sense he gives to such knowledge. What is it about the self, that Socrates emphasises?[36]

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[34] It is this assumption at 164 a which leads to Critias definition of temperance as self-knowledge. In fact Critias' initial statement of this is very strong, he is willing to give up any of his previous admissions, e.g. the one immediately preceding, 'doing of good things', rather "than concede at any time that a man who is ignorant of himself is temperate." I take this formulation as accurately reflecting Socratic opinion.

[35] Prt. 357e-358c.

[36] The term 'self' is a better translation of psuche in its Socratic sense than 'soul'. In what follows I will use both terms however, as often the term 'soul' is better able to bring out the

Socratic self-knowledge as aretê

For Socrates there are, broadly, two senses in which one can have self-knowledge, and we need to specify which of these he equates with aretê. Firstly, a person may have self-knowledge in the sense that he is aware of his limitations. This is a Greek commonplace, and a claim which is made on Socrates' behalf.[37] The Delphic recommendation ("know yourself") was in all likelihood to be taken in this sense, contrasting limited human knowledge with the unlimited knowledge (and power) of the gods.[38] While such a contrast is not found in the Platonic dialogues, 'self-knowledge' is given a related sense in the Charmides where it is equated with knowledge of what one knows and does not know.[39] And this is a sense in which Socratic ignorance has often been taken: as an awareness of one's lack of knowledge.

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intended contrast with the body. The term psuche itself has varied use, nevertheless the Socratic sense has to be distinguished from the numerous theological and other-worldly associations which the term has. "If there is anything new in the way Socrates uses the "soul" it is that he quietly narrows down its meaning to something whose supernatural origin or destiny, if any, is indeterminate, so that both theological and anti-theological, mystical and physicalistic doctrines of the soul become inconsequential." (Vlastos, "The Paradox of Socrates," p. 5)

[37] Ap. 19c, 23b In the former passage Socrates denies that he knows any of the things in the air and beneath the earth that are attributed to him, and in the latter passage he denies that he has any knowledge except that of his lack of knowledge. O'Brien, The Socratic Paradoxes p. 123-25 sees this as central to the discussion in the Charmides. As does T. G. Tuckey, Plato's Charmides (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 65.

[38] cf. B Snell, Discovery of Mind, chapter 7. Such a contrast is mentioned by Socrates as a possible sense in which the oracle about him might be taken ("Human wisdom is of little or no value") such an interpretation is not especially Socratic, for after all the oracle was from Delphi. Otherwise the contrast between divine and human knowledge is absent in Plato. Socratic consciousness of the lack of his own knowledge, is not a consciousness of his lack of omniscience. Socratic self-knowledge is thus quite different from that which Oedipus at last attains to. O'Brien, The Socratic Paradoxes p. 80, thinks otherwise when he writes, "To know oneself is to know one's limitations. In this conviction Socrates is one with the Sophocles of Oedipus Tyrannus."

[39] Chrm. 167a.

In the Apology Socrates concludes that the oracle that proclaimed him the wisest of men must have meant that he, of all men, was aware that he did not know.[40] Socrates' awareness of this is the awareness of his limitations, in not having knowledge of virtue. In discussing and rejecting a possible definition of virtue which importantly resembles this claim. Socrates, in the Charmides, seems to be distinguishing a sense in which awareness of one's limitations is not to be equated with aretê, welcome though such self-awareness might be. Self-knowledge as an awareness of one's limited knowledge has to be distinguished from self-knowledge as knowledge of the self. The reason why such a refutation is important, and why this distinction needs to be made, is that this confusion of self-knowledge with knowledge of one's limitations is understandable and likely, given traditional usage on the one hand, as well as some of the claims made by or about Socrates on the other.[41]

Falling back on an idea that Socrates floated at Charmides 164a, Critias offers "to know oneself" as his second definition of temperance But the sense that Critias goes on to give this formulation concerns not knowledge

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[40] G. Vlastos, "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge," PQ 35 (1985): 1-31 claims, p. 6 n. 13 that the import of Ap. 21b2-5 and 21d2-6 is that Socrates claimed to know "absolutely nothing." But this is surely not right. Socrates clearly knows, and claims to know, a great many things, for example about love in the Symposium (177e); he even says, in the Apology, that the craftsmen know many fine and noble things and in this they are certainly wiser than him.And hence .an claim to know that. Socratic ignorance is really a claim about virtue. It is only with regard to this that Socratic ignorance is likened by him with wisdom when it is compared with the conceit of knowledge (of virtue) that everybody else has. In the passage that Vlastos quotes (Ap. 21d2-6) Socrates explicitly says, "...it is unlikely that either of us knows anything noble or good..." This clearly places limits on the sorts of things that he thinks himself and others to be ignorant of.

[41] "When Socrates expands and alters Critias' suggestion into 'knowing the things one knows (oiden) and the things one doesn't know, that one knows them and one doesn't know them', 162b2 he refers to his own attitude." Irwin, PMT p. 298 n. 45.

of oneself, but the "knowledge of what one knows and does not know," and "knowledge of what one knows" is taken to refer to knowledge of some particular craft. Critias' account of temperance thus makes it the sort of knowledge that some one who knows a particular craft might have. Such a person would know that he knew how to make shoes, say, and he would also know that he did not know how to make cartwheels, and by acting on such knowledge, would attempt the one and avoid the other.[42] Socrates admits that so defined temperance might be useful, and a state run on its principles would be well-run: in fact for Critias this is all that would be needed to run a state well: where temperate craftsmen would not deceive anyone and temperate rulers would oversee their work.

> "For neither should we ourselves attempt to do what we did not know, instead of finding out those who knew and placing the matter in their hands, nor should we permit others under our governance to do anything but what they were likely to do aright; and they would do that when they had knowledge of it."[43]

Socrates, despite his 'dream' where he posits such a state, is not sure that such knowledge will really benefit us at all.[44] But he is unwilling to hold

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[42] I have in this reconstruction of Critias' argument greatly simplified his position, ignoring for the moment the problematic transition from knowledge of self to knowledge of itself. Critias, instead of positing the self as the object of temperance, makes temperance its own object. And to this he adds at 166c, without provocation, "knowledge of all the other sorts of knowledge "

[43] Chrm. 171e.

[44] Chrm173a-b. "ouden moi dêlon einai dokei ho ti agathon hêma apergadzetai." This is, it seems, the crucial difference between Critias' idea of a well run state (which Socrates articulates in his dream) itself in 'large letters' the account of temperence that he gives for the individual, and that which Socrates thinks would truly benefit individuals in it. For Socrates, such a state, while preferable to one in which even professional knowledge could not be guaranteed, is nevertheless of no real benefit simply because it will have no good effect on us. Watt, ("Introduction to the Charmides,"p. 166), it seems, would like to concur, for he abandons this interpretation "reluctantly." He does this because, he says, sophrosune as self-knowledge is one of the definitions proposed in the course of the investigation. He does not notice that there are two distinct senses of self-knowledge being considered.

that temperance can be of no benefit to the person who is temperate. And he details the reason why temperance, so conceived, would not be beneficial to us, because, he says, there would be no guarantee that men who lived according to such knowledge would be happy (eudaimon). In order for them to be happy, they need to have a particular sort of knowledge, not any particular craft knowledge such as the making of shoes or something like that, nor even awareness that that was all they knew, but something else. This knowledge is identified soon after with knowledge of good and evil. We have already seen how such a formulation, while it does tell us something true about virtue, really implies knowledge of the self. If temperance is to be some sort of knowledge at all, then it must be of the self. This is a conclusion which we may arrive at by considering the discussion of temperance that the Charmides begins with.

When Charmides is first introduced to Socrates it is in order that his headache may be cured. Socrates claimed to have learnt from the Thracians a remedy for headaches, but the remedy could only be used along with a charm. The charm itself was directed at engendering temperance in the soul of the affected person, and this was a condition of making the body healthy, or in this case, curing Charmides' headache.[45] The basis of Socrates' cure is the belief that the body is dependent on the soul and that curing Charmides' soul will benefit him as a whole. Temperance here is seen as a condition of the soul, and not as the awareness of their own knowledge that craftsmen might have. The benefit that temperance

[45] Chrm. 157a.

provides depends on a state of the soul, rather than on the honest employment of craft knowledge. At the beginning of the dialogue Zalmoxis was quoted as saying that "all good and evil, in the body and in man altogether was sprung from the soul."[46] If knowledge of good and evil is that knowledge which will truly benefit men, then this knowledge must be knowledge of the soul. We find that with a rejection of the account of temperance as knowing one's limitations, the dialogue returns again to the soul or self as being of primary importance in any understanding of virtue; and as that which alone is to be benefited by such understanding.

Socratic self-knowledge must then be more than just a knowledge of one's own limitations, of the restricted or limited nature of what one in fact knows. While such self-awareness may be an important first step in knowledge of the self, it cannot be equated with it. Self-knowledge, rather, is knowledge of the nature of the self. For, as we have seen, knowledge for Socrates must be an understanding of the nature of the object that is known. This is the second sense in which self-knowledge may be taken for Socrates, as knowledge of the nature of the self or soul It is in this sense that aretê is to be distinguished from all the other technai. Only one who has this knowledge can be said to be in possession of aretê in the Socratic sense. It is this knowledge that Socrates was in search of.[47] A central concern of Plato's in the middle dialogues is to determine the nature of the

[46] Chrm. 156e. Compare Men. 88e, "in man all other things depend upon the soul, while the things of the soul herself depend upon wisdom, if they are to be good."

[47] Such knowledge may still be described as a technê, albeit of the soul, as it is, e.g. at Laches 185e. But is crucially to be distinguished from any one of the professional skills.

soul, its structure and composition, whether it is immortal or not.[48] In the Republic the nature of the soul becomes the basis for understanding the nature of the virtues. Plato here is offering us a logos of the soul.[49]

What Socrates claimed to be ignorant of, and which he thought others to be ignorant of as well, was aretê. If his claim that aretê is self-knowledge is to be correlated with his own claim of enlightened ignorance, then what this claim amounts to is that Socrates is aware that he lacks self-knowledge, but is equally aware that this is what is most needed for one who would have aretê. It is precisely this that others do not know they lack. And the fact that they are not aware that they lack self-knowledge is a result of their being unaware of the need for it. While men may be, and are, wise in other matters, it is their lack of this that is of the greatest import to them. Socrates' admission of his own ignorance, is also a claim about the pervasive ignorance of others.

It might, however, be thought that in the early dialogues we get no coherent, consistent or complete account of the nature of the self: and it

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[48] On the soul as divine in origin cf. Guthrie, "Plato's Views on the Nature of the soul" in The Philosophy of Socrates, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press,1978), pp. 230-43. Guthrie notes that such views did not originate with Plato or Socrates but had roots in Orphic and Empedoclean doctrines. Burnet, "The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul." Proceedings of the British Academy 7 (1915-16): 235-59 disagrees and claims the Socratic notion of the soul was a major Socratic innovation. Erwin Rhode, Psyche, (New York, 1925), p. 462 begins his chapter on Plato by denying that Socrates had any conception of an immortal soul.

[49] Men 88c. In the Politics (1.5.8), Aristotle contrasts Gorgias and Socrates on the nature of virtue. He suggests there that it was Socrates who, falsely, regarded virtue as being a good condition of the soul.

might be supposed that Socrates does not have any clear content to give to self-knowledge, and this is possibly why commentators, while they note his frequent admonition that one should care for one's soul or self, have little else to say about it, and have not connected such knowledge with Socratic aretê.[50]

But if we look at the sorts of things that Socrates says about the soul in the early dialogues, there seems to be rough progression from the circumlocutory phrases in the Crito to the bipartition of the Gorgias.[51] This progression reveals at least two things. Firstly, the recurrent theme that emerges from this pre-occupation is the recognition that the improvement of the self is, as Socrates emphasises in the Laches, the real aim of all education.[52] In the more complex psychology of the Gorgias it is suggested that all actions, good or bad, which a person performs, will have their effect as much on his own soul as they will have on anyone else. Secondly, also common to all these early occurrences, is the distinction between body and soul: a distinction which needs to be given cognizance by anyone attempting to understand the nature of either.[53] So that, even one who would pursue

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[50] A notable exception is R. E. Allen, "The Socratic Paradox." JHI 21 (1960): 256-65.

[51] T.M. Robinson, Plato's Psychology, (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1970), chapter 1, has given a careful analysis of the evidence in the early dialogues: the soul appears as the possessor of moral attributes(Cri. 47d, Prt. 313a), the seat of intelligence (Euth. 295e), equivalent to the whole man (Chrm. 156d) and numerically distinguished from the body in the Gorgias, as well as the subject of analogous technai.

[52] La. 185b-185e

[53] Robinson sees the body-soul relationship as expressed in different ways, especially in the Charmides where he thinks the analogy of 156d, if taken seriously, would make the body a part of the soul. Now in the Charmides, it seems to me, what is emphasised is a relation of dependence between body and soul. Just as the eye can have no real existence (and not as Robinson says, 'meaning') without the head, nor the head without the body, the body too depends on its well being on the condition of the soul Elsewhere, however, we find a relationship of mutual implication, e.g. in the Gorgias, where it is suggested that what

the pleasures of the body, must have some knowledge of the intimate relationship between the body and soul in order to efficiently do so.

Charmides' headache, for instance, arises, Socrates says, from his lack of understanding of the nature of the body-soul relationship. Self-knowledge while it will demand ultimately an understanding of the nature of the self, may be seen as the knowledge of the priority of the soul over the body. In the early dialogues the relationship between the body and soul may be minimally seen as one of interdependence. What affects one will affect the other. An understanding of the relationship between them will involve, however, an understanding that in this relationship the soul is more important than the body, for not everything that happens to the body, according to Socrates, will affect the soul. This is why, the man who is just, he thinks, cannot really be harmed when his body is hurt. But at the same time, he holds that certain kinds of punishment can benefit the soul.[54]

If human excellence is constituted by self-knowledge, and if by this Socrates means the knowledge of the nature of the self, of its priority over the body, then we can see just how radical the difference between technical expertise and moral knowledge will be. For what is common to technical knowledge, as opposed to moral knowledge, is its concern with what is external to the

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happens to the body affects the soul (the fact that is that the soul can be improved by punishment of the body). It is not always clear how exactly Plato wanted to characterise the relation between the two.

[54] Grg. 525b. Plato's account, in the early dialogues, of the relationship between body and soul is itself complex and admittedly incomplete.

self. The closest that any technê comes to concern for the soul, is the health that medicine can bestow on the body, but even this, as Socrates points out in the Charmides, is not really possible so long as the soul remains untreated. This distinction between the technai and Socratic aretê is made explicit for instance, in Alcibiades.1, where Socrates says of craftsmen that they

> "do not even know their own things, but only things still more remote than their own things, in respect of the arts which they follow; since they know but the things of the body with which it is tended."[55]

And this is not the only evidence for this distinction The limited utility of the technai in fact pervades the early dialogues in the contrast that is continually drawn between the value of moral knowledge and the corresponding lack of value of knowledge of all other things. This is the reason why no accumulation of technical knowledge can contribute to an individual's state of well being. This distinction lies behind the contrast, made in the Gorgias, between the respective technai that deal with these two distinct entities, the body and the soul.[56] But the hiatus is not perfect: for what is done to one will affect the other: what is required in assessing the relative worth of medicine and justice, for instance, is recognition of the greater worth of the soul, and therefore of arts pertaining to it.[57] But while the soul is more important, it is not unconnected to the body. The Gorgias'

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[55] Alc.1 131a

[56] Grg. 464a-c. Dodds, Plato's Gorgias, p. 227 notes that the historical Gorgias (Helen 14), claimed that rhetoric was to the mind what medicine was to the body. Indeed, Plato in this dialogue continually contrasts rhetoric and medicine, as J. de Romilly, Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) chap. 2, esp. p. 40, points out.

[57] Grg. 477c. Such an assumption allows Socrates to assume that the vice of the soul will be fouler than a bodily vice. However such vice if it is to be treated by punishment, and if this punishment is painful, is then treated by means of the body.

critique of Periclean architectural excesses, for instance, is based on the recognition that the ultimate effect of arts or institutions will be on the individual soul.[58]

The teachability of virtue

If we characterise aretê as self-knowledge, we may be able to understand why the question of the teachability of virtue, itself such an important theme in the early dialogues, is fraught with so many problems. If aretê were identical with some ordinary technê as some commentators have thought, then there should be no problem in claiming that it can be taught, and taught in much the same way as any other branch of knowledge.[59] But we find, however, a great reticence on the part of Socrates on the question of whether aretê can be, and if it can, how it can be, taught.

Sophists like Protagoras and Gorgias are on much firmer ground here, because of what they claim aretê to consist in. For them aretê is teachable because of what they hold aretê to consist in: some form of success, easily recognised because of its public character. Such excellence as can be the result, so the Sophists claimed, of employing the right techniques of public speaking, or the right understanding of social interaction. On Protagoras' view of what constitutes aretê, Pericles could not but help having his children instructed in virtue because such instruction goes on all the time.

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[58] Grg. 517-518.

[59] Thus Irwin (PMT p. 24) writes, " if we could show that virtue is teachable as a craft, we would have shown that it is a rational discipline with some clear point."

In the Republic such a conception of the nature and mode of education by society is seen merely as essential to the educational process and lies behind the demand for the restructuring of the state and its institutions.[60] But for Protagoras such mores constitute morality in its entirety. The learning of virtue is learning those rules by which society is organised. Learning virtue involves growing up within a society. Protagoras' account of learning virtue is a powerful and persuasive picture of the way in which moral education actually takes place.[61]

The Sophistic notion of aretê for Plato is identical with the appearance of virtue rather than virtue itself.[62] The ability to speak well is only the most elementary aspect of rhetorical skill. For Plato such an ability is clearly the

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[60] In R. VI 492b-c the public is said to be the real Sophist in terms of what it approves or disapproves of

[61] Prt 325b-326e Contrary to Socrates' supposition, Protagoras argues that virtue is taught, and from a very early age throughout a person's life. Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement, p. 135 finds Protagoras' position quite plausible. He does not seem convinced by Socrates' rebuttal and he does not think valid Socrates' claim at the end of the dialogue that Protagoras' position has been reversed, and that for him (Protagoras), virtue has become unteachable. For Kerferd as for Taylor (Plato, Protagoras, Oxford, 1976), Protagoras claims that it is possible to teach virtue in a broad sense of 'teach' "which includes conditioning in social mores as well as instruction in specific techniques such as rhetoric" (Kerferd, p. 136, Taylor, p. 214). But both Taylor and Kerferd seem to me to be mistaken in what they think constitutes Protagoras' inconsistency. The root of the problem lies in their belief that for Plato "learning how to be a good man must consist in the acquisition of.an exact and unitary science" (Taylor, ibid.). This is where the difference between the content of Sophistic and Socratic teachings becomes important, and this content depends crucially on their rather different conceptions of what aretê consists in.

[62] Note Polus' incredulous response to Socrates' conviction that Archelaus must be the most wretched of men if he is unjust, "So now, you see, as the greatest wrong doer in Macedonia, he is the most wretched of all Macedonians, not the happiest; and I daresay some Athenian could be found who would join you in preferring to change places with any other Macedonian of them all, rather than with Archelaus!" (Grg. 471c).In the Republic, when Glaucon and Adeimantus ask Socrates to show that justice is valuable in itself, it is from the appearance, or reputation of justice that they wanted it to be distinguished. Protagoras' repeated association of wealth with success and both with the consequence of his own art shows that whatever else Plato thought about sophistry, he did not deny that it was a profitable pursuit (Prt. 310e, Tht. 161d, Prt 328b, Men 91d,e, R. X 600a).

basis of an entire attitude with its own metaphysics and ethics. In the Gorgias, Plato offers in terms of his own moral psychology, an account of how it operates. In sum, rhetoric appears as a way of life rather than merely a set of rules for effective public debate. Such a choice of life is built, as we have seen, upon a claim to teach how to speak well about any subject whatsoever as well as the recognition of the need to do so.

By contrast, Socrates does not really teach a skill at all, even though he practices one which can be mistaken for a version of Sophistry.[63] The Socratic elenchus is a method for investigating knowledge-claims, or even, it might be argued for tying down convictions, but it is not equivalent to aretê, nor is it what Socrates would have people learn. In the Apology (23c) Socrates complains that by imitating him the young infuriated their elders who blamed him for this teaching. In the protreptic discourses of the Euthydemus we do not find Socrates telling Cleinias that what he ought to practice is dialectic, rather he employs his method of discourse in order to convince the youth that what he ought to pursue is virtue. What of course distinguishes Socratic elenchus from the rhetoric of Gorgias, Protagoras' sophistic and Euthydemus' eristic is the value that Socrates placed on its ability to discover the truth, while the others start with the premise that there is no truth to be discovered at all, and what is important is victory (rhetorical persuasion is primarily concerned with convincing the other, not with instructing him and this is a form of victory in debate). Salutary as

[63] The Euthydemus may be seen as an occasion for Plato to distinguish Socratic discourse from what seemed to be similar but were in fact quite different debating techniques.

the aims and methods of Socratic dialectic might be, in the Republic Plato restricts it to those who have reached a certain age.

The Meno opens with the question of the teachability of virtue:

> "Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue can be taught, or is acquired by practice, not teaching? Or if neither by practice nor by learning, whether it comes to mankind by nature or in some other way?"[64]

Meno's question gives us a broad contrast between ways in which anything might be acquired: a contrast between nature (physis) and nurture (paideia)[65] Meno's threeway distinction between education, nature and divine dispensation may be applied to the question of self-knowledge as we applied it in chapter one to the learning of skills. And it seems pretty obvious that we can rule out the last at once. If virtue came by divine dispensation, it would be unnecessary to instruct anyone in it or even to attempt to do so. Further, no account of it could be given by those to whom it was given, or at least we would have no reason to expect such an account; their claim to moral authority would rest merely on their being chosen by the gods. If virtue in the Socratic sense is so given, then the Socratic programme becomes useful only in so far as it can identify such men. As a possible mode of instruction in virtue, however, it is completely useless.

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[64] Men. 70a.

[65] While the latter is not explicitly mentioned, it seems to be what might encompass 'oute askêton, oute mathêton' which are jointly contrasted with what is given to men by nature (phusei paragignetai tois anthropois). There is a third option, unnamed, added on by the phrase, 'in some other way' (allôi tini tropôi). This option is excercised later on in the dialogue when Socrates suggests that virtue comes to men as a 'divine portion' (theia moira): this is not I think, a genuine source of aretê for Socrates. The last time we heard of such a portion, it was used to account for the wisdom of the rhapsode.

Virtue as a gift of the gods would make it completely unlike knowledge.[66] This is the aporetic conclusion of the Meno. It is not one which, I think, we are expected to adopt, but rather to think around.[67]

But if virtue is not given by the gods, can we even suppose that it is given by nature? If virtue is something that men have by nature, then there will be no need of teachers for it. For everyone will have it and in this it will be different from divine dispensation. But in so far as it will not need teachers it will be like divine dispensation. So if either of these are ways of acquiring virtue, their will be no need of teachers for it. But Socrates as well as the Sophists claimed that virtue was teachable. In so far as they did they would have to contrast teachability as a means of acquiring virtue from its possession by nature. This contrast between teaching something and possessing it by nature seems to be one which is established in Greek literature of the fifth century.[68]

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[66] Nor is this view entirely new in the Socratic dialogues. We come across it in the discussion of Simonides' poem in the Protagoras. Simonides denies that men can be wholly good and reserves that privilege for the gods alone. He claims that to pleiston aristoi, tais theoi phileônti. (345c). For Simonides, virtue is a gift of the gods, in so far as the circumstances of one's existence are determined by them. Simonides' reliance on divine favour is remniscent of both the Ion and the Euthyphro. Socrates rejection of it is in keeping with his account of virtue as something which has to be achieved by men.

[67] Men 99a-100b. R. S. Bluck, ed. Plato's Meno, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961) p. 434 in his note on 100a1 points out that here, as in the Ion, Plato stresses that politicians lack knowledge, and in saying that they are divinely inspired, is being very ironical (cf. Adam, Republic I, p. 13, n. on 331e 33 who refers to Socrates' ironical use of sophos and theios). The Meno's aporetic end points forward, as does the Gorgias to doctrines that we find in the Republic. The Meno concludes that if virtue is to be imparted at all, there must be at least one person capable of making a statesman out of another (100a). Such a person, Socrates adds, would be 'among the living, what Tiresias was said to be among the dead'. The language here especially reminds us of the contrast in the Republic between knowledge of the Forms and opinion concerning the sensible world. (476d, cf; 533c, 534c; Bluck, n. on Men 85c9).

[68] cf. Paul Shorey, 'Phusis, Meletê, Epistemê' TAPA 40 (1909) p. 187. But we still need to specify this contrast. Usually, physis, or nature is contrasted with nomos and not with

Socrates offers one argument in the Meno, for thinking that the good are not so by nature.[69] If they were, he says, then we could recognise which of the young were good, and they could be protected from corruption. That is, if men were good by nature, then there would be no difficulty in identifying those who were good, and this would be beneficial to the city. Socrates' reason for denying that men are good by nature is hardly convincing. He seems to say that men might be good by nature, and then corrupted by a bad education. Or that they might have been born good (=virtuous), but have subsequently forgotten themselves. But if this is so, the question, 'how does one acquire virtue?' remains unanswered. You cannot be said to acquire virtue by nature if you then need to acquire it again by teaching. But in denying that virtue was acquired by nature Socrates seems to align himself to the claim that it is to be acquired by teaching. But how exactly is this to be done?

We have seen how for Socrates the teaching of virtue was not to be confused with the teaching of any particular craft, and yet the analogy with crafts would suggest that it is to be taught. We saw in chapter 1 that there was not much discussion of how genuine crafts were in fact taught. We might summarise the point we made there for the sake of convenience: crafts are taught one to one; by someone who knows to someone who doesn't.

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paideia. Such a contrast is usually a Sophistic one as Aristotle, (Sophistici Elenchi, 173a7-18) points out. Teaching or instruction may, as Protagoras seems to suggest, be limited by nature, in the sense that one cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. But one may still be able to make some sort of purse: this is what Protagoras claimed to be able to do, at a price.

[69] Men 89b.

Such teaching presupposes experts who have the requisite knowledge of the nature of their subject. How this transmission takes place is not made explicit. We may speculate that it doesn't take place in a lecture hall, and that there must be a important practical element involved in it. But it is to be noted that such knowledge is to be gained by a comprehensive inquiry and understanding of the nature of the subject, and hence while it also involves the ability to produce the particular product of the craft in question, this practical consequence is a result of the knowledge that they expert has of the nature of his subject. In terms of the contrast in Meno's question between teaching and practice, we might say that crafts cannot be taught exclusively by practice, athough what is learnt in such knowledge will be intimately connected with successful practice.

Though virtue is teachable, as crafts are, it is not taught as crafts are taught. One reason for this is that the subject of such knowledge, is the self, and this is radically different from the sorts of subjects which the ordinary crafts deal with. Further there is no cumulative body of knowledge, systematised and systematisable which can be handed on from someone who has it to anyone who doesn't. Socrates' arguments in the Protagoras, denying that virtue can be taught, are all based on the assumption that aretê is to be taught like an ordinary technê. Thus, he says, those who were counted as possessing aretê, e.g. Pericles, had their sons educated in those subjects in which there were teachers, but neither had them trained by others nor undertook the task themselves in the matters in which they were

wise [70]. And from this failure, mentioned both in the Meno and the Protagoras, Socrates seems to conclude that virtue cannot be taught. But of course this is not the only conclusion that is possible from these premises. In any case from the fact that it is not taught it does not follow that it is not teachable. We might instead suppose that virtue is teachable but not as yet taught. We may also in the case of the arguments in the Meno, question the premise that Pericles, or any of the other statesmen that Socrates mentions, actually have aretê. While in the Meno he assumes they do have aretê, Socrates explicitly and somewhat vehemently denies this in the Gorgias.[71]

From this we might conclude that neither Pericles nor anyone else actually taught aretê, and if they did not it was because they themselves neither had it, nor were they able to find other teachers who did. It may be that there is no one who has knowledge of virtue, in the sense of a comprehensive understanding of its subject, the self. Socrates himself does not provide us with any adequate account or definition of the virtues: there are admittedly moves made towards such definitions, but no adequate definitions result from the discussions that take place, and the results of these discussion are invariably declared to be inconclusive. Socrates himself claims not to know and therefore to lack the very expertise which would make it possible to

[70] Prt 319e-320a. Men., 93b-94c adds Thucydides, Themistocles and Aristeides as virtuous fathers who failed to teach virtue to their sons. The Laches mentions Thucydides and Aristides again in connection with this failure to teach what they had, or at least to have their sons taught.
[71] Grg.515d-516e.

teach virtue as crafts are taught. And further, he also says that there are no wise men at all that he has discovered.[72]

If this is so then we will have to suppose that virtue cannot be taught. And if virtue cannot be taught then it would follow that no one can become virtuous except by the grace of the gods or as a matter of chance. However, Socrates also holds that virtue is knowledge. If it is knowledge then it must be teachable. And unless we believe this, the whole Socratic programme becomes incomprehensible. Why should Socrates urge his fellow men to pursue virtue, and by this he clearly means some kind knowledge, unless he at least believed that it was possible for them to do so. Not only does Socratic practise become incomprehensible, but it becomes futile. If virtue cannot be taught then Socrates has wasted his entire life engaging in pointless discussion with those who he happened to meet or those who kept him company. If he really believed that virtue could not be taught not only would his life have been futile, but he would have had to be aware that it was. Need we accept this rather unpalatable conclusion?

We will have to, if we hold that virtue must be taught exactly like crafts are taught: from experts to non-experts. If we believe that there is some perfect,

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[72] Stated explicitly at Men 71c; cf. La. 185b-c, Ap. 19e-20b, where further the knowledge is stated to concern human beings: "Who has knowledge of that kind of excellence, that of a man and a citizen?" cf. also Rep.1 337e. Irwin PMT p. 75 says, "When he claims that virtue is a craft, Socrates does not mean that he or any recognised virtuous man practices a craft; for no one has the right knowledge to explain the really virtuous man's methods." It is not so much the virtuous man's method that is at issue here as the content of the knowledge which accounts for virtue.

but as yet undiscovered, body of systematic moral truths which will enable us to know what should and what should not be done, then we would be forced to conclude that virtue cannot be taught like a craft because there are no experts who know such a body of of moral truths. And if there are no such experts then it cannot both be a craft or taught like a craft. Even if he thought that a coherent system of moral truths were possible, Socrates does not have such a system.[73] In consequence no such system can appear except perhaps by divine fiat. And even if it did, this would not constitute teaching of virtue, but only the transmission of divine law. There is one other way that Socrates has out of this impasse: he can deny that virtue is to be taught by experts. He could claim that it was taught as Protagoras thought it was: by everybody. However, Socrates explicitly denies this. The aporia, then, seems to be complete. It is, however, not without a solution.

Its solution clearly lies in denying that virtue is to be taught like a craft or at least exactly as crafts are taught: from experts to non-experts, but not thereby denying that it can be taught at all. Instead we must consider how virtue is taught, by Socrates.[74] He does not argue for it, but exhibits it. And

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[73] Such a view is held by Kraut in Socrates and the State. Kraut believes that what distinguishes human from divine knowledge is that the gods are indeed in possession of a complete moral theory(p. 284). On Kraut's account the gods "love pious people for the knowledge they have of central moral truths." (p. 282 n. 58). I find this view unpersuasive. Socrates does not seek an accumulation of moral propositions and truths. And while it may be difficult to know why the gods love those that they do love, Kraut's claim will unduly restrict their love to certain kinds of philosophers. What, of course, is suggestive of such a view is the analogy with the crafts. But it is precisely here that Socrates distinguishes such knowledge from the knowledge that he is interested in and seeks.

[74] I think that this accounts for his reticence on the question of its teachability. The closest he comes to saying that it is teachable is at Euth. 282c. And even here he does not explicitly claim that it is teachable. He never says how it is to be taught. But it is clear that if it is knowledge, it must be teachable: it is this connection that is repeatedly emphasised.

if it is taught, we need to determine what the craft is that teaches it. Such a technê will, of course, be different from all other crafts in the manner of its instruction as well as in respect of its subject. We have already seen how given the fact that aretê is knowledge about the soul, it is different from all other technai, which collectively address themselves to the needs and desires of the body, while this alone will address itself to the needs of the soul, which it will be able to do only because it has understanding and knowledge of the soul's nature.

If we assume that there are for Socrates three ways in which someone can learn something, by being told, by inquiry and by imitation, then we can set in the context of such a distinction the way that virtue is to be taught by Socrates.[75] For Protagoras virtue is learnt by a combination of being told as well as imitation: his example of how writing masters teach their pupils how to write letters is a telling analogy for instruction in conventional morality: the student traces the letters which have already been written for him, and by repeated effort learns how it is done. Learning virtue for Protagoras, is like learning a language.[76] One would think that the one method by which virtue is not learnt according to Protagoras, must be the way in which it is learnt according to Socrates: by inquiry. This is certainly correct. But this does not mean that imitation is to be ruled out entirely. What we may however infer is that imitation cannot be the only way of learning virtue, for to follow what someone else does is not to learn why a

[75] This is elaborated, somewhat differently, by Samuel Scolnicov, "Three aspects of Plato's Philosophy of Learning and Instruction," Paideia (special issue on Plato), ed. George C. Simmons (Brockport: State University of New York, 1976): 50-66.
[76] Prt 325e.

thing is to be done.[77] But this does not mean that imitation will play no part in learning what virtue is, so long as we can discover the right person to imitate. We should not underestimate the importance of such a moral paradigm for Plato. The criticism of the poets in the Republic has principally to do with the way in which they set up unacceptable models for behaviour in their work. But the principle way in which virtue will be taught or learnt will be through inquiry, and inquiry into the nature of what primarily possesses virtue: the self.

Such inquiry will however be different from the way in which other crafts are taught, because it does not presuppose an expert who instructs some one who does not have knowledge. Socratic inquiry is a co-operative endeavour in which neither the teacher nor the student have knowledge of their subject, but are both, to varying degrees, ignorant of its nature. However, the Socratic craft is such that it enables Socrates to lead the student to self-understanding, and thereby to virtue itself.

In the next chapter I will look at the craft that does this, and the beneficial product of such a craft. But it might be useful to remind ourselves of the results reached in this chapter: we found that the subject of Socratic virtue-knowledge was the soul, and the specific sense in which the soul was to be known: that such knowledge was for Socrates an understanding of the

[77] On Socrates' rejection of Charmides' definition of sophrosune as doing something quietly, that is, as a certain manner of behaving, cf. Myles Burnyeat, "Virtues in Action," in The Philosophy of Socrates, ed. G. Vlastos (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978): 209-234, esp. 216-17.

nature of the soul, not simply as that for the sake of which all actions were to be done, but that which was affected by all moral actions. In supposing that such knowledge has a particular subject, that which it is about, Socratic aretê is like a craft. But in having the subject that it does, Socratic aretê is contrasted fundamentally with other technai which are at best concerned with benefiting the body, many of which do not necessarily even have to recognise the dependence of the body on the soul and therefore may proceed in ignorance of what is in the best interest of the soul. Further, unlike other crafts where there are plenty of experts who can be identified without problem, in the case of virtue, no such expertise has been exhibited and the early dialogues record Socrates' failure to find a moral expert. He himself denies that he has knowledge of virtue and hence cannot be regarded as a moral expert. While this seems to lead to an impasse, we found that it really emphasised the differences between the Socratic notion of virtue and the technai. That while the craft analogy is useful and is used to formally identify the subject and nature of virtue-knowledge, and to suggest that qua knowledge it must be teachable, the disanalogy between crafts and virtue is equally important in specifying both the nature of aretê as well as the manner of its instruction.

Chapter Four

The Craft of Virtue

In the last chapter I argued that we should take Socrates' disavowal of knowledge seriously. But this disavowal denies the existence of moral experts. If there are no virtuous men in the Socratic sense and if Socrates himself claims not to be a teacher of virtue, i.e. to be in possession of the excellence which he could thereby teach others, then we shall have to conclude that virtue cannot be taught. But apart from learning from experts there are two other ways in which something can be learnt: by self-instruction and by co-operative inquiry. Such learning involves, however, first realising that one does not have the knowledge in question.[1] Such an admission of ignorance, particularly about matters concerning the virtues is uncommon.[2] Socrates is unique because he admits ignorance of the very thing which everyone else claims to know. As Protagoras remarks, people would consider a man mad who claimed not to know what was just and unjust: and indeed for many Socrates must be regarded as mad.[3] Socratic

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[1] Alc.1 109e. "Alc: Do you not think I might inquire? Soc: I do. If you thought you did not know."

[2] Alc.1 112a "..do you now find that the many agree with themselves or each other about just and unjust men or things?" Euthphr. 7e, "Are not these the questions about which you and I and other people become enemies...because we differ about them and cannot reach any satisfactory agreement." While these passages seem only to show that virtue is a disputable topic, they also imply that opinions concerning the virtues are strongly held, so strongly that they lead easily to enmity among both gods and men. This is because if one really investigates the matter, one will "find a great many people who think they know something but who know little or nothing." (Ap. 23c). In the Meno (92e) Anytus confidently claims that any Athenian gentleman (kalos kagathos) could instruct Meno in aretê. (cited by Nehemas, "Socratic Intellectualism," p. 296, n. 39. who rightly notes, "Socrates is the only one, it seems, who lacks the knowledge in question."

[3] Prt. 323b.

ignorance, as the recognition that one does not have virtue is thus the basis for beginning an investigation into virtue.

Nor does such an admission of ignorance mean that one cannot know anything at all prior to the investigation. Socratic ignorance is restricted to a special sort of knowledge: the very sort which is under investigation in the dialogues and which is identified with self-knowledge. Lack of self-knowledge does not mean that Socrates knows nothing. Indeed his ability to compare virtue, qua knowledge, with other crafts, shows that he can claim to know about crafts. Not that he knows this or that craft, but that such things are known.

Socratic ignorance is his claim not to know the nature of virtue and this is the claim not to know himself, one which he makes explicitly in the Phaedrus.[4] It is this knowledge which everyone else lacks. Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is as much a reminder of the prevalence of the conceit of knowledge as it is an admission of his own ignorance, and the initial response of his interlocuters to his questions, either to vigorously affirm that they indeed know what they claim to, or to claim that they have no need of any special knowledge at all, is proof of this. Socrates himself denies that he has that knowledge which would make him a teacher, and hence will not accept responsibility for teaching virtue.

[4] Phdr. 230a "I investigate.. myself, to know whether I am a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature, to whom a divine and quiet lot is given by nature."

In the Laches, for instance, his continual association with the young is noted at the begining of the dialogue (180c-e). Laches remarks that he thinks it odd that they should discuss the question of how to educate the young and not invite Socrates to participate in the discussion. But when at the end of the dialogue both Laches and Nicias agree that the education of Lysimachus and Melesias' sons should be given to Socrates, he declines, suggesting instead that "we ought all alike to seek out the best teacher we can find, first for ourselves...and then for our boys." For this purpose he agrees to meet again at Lysimachus' house the next day, so that they may consult on this very matter. This I take it is the essence of Socratic participation in the problem of becoming virtuous. Socrates can conduct such an inquiry without claiming to have the knowledge of an expert and therefore to be virtuous, and thus not be a teacher in the sense of having a given expertise, but he can still allow for the possibility that men may be lead to virtue. Socrates as the abettor of self-discovery undertakes thereby a role which is compatible with what he claims for himself in the Meno, and which Plato gives him in the Theaetetus.[5]

If we grant Socrates even the role of a catalyst in the acquisition of virtue, we will admit that virtue, as is to be hoped, may indeed be implanted in the young. That this can be done without anyone actually claiming expertise in it makes the Socratic technê quite different from any other, where only the expert is seen to actually instruct.

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[5] That Socratic midwifery is a Platonic invention, and belongs to the Theaetetus has been shown by Myles Burnyeat, "Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration," BICS 24 (1977): 7-16.

We have already specified the subject of such an undertaking: the soul, and it remains to specify the technê that will do this. We saw in Chapter two how different technai that claimed they imparted virtue were found not to do so by Socrates. Indeed they were also found not to be technai at all This chapter will consider the depiction and defence of the craft that does impart virtue: philosophy.

As the craft of virtue, philosophy reveals itself as essentially concerned with self-knowledge. Such a depiction is in keeping with what Socrates says of his own undertaking in the Apology. There Socrates identified the soul as the real subject of philosophy, and the chief endeavour of what he meant by philosophising was an attempt to create its best condition. He saw this as his divine mission. Socrates goes on to add that even if he were released with a proviso that he could no longer, on pain of death, spend his time "in this investigation or in philosophy," he would refuse saying, "I shall never give up philosophy or stop exhorting you." And what he does when he does this, he spells out in no uncertain detail, "For I go about doing nothing else than urging you, young and old, not to care for your persons or your property more than for the perfection of your souls."[6]

[6] Ap. 28e-30a. Such a view of Socratic practice is contested forcefully by Martha Nussbaum, "Aristophanes and Socrates on learning practical wisdom," esp. pp. 79-88. While Nussbaum acknowledges Socrates' "lifelong devotion to virtue" she thinks that his actual teaching was a negative rejection of conventional morality, and was limited at best to good intentions for others, but without positive content to replace his critique of conventional wisdom and virtue. Such a view involves taking seriously Aristophanes' portrait of Socrates, as well as a somewhat selective reading of the Socratic dialogues. The positive content of Socratic thought is to be found in the basis for his critque of conventional and Sophistic views on the nature of aretê.

If philosophy has the self as its subject and if this is what it is knowledge of, then, like any craft, it will also be concerned with bringing about the best condition of the soul. Philosophy as the craft which teaches self-knowledge, gives us at the same time a clue as to how aretê is to be taught, for philosophy in the early dialogues is shown as being essentially co-operative learning. While philosophy is conceived on analogy with the other technai in so far as it has a determinate subject as well as a product, it differs from them in that its subject is not external to the craftsman, but is concerned with the person himself, and so of all the crafts is the only one which is concerned with the benefit of its practioners.[7] Virtue as self-knowledge is not something distinct from the best condition of the self but is itself constitutive of such a condition, just as health is not different from the proper ordering of physical elements.[8] Again, in so far as it is knowledge, it is teachable, but it is not taught like other crafts are taught: transmitted from someone who knows to someone who doesn't, but is the result of co-operative inquiry.

Philosophy is thereby not merely a theoretical activity concerned with knowing the nature of the self, and thereby knowing its best condition. If all knowledge is like a technê, then philosophy too must have a practical component. We find in fact that the importance of practice in the case of

[7] In the Charmides, (163b, 164b), Socrates says that a doctor benefits both himself as well as his patient. But this is denied at R 342b, where benefit to oneself is ruled out as being extraneous to an technê.

[8] cf. Donald Zeyl,. "Socratic Virtue and Happiness," Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 64 (1982 heft 3): 225-238, esp.p. 234.

virtue is emphasised throughout the early dialogues.[9] Like the knowledge provided by any other craft, self-knowledge becomes the condition of the successful practice of virtue.

Philosophy in the early dialogues.

Philosophy as the craft of virtue, as that which is concerned with the nature and the best condition of the self, appears in the early dialogues in two related ways. I shall first briefly mention each of these and then go on to consider them in detail.

Firstly philosophy is characterised as the art that tends to the soul. Such a characterisation identifies philosophy as the art of virtue, locates its subject and provides for it a distinct product, the ordered soul. Philosophy can thus be conceived analogously with the other crafts, and yet be considered distinct from them because of the crucial difference in its subject and the belief that this subject is of greater importance than that of any other craft. Such a view of philosophy is to be found detailed in the Gorgias, but as we have seen, it is also present in other early dialogues. The Gorgias, as we

[9] Socrates more often than not uses the verb askeô ('to form by art', LSJ s.v.) to refer to the practice of virtue. Thus at Euth. 283a Socrates wants to see how the young will be exhorted to practice wisdom and virtue (sophian te kai aretên askein). At the very end of the dialogue the verb is used to refer to the practice of philosophy (307c). In the Gorgias, 507d, Socrates contrasts the practice of temperance with that of Calliclean self-advantage (508a), at 526d, Socrates vows "by practising sincerety" to go before his judges in the after life. (reading after Dodds, tên alêtheian askôn rather than alêtheian skopôn; Dodds rightly remarks (Gorgias, p. 384), "Socrates is vowing himself not to research but to a way of living and dying). At 527d, Socrates again uses askeô to refer to the practice of virtue ("for you will come to no harm if you be really a good and upright man, practising virtue."). The Gorgias in fact ends with the admonition that the best sort of life is "to live and to die in the practice alike of justice and all other virtue" (527e).

shall see, develops the parallel between the craft of virtue and other crafts more systematically, and in greater detail, than we find elsewhere.

In general, what is said about philosophy in the early dialogues is confirmed as well by what Socrates is shown, at least on occasion, to be doing. This is the second way in which philosophy is depicted in the early dialogues: in the way that it is practised by Socrates. Both opponents and admirers of Socrates are aware of the problems of a conversation with him. Meno's description of him as a torpedo fish, and his own description of himself as a gad-fly are in keeping with his distinction between pleasing a person and acting for his good.[10] Socratic conversation is radically different from Sophistic flattery because of the relationship in which it stands to its subject.

We will look at one such conversation in the Euthydemus where what Socrates does conforms to what is said of the philosophical art. Elsewhere this is held in contrast to the Sophistic arts, both in terms of their aims, as well as the method they employ (or teach) to achieve them. The parallel is surely worth noting, for Socratic practice is continually identified by means

[10] Men. 80a, where Meno says, "I consider that both in your appearance and in other respects you are extremely like the flat salt torpedo sea-fish; for it benumbs anyone who approaches and touches it...I feel my soul and my tongue quite benumbed and am at a loss what answer to give you." Ap. 30e , where Socrates, describing himself as a gad-fly says, "I think the god fastened me upon the city in some such capacity, and I go about arousing, and urging, and reproaching each one of you." In the Laches (187e-188a) Nicias says that "whoever comes close into contact with Socrates and has any talk with him face to face, is bound to be drawn round and round by him in the course of the argument...and cannot stop until he is led into giving an account of himself."

of its difference from Sophistry. If Socrates is concerned with the self, and what is best for it, Sophistry, so he argues, arises from a mistaken conception of the self and hence is completely wrong about what is in a person's real interest.

In the Protagoras such ignorance is seen to extend to a knowledge of where one's good lies, even if one's good and one's pleasure are taken to be identical. Plato could have foisted hedonism on Protagoras, for Protagoras' general thesis is not only compatible with but seems to require some form of hedonism.[11] Socrates' assumption of hedonism here thus seems to be ad hominem athough it is attributed to the many. In concluding the discussion of acrasia Socrates says, "to be overcome by pleasure' means just this--ignorance in the highest degree." The pursuit, or surrender to pleasure is itself a result of ignorance, and is regarded by him as ridiculous (gelaios) as are those who are so affected. And these are the many, who in fact lack the special knowledge which would enable them to judge even between pleasures Protagoras is seen to be in the same position as the many--holding for, instance, that one who is unholy, unjust, and ignorant can also be courageous.

The Sophist's ability to deceive both himself and others is brought out in the preamble when Socrates is trying to determine whether Hippocrates knows

[11] That is, Protagoras' relativist thesis which gives reality only to appearances, cannot recognise a standard of judgement in moral choice other than the sensation which would result from the pursuit of one or the other action.

the content and effect of Protagoras' teaching. Socrates warns Hippocrates that he should be more cautious about investing his time and money with the Sophist if he does not know what the effect of such teaching will be.[12] In the Gorgias too the rhetorician's mistaken notion of narrow self-interest is seen to arises directly from his mistaken notion of the self. By looking outwards instead of inwards these people are in the condition of the theives described in the first book of the Republic. In their pursuit of advantage over others they cannot even trust themselves to concerted action but may be led astray by their own unbridled desires. If virtue is health of the soul then Sophistry must, analogously, be responsible for disease of the soul. And if philosophy is the art of administering justice to the soul (that is making a person psychically ordered) then it will belong to the province of this art to recognise the nature of psychic ill-health. It is this diagnosis that Plato offers us in his account of Sophistry.

In the Republic we find that the specific cure for diseases of the soul addresses the particular part by procedures that are derived from its own condition: reason by means of dialectics, and persuasion by means of education.[13] Techniques of persuasion which, lacking knowledge of the composite nature of the soul, aiming at its pleasure rather than its good, will thereby serve to upset the equilibrium between reason and passion that

[12] Prt. 357eff. Earlier in the dialogue Socrates had indicated that the Sophist is in the same position as the merchant is about the effect of the goods that he sells, "there may well be some of these too... who are ignorant which of their wares is good or bad for the soul; and in just the same case are the people who buy from them, unless one happens to have a doctor's knowledge here also, but of the soul" (Prt 313d-e).

[13] cf. Luis Garcia Ballester,' Soul and Body, Disease of the Soul and Disease of the Body in Galen's Medical Thought', in Le Opere psichologiche di Galeno, ed P. Manuli and M. Vegetti. (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1988), p.120

constitutes psychic health. From this it would seem that the rejection of Sophistry is a part of Plato's general view of philosophy as the art of virtue. Sophistry thus becomes the cause of psychic disorder rather than its cure.[14] By contrast, the knowledge which has the self as its real subject will be concerned with its improvement and will also be in a position to effect this, since it will proceed from knowledge of it. This will make it the most desirable of pursuits, one that anyone who is concerned with his own welfare will want.

One way of approaching this claim is to consider its opposite: the charge of the uselessness which is levelled against philosophy. The very fact that Plato considers this charge important shows that he is measuring the success or failure of the practice of philosophy on analogy with the technai in general, and is concerned himself to show that it is in fact the most useful of pursuits.

The Uselessness of Philosophy.

The charge that philosophy is useless is one that is dealt with at length in the Republic.[15] But in crucial ways, both the charge as well its subsequent

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[14] Contrary, Plato thinks, to Gorgias' boast about the efficacy of his logos (DK B82 14). Instead, he compares it with the charming of snakes and the like (Euth. 290a).

[15] R. 473ff introduces the notion of philosophers as a special breed of persons, whose nature is detailed at 485a-486d. The image of the helmsman is introduced to show why philosophers are not honoured. Once he has explained the cause of the uselessness of the better sort, Plato goes on to show why the degenerancy of the majority is inevitable (495ff). The question of the uselessness of philosophy is also raised in the Amatores (135bf.) and while the dialogue is generally regarded as spurious, it was clearly composed by someone familiar with the doctrines of the early dialogues. cf. Dodds, Plato's Gorgias p.228 on Amat.137 d. The employment of the craft analogy in the Amatores is perfectly in keeping

defence are prefigured in Callicles' attack on philosophy and Socrates' defence of it in the Gorgias. Initially this attack on philosophy as the craft of virtue begins with an attack on virtue itself. Callicles questions the conventional prohibition of injustice by claiming that injustice is itself beneficial for men. Polus had already given the example of Archelaus the tyrant of Macedonia as someone who had clearly benefited from unjust behaviour.[16]

In attempting to prove that doing wrong is better than suffering it, Polus offered an initial defence of injustice. This defence failed because, according to Callicles, Polus gave in to conventional beliefs about injustice and admitted that doing wrong was shameful, and Socrates used this admission in refuting him. In dismissing convention (nomos), Callicles, like other Sophists, contrasts it with nature (physis): by claiming that the virtues are only conventional restraints upon men, rather than fundamental to human nature, Callicles questions the very basis for moral behaviour. For him wisdom consists in overcoming these restraints and using moral codes only where they suit the needs of the individual. Callicles attacks morality by pointing out that it is only conventionally true. The recognition that moral codes are conventional is to regard them as only contingently binding. Callicles says, "nature herself proclaims the fact that

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with what we see in other genuine dialogues, and on the question of the relation between philosophical knowledge and knowledge of the other arts and crafts, the Amatores takes, albeit somewhat heavy handedly, an entirely Socratic line.

[16] Grg. 470dff.

it is right for the better to have advantage over the worse, and the abler over the feebler."[17]

Socrates on the other hand holds that justice is by nature in the interest of a person. As both rhetoric and philosophy aim to serve the good of individuals they stand opposed on the question of what is in a person's interest. For Socrates this conflict depends on radically different views about the nature of the self. The rhetor's ignorance about and indifference to understanding the self is the cause of his mistaken notion of where one's interest lies. As such even the many, whose views make up the sum of the conventional, will support Callicles, for while they praise the virtues, they also regard them as not always in an agent's own interest.[18] What Callicles attacks philosophy for is its defence of virtue and a rejection of those ends which he thinks are central to one's pursuit of one's own good.[19] The pursuit of philosophy, identified with the pursuit of virtue, is thus an impediment to real success rather than an aid to it.

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[17] Grg. 483d. Callicles position is similar to the claims that Thrasymachus makes in the Republic (Grg. 482e-484c with R. 338ff).Both operate with a distinction between nomos and physis, both claim that the 'morality' enjoined by nature is over-riding; both hold that conventional morality is really only a restraint by which the weaker holds the stronger down: neither, of course, recommends that conventional morality be completely overthrown: indeed, Thrasymachus offers the more sinister view that conventional morality really serves the higher morality of 'nature'. For both, then, morality is an obstacle to the self-development and freedom of those who are superior. While neither Thrasymachus nor Callicles are Sophists, they are clearly the product of sophistic education, and their views are to be taken as the finished product of such an outlook. On the Nomos-Physis distinction cf. Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement, p.117-123. Kerferd rightly points out that while Thrasymachus does not actually use the terminology of the nomos-physis antithesis, he is to be placed among those who employ it.

[18] Socrates in fact says to Polus that he will find "almost everybody, Athenians and foreigners, in agreement with you on the points you state." (Grg. 472a)

[19] He makes this connection explicit at 484c where he says, after "that is the truth of the matter; and you will grasp it if you will now put philosophy aside and pass to greater things."

> "And yet what wisdom is there, Socrates, in "an art that found a man of goodly parts and made him worse," unable either to succor himself, or to deliver himself or any one else from the greatest dangers, but like to be stripped by his enemies of all his substance, and to live in his city as an absolute outcast?"[20]

Socrates claims on the other hand that what is just is also in the agent's advantage: he does not defend conventional beliefs because they are conventional but because he regards some of them as true. In rejecting this view what Callicles is rejecting is the claim that the pursuit of virtue is in the agent's interest, and hence that philosophy, as the craft of virtue, is really useful. Socrates notes that Callicles really believes this, for he has also expressed such an opinion in private amongst his closest friends: that the pursuit of philosophy could lead one to ruin.[21]

Gorgias had, prompted by Socrates, described rhetoric as that which confers the greatest good to men.[22] He did this by comparing its product with the products of three arts-- medicine, gymnastics and money making.[23] Rhetoric is useful, Gorgias suggested, because it can confer power over all the other arts and appropriate their products at will. By

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[20] Grg. 486b-c.

[21] Grg. 487d.

[22] Grg. 452e, "A thing, Socrates, which in truth is the greatest good (ta megiston agathon), and a cause not merely of freedom to mankind at large, but also of dominion to single persons in their several cities."

[23] Socrates quotes a drinking song whose "verses probably reflect aristocratic Greek opinion pretty accurately (cf. Euth 279ab, Meno 87e, Hp. Ma. 291d)" (Dodds, Gorgias p.200). Dodds adds that Plato refers to this skolia again in the Laws (661 a) and reaffirms "against it his own belief that all natural good is relative to spiritual good (661 b, 631 bc)" (ibid p.201). We do not, however, have to look as far ahead as the Laws to learn what Plato thinks the best end is, the Gorgias itself discusses that in detail.

contrast, Socrates argues that the usefulness of philosophy lies in its ability to rightly use the products of the other arts, to enable an agent to use them for his own good. In order to do this, philosophy must fulfil its own function as a first order craft, and produce a beneficial product: the good of the agent. Both Socrates and his opponents hold that one ought to pursue one's own good, but they differ about what constitutes it.[24]

Callicles' attack on the philosophic life is based both his rejection of its emphasis on virtue as well as its rejection of the sphere in which, according to him, an individual must seek his own advantage: in the political life of the city. He rejects thus both its content and the form of philosophy. For Callicles, those who practice philosophy lack experience in the very things they need to be experienced in, the laws of the city, the terms of public and private contracts and human pleasures and desires.[25] It is because they lack such experience that philosophers cut a ridiculous figure when they do appear in public. As a result, those who pursue philosophy late into life become "unmanly through shunning the centres and marts of the city" instead they "cower down and spend the rest of [their] days whispering in a corner with three or four lads, and never utter anything free or high spirited." [26] Callicles sees philosophy and philosophers as

[24] In saying this it should be clear that I differ from Irwin's characterisation of the relative position of Socrates and his opponents. For Irwin, happiness is the undisputed end at which all men aim. He sees virtue as a means to happiness and hence only instrumentally desirable. This, however, is not Socrates' view: virtue is like health: it is not a means to something else, but rather the ordered soul is the best sort of way to be. Callicles can agree with Socrates about the general principle, one ought to pursue one's own good, while differing as to what precisely constitutes one's own good.

[25] Grg. 484d.

[26] Grg. 485d-e.

avoiding the real world. He aptly quotes from Euripedes' Antiope (where a contrast is drawn between the pratical and theoretical life and their relative advantages are compared) and adds that he himself feels towards Socrates as Zethus did towards Amphion.[27]

Socrates does not deny that philosophy is concerned primarily with the individual. For him as a genuine art it alone is concerned with the good of its subject, which in the case of philosophy will be the individual himself. But in order to determine how the individual can be made better, one must first understand what the nature of the individual is. This is the first requisite, as we have seen, of any craft: a knowledge of the nature of its subject. The analogy that he sets up in the Gorgias between body and soul and the distinct crafts that serve them, enables Socrates to specify the discipline that cares for the soul and thereby the technê of virtue.[28] Virtue is here explicitly said to be the best condition of the soul, and the one who is good at improving souls is called a technikos (craftsman). Such a craftsman, like all craftsmen, brings order and regularity into his subject. And the craft which will enable him to do this is philosophy.[29]

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[27] The question of whether the practical or theoretical life was the one to be preferred is one which recurs often in Greek literary and philosophical texts. On the point of this contrast cf. B. Snell, Scenes from Greek Drama (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), ch. VI; also Dodds, Gorgias p. 275 n. on 485d7. Dodds compares Tht. 173 c-d where the philosopher is said not to know his way to the agora. But he agrees with Cornford that this "is a long way from the humanity of Socrates". While in the debate between the active and the contemplative life, Plato opts for contemplative knowledge (of the Forms); he does so because such knowledge is, he thinks, the condition of practical ability.

[28] Grg. 463e-466a; but cf. also Grg. 512a, R. 445a, Cri. 46-8 (cited by Burnet, Euthyphro, Apology, Crito p. 139; Santas, Socrates p. 286ff). In the Crito, the body-soul analogy is set up in terms of the crafts associated with each. It is suggested there that one who has knowledge of the soul will alone be competent to give advice on how one is to live well.

[29] Grg. 504d. The term philosophy is not explicitly used of the craft of justice, but it is clear from other occurences of it in Socrates' reference to his own practice as well as Callicles'

While the term philosophy is not in itself used here, but there can be no doubt that it is the philosopher that he means when he says that it is the benefit of the soul that the "the man of art and virtue, will have in view when he applies to our souls the words he speaks." Later Socrates refers himself to his own practice as identical with this true rhetoric, the like of which has not yet been seen, one which is concerned with making the souls of citizens as good as possible.[30] The aim of this art is the production of virtue in the soul and the craftsman who does it is one who is himself virtuous. But this technê has two components. In the discussion with Polus earlier in which Socrates charaterised the nature and function of rhetoric, he gave the general name of politics (politikê) to a composite art concerned with the soul, which he contrasted with an unnamed composite art that looked after the body. Each of these two generic arts, of soul and body, he divided into two component arts, gymnastics and medicine in the case of the body, legislation and justice in the case of the soul. The analogy between them assumes that the relationship between the body and the arts of gymnastics and medicine is uncontroversial, and that this relationship can

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attack of it (482a, 484c etc) that it is the practice of philosophy, as Socrates understands it, that constitutes the craft of justice. On this cf. Dodds, Gorgais, p. 330 n. on 504d "Socrates appears to contradict his earlier denial that rhetoric is a technê. But he is now contrasting the actual with the ideal, politics as it is with what politics might become if politicians were philosophers. This will content to the notion of philosophy for Plato, that it inovolves not simply intellectual excellence but moral excellence as well. This of course raises the question of the relation of dialectic with philosophy On which see Robinson Plato's Earlier Dialectic, p.71 "Dialectic was not a propaedeutic to philosophy. It was not a tool that you might or might not choose to use in philosophising. It was philosophy itself, the very search for essences." While Robinson is sensitive to the range of meaning of the term 'dialectic' in Plato, it does not seem to me that he is right in thinking it to be all of philosophy. As we shall see in the Socratic protreptic discourses of the Euthydemus, dialectic is used as a propaedeutic to philosophy, which is conceived as knowledge of a specific sort.

[30] Grg 521e. "I think I am one of the few, not to say the only one, in Athens who attempts the true art of statesmanship, and the only man of the present time who manages affairs of state.. as the speeches that I make from time to time are not aimed at gratification, but at what is best instead of what is most pleasant."

throw light on what Socrates has in mind when he speaks of legislation and justice. Here we have a clear use of the craft analogy, arguing from the nature and structure of crafts to that of virtue. Medicine is the craft that is closest to the craft of virtue, and therefore its employment here is especially apt. Both medicine and philosophy have their respective subjects, knowledge of which is essential to produce their respective effects. Indeed the subjects of these two crafts are intimately related, as are their effects.

While gymnastics and medicine are both concerned with the body, they are not identical and do not look after the body in the same way (Socrates admits this but does not tell us how they differ). We might suggest that gymnastics is concerned with the external functioning of the body,[31] while medicine will be concerned with its internal order, that it be free of disease. Similarly, the art of the legislator will be concerned with the external aspect of the soul, of its actions in the public domain, with its orderly functioning in society and will represent the sphere of law to which a person as a citizen is bound. While the 'judge's art' will be concerned with the internal state of the soul, with the individual himself.[32] The judge's role here is the same as that of the philosopher's, the craftsman of the soul who knows what it is for individuals to be benefited.[33]

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[31] Grg. 452b tells us that the aim of the trainer "is making men's bodies beautiful and strong."

[32] This reading is supported by the role that Socrates accords to just punishment as a purification of the individual's soul and as something which makes the person, rather than society better off (480a-b). And it is this orderly state of the soul which the true orator, i.e. the philosopher has in mind in all that he does.

[33] It should not of course be supposed that the distinctions between legislation and justice are or even can be made as sharply as I suggest. Socrates himself admits that there will be intercommunication between them (464c), just as the natural distinction between Sophistry and rhetoric may be jumbled up in practice (465c).

These four arts are put in a geometrical order, as are the psuedo-arts that imitate them. Gymnastics is to medicine as lesgislation is to justice. And as the body is dependent upon the soul, the arts that serve the soul are primary and those that serve the body are dependent upon them. Thus, the art of gymnastics would be of no avail if the art of medicine did not do its job. And if the soul itself was diseased the art of medicine would not be able to do its job, with the result that the body would tend towards an infirm or diseased state.[34] Similarly, and this is a central Platonic insight, one which the whole argument of the Gorgias is concerned to articulate, the art of legislation, that part of the political art which relates to society or the state, would be of little use if the art of justice, which was concerned with the individual himself, did not do its job, i.e. made individuals just.[35] A state whose citizens were disordered, could not effectively regulate their conduct except perhaps by force.[36] The art of legislation and justice both work on the soul, and both bring about temperance and justice, but in different ways.[37]

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[34] Charmides' headache is a case in point.

[35] In the final account of the after-life which we might add, Socrates says that he regards as true (523a), when Rhadamanthus hands out rewards and punishments, the sort of person who gets sent to the isles of the blest is more often than not "a philosopher who has minded his own business and not been a busybody in his lifetime." (526c).

[36] R 415e1-2 and 465a 8-9 are instances of internal repression or compulsion in the just state. cf. G Vlastos, "The Theory of Social Justice in the Polis in Plato's Republic," in Interpretations of Plato, . Ed. Helen F. North, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1977), p. 20 n. 77.

[37] Not, as Santas (Socrates, p.288) thinks, the art of legislation brings about temperance and the art of justice, justice in the soul. This would not, in any case give us the needed parallel of gymnastics with medicine Nor would it explain why it was necessary for Socrates to introduce these two arts as divisions of the art of politics. Similarly Dodds, Plato's Gorgias, p. 227 thinks it an "obvious weakness" that the arts of mind-tendence are concerned with society as a whole while those of body-tendence are concerned with the individual. The pseudo arts of self-adornment, cookery, rhetoric and sophistry exhibit a parallel and inverted structure: those fond or adorning the body would also tend to pamper it in other ways, e.g. by overfeeding. And the art of the sophist would not be effective if men were not already disordered by desire. Rhetoric as the art which panders to desire is that part of sophistry which has to do with the individual. Each of these arts aims at immediate pleasure rather than overall good.

In what follows, which Socrates calls the chief part of his argument, signaling thereby its importance, he outlines the notion of virtue as an order within the soul. One whose soul is thus ordered is called "the perfection of a good man."[38] While Socrates goes on to describe the importance of such knowledge in man's quest for happiness, we may recall that he had earlier identified the art of justice as that which aimed at what was best for the soul (463-66). Justice as the counterpart of medicine has the service or care (therapeia) of the soul as its main concern.[39]

This is Socrates' defence of philosophy. For if it leads to virtue, and if virtue is the best condition of the soul, then philosophy alone will produce psychic health. By contrast, injustice is likened to a disease. The rhetorician's recommendation of injustice can only proceed from ignorance of its nature and ignorance of himself [40] In consequence of its connection with the best

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[38] Grg. 507c. dikaion onta kai andreion kai hosion agathon andra einai teleôs. ("being just and brave and pious is the perfection of a good man") Compared Simonides' claim that we do not and should not look for perfection in the world because we will not find it.(Prt.341e). Socrates to some extent agrees with Simonides: we do not find such perfection in the world, but where he differs is the importance he gives to having such ideals.

[39] That the analogy between medicine and philosophy is all that ancient philosophy owes to ancient medicine has been argued, for instance, by Ludwig Edelstein, "The Relation of Ancient Philosophy to Medicine," Bulletin of the History of Medicine, vol.26 (1952): 299-316. It is substantially shared by Jaeger, Paideia vol. 3. p. 4-6, although Jaeger's general position seems more complex. J. Longrigg, "Philosophy and Medicine: some early interactions," HSCP (1963): 147-75, on the other hand, thinks that medicine importantly and fruitfully influenced philosophy. The analogy between bodily states and states of the soul are a constant feature of Socratic ethics. cf., e.g. Santas, Socrates, p.286ff for an exposition of this.

[40] Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness, pp. 92-93 suggests that diseases of the soul for Plato, centre around the pull of the passions. It is certainly true that in order to explain the efficacy of the rhetorical as well as other pseudo-arts, Plato suggests that there is a part of us which is affected by persuasion, a part powerful enough to motivate unreflective choice. Nussbaum suggests that the sphere of the passions includes erotic love, and that in the Symposium Socrates is cured of his need for it as well as his need for sleep, both features of being human which the correct technê of moral reasoning will cure. Nussbaum does not actually describe this technê as philosophy, but it is clear from her account that this is in

kind of life, Socrates' defence of philosophy has shown it to be the most useful of all the arts. Indeed, compared to it all the other crafts are of no real use. Repeatedly the technai are called banuasic. This was for Plato, as it was for the Greeks in general, a term of contempt.[41] The rejection of the final utility of the arts, common to both Socrates and the Sophists, is based on the criterion of utility that the technai themselves satisfy. Protagoras thinks little of those teachers who teach their students one or the other technai, and Gorgais offers rhetoric as the alternative to all other forms of knowledge. Dionysodorus and Euthydemus too have taken up the practice of aretê and abandoned the art of 'fighting in armour.'[42] Each of these teachers offers something that they hold is more useful to the person who learns it than any other branch of knowledge.

Philosophy, in so far as it is knowledge, makes the same claim: but insofar as it is like any other special skill, it must be able to specify its subject as

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fact what she sees as the Socratic philosophic ideal: a certain understanding of the nature of the self, and the consequent re-valuation of objects of desire. If every technê is addressed to a defect in the material which it works upon, then the technê of philosophy will aim to correct ignorance.

41 Thus Diotima dismisses all pursuits which do not have to do with the divine as banausos (Symp. 203a). Alc.1 131b uses this term for all the regular crafts because they do not involve sophrosune (i.e. virtue). Adam, Plato's Republic Vol 2, p.29, note on 495 e 30, says that the term was in "practice...applied...to every kind of mechanical or illiberal labour or pursuit." But this use of the term is limited by the effect that some arts were perceived to have either on the body or the soul as in Aristotle's definition (Politics 1337b 8ff). See also Burnet, Plato's Apology, Euthyphro and Crito, p. 96, Dodds, Gorgias, p.349. But at Republic 522d Plato again refers to all the arts, including music and gymnastics as banausoi technai. And this is a general dismissal of all practices except philosophy as being ultimately of little or no worth. The sentiment, if not the term, is found, for instance, in Chrm. 173d, "but that by acting according to knowledge [i.e. of the crafts] we should do well and happy--this is a point which as yet we are unable to make out." Euth. 281 and Men. 88a see the products of the principal arts as themselves being only conditionally good, from which we may infer that the arts which bring about these products, are inferior to that art whose product is unconditionally good.

42 Prt. 318e, Grg. 452e, Euth. 273d.

well as aim to explicate its nature. We have seen that Socrates characterises philosophy as doing just that. Its product too, he adds, is better than that produced by any other form of knowledge and hence for one who would truly seek his own best interest, there is no form of knowledge worth pursuing other than philosophy. This is because, as Plato maintains with few modifications throughout his work, only philosophers can be eudaimon (happy). In the Gorgias Socrates concludes "it is by the possession of justice and temperance that the happy are happy and by that of vice that the wretched are wretched."[43]

[43] Grg. 508b. "Happiness here is strictly self-referential: it stands for the agent's happiness and that of no one else." G. Vlastos, Platonic Studies, p. 20 n. 56. On the intrinsic connection between virtue and happiness, cf. also Vlastos, "Happiness and Virtue in Socrates' Moral Theory," and Donald Zeyl, "Socratic Virtue and Happiness."

Socrates at Work

What is said about philosophy in the Gorgias is paralled by what Socrates is shown as doing himself. Socratic investigation into the meaning of moral concepts is itself an inquiry into the meaning of virtue. And if virtue is to be taught at all, it can only be by the respondent's coming to knowledge himself. The repeated emphasis on 'saying what you believe,' leads, as Laches points out, to an examination of the very life of his respondent, "how he spends his days, what kind of life he has hitherto lived."[44] While this is important for the investigation into virtue, to determine whether a person who claims to, actually knows, there are other, gentler, ways in which Socrates is depicted in his role as a teacher of virtue.

I will consider one example of Socratic philosophic discourse which illustrates the sorts of things that we found Socrates said in the Gorgias about philosophy. In the two protreptic discourses of the Euthydemus we find the Socratic art contrasted once again with a version of Sophistry: eristic.[45] The Euthydemus is a good place to look at the Socratic art because,

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[44] La. 188a, cf. Prt. 333c, "It is the argument itself I wish to probe, though it may turn out that both I who question and you who answer are equally under scrutiny."

[45] On the nature of eristic see Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement, chapter 6. He, along with Robin Waterfield, ("Introduction to Euthydemus," in Plato: Early Socratic Dialogues, ed. by T.J. Saunders, pp. 297-311), prefers to characterise it as anti-logic. Waterfield's account of the difference between eristic and dialectic is particularly good. I do not however agree with him when he says (p. 303) that "both methods lay claim to the same purpose--virtue--but we are bound to think that only one is successful" if he means by this that both have the same aim. The point is, rather, that while both use the same term, aretê, as the aim of their respective skills, their conception of what constitutes aretê is quite different. R. S. W. Hawtrey, Commentary on Plato's Euthydemus (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981), p. 34 seems closer to the truth when he notes that eristic is supposed to be an educational discipline and that this is why Plato pays it such attention. The discussions in the Euthydemus are framed, as they are in the Laches, around the question of what sort of

although it ends like other early dialogues without apparent positive result, we have here a straight contrast between the method and aim of Socrates and that employed by some of his rivals. The dialogue, narrated by Socrates to Crito, consists of five alternating scenes, the 1st, 3rd, and 5th by the Sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodoros, and the 2nd and 4th by Socrates. Socrates' two protreptic displays are connected with the demand which he initially makes to the Sophists: "concentrate on convincing our young friend here of the indispensability of philosophy and the practice of virtue."[46]

The principal contrast that is set up in the dialogue between the practice of the Sophists and Socrates is between the effect that each has on the young person they are trying to educate, and this effect is the result of their separate intentions as well as the result of the radically different subject that each conceives virtue to be. While the Sophists are content to make sport of Cleinias with their word chopping logic, Socrates is concerned to lead him, by way of argument, to recognise the need for knowledge of a certain sort. But Socrates does not hand Cleinias a solution on a platter, nor

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education the young should be given Eristic, it is clear from 307c, is likely to be confused with philosophy and it is important for Plato to be able to disintinguish the content of his teaching from what others, who may have used the same terms to characterise their own discipline, regarded as 'doing philosophy.' As Hawtrey remarks, (p. 30), "The particular danger of the eristics lay in the superficial similarity of their method to that of Socrates and Plato."

[46] "chrê philosophein kai aretês epimeleisthai." Euth. 275a (translated by Waterfield). Protreptic speeches were designed to persuade a person that he had come to the right teacher, this is the point of Socrates asking the Sophists if "it is the business of this same art to persuade...a man that virtue is teachable, and that you are the men of whom one may best learn it? (274e). Dionysodorus agrees that it is: and if we assume that Socrates does too, then his protreptic discourse will belong integrally to his art: the exhibition that each gives will, as we find it does, describe the virtue that each claims to impart.

does he provide a display of verbal tricks in the guise of educating him. It is clear that the method that Socrates follows, while it does not assume the metaphysical backdrop of the theory of recollection that we find in the Meno, is in keeping with a general tenet of Socratic education, which is to let the person discover things for himself.[47] Of course this is in keeping with the nature of Socratic co-operative inquiry, and in the final aporia of the dialogue, Socrates does not, as usual, offer any clear solution to the problem. But by the end of the first protreptic, Socrates has got Cleinias to agree that knowledge is to be pursued above all else. They need, Socrates says, to determine "whether he ought to acquire every kind of knowledge, or whether there is a single sort of it which one must obtain if one is to be both happy and a good man."[48] This recognition of the importance of knowledge in general, and its subsequent specification, is by now familiar. The mark of such knowledge, that it alone provides for well being, enables us to confirm our suspicions about its nature.[49] What the first protreptic does tell us is that this knowledge is concerned with right use.[50]

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[47] In the Republic (518c) Socrates still maintains that it is no more possible to put knowledge into the soul than it is to put sight into blind eyes. But of course, medicine may still prescribe cures for blindness and philosophy the remedy for human ills.

[48] Euth. 282e. This is seen as in fact a confused and confusing request. Waterfield, ibid. p. 307 for instance, says that Socrates has only established that knowledge in general was worth pursuing, and for him to go on to claim that a particular branch of knowledge leads to happiness is a flaw in the argument. This is not a flaw at all. It is in fact, as we have shown, central to the role of the craft analogy that other branches of knowledge not be mistaken for aretê.

[49] In the Charmides (173e) it was a mark of such knowledge that it ,makes its possessor happy. In the Euthydemus, too, there is the recognition that such knowledge is to be distinguised from all others kinds, and that no other knowledge or group of skills can stand in for it.

[50] Euth. 280a.

The things normally regarded as good are not good unless they are used. Socrates compares such unused goods to a craftsman having but not using his tools. If knowledge is likened to a tool, its possession is not sufficient to guarantee benefit to its possessor. This point is crucial for an understanding of the Socratic conception of knowledge as the only excellence. It ties it closely with practice and action on the one hand, but makes such knowledge a necessary condition of practice on the other. All the so called goods are only contingently good. If they are to be rightly used, the agent must first know how he will be benefitted. The knowledge that will enable him to know this is characterised in the Euthydemus as an art of both making and using, superior to the otherwise separate arts of making or of using.[51] We expect Socrates in his second protreptic to tell us what such an art makes and uses. But the second protreptic leads to aporia: the content of the wisdom that Socrates would have young men like Cleinias pursue is not finally determined. This is in keeping with Socrates claim not to know, as well as with his usual practice of not 'telling': that the student or reader is expected to think things out makes the task of philosophising one which is not left entirely to Socrates, and hence any benefits that are to accrue from such practice will not fall exclusively to him. The problems with Cleinias spill over into the conversation with Crito, to whom Socrates is narrating the whole conversation. Dramatically this emphasises the continuing nature of the problem. Socrates is shown here as wrestling with

[51] While this distinction is found elsewhere in Plato's dialogues, e.g. Cra. 390bff; Men. 88a-e, Hp. Ma. 295cff, R. 601d, we do not find the claim that there is a composite art of making and using as we do here.

the issue of the nature of moral knowledge with his partners in conversation.[52]

Cleinias at the end of the first protreptic agrees that wisdom is teachable and necessary to pursue for human welfare and says that he intends to pursue it.[53] In the second protreptic the acquisition of this knowledge is identified with philosophy, and the only condition that is set on this knowledge is that it benefit us and lead to happiness (eudaimonia), though it is not immediately said how it is to do so.[54] What Socrates does claim, by an appeal to different forms of craft knowledge, is that this possession must benefit us in a way in which no other possession does.[55]

Socrates does this by employing the distinction between making and using that he introduced earlier. Each craft, he says, is either a craft that makes something, or one that uses the thing that is made.[56] Knowledge of buried

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[52] This has led some, e.g., Waterfield, to suppose that the aporia is a genuine one, in the sense that Plato has no solution to it either and that hence we should not attempt to look for one. Such a view however, requires us to think that Plato was not entirely in control of his subject matter, which to my mind lacks plausibility.

[53] Euth.282d. Socrates uses the verb philosophein which, while it could in the context mean the pursuit of any sort of wisdom or knowledge, serves to reinforce the picture of the active nature of philosophy, and identifies for us in advance of the aporetic search of the second protreptic the means by which such wisdom is to be attained.

[54] Euth. 288d, "We ended by agreeing that philosophy is essential?...and philosophy is acquisition of knowledge, isn't it? (translated by Waterfield).

[55] Euth. 289a "Nor, it seems, do we get any advantage from all other knowledge, whether of money making or medicine or any other that knows how to make things, without knowing how to use the thing made."

[56] Making (poiein) is contrasted (289a-c) with using (chresthai). While Socrates suggests that for every craft that makes there must be one that uses its product, he is not committed to this by the argument, for in any case not all products have specialist users, though some might. The distinction, however gives Socrates a formal criterion which allows him to

treasure, even knowledge of how to become immortal will be of no benefit, he claims, if we do not know how to use what these skills know how to make. In effect what Socrates is here trying to show is that philosophical knowledge is the most useful knowledge to acquire. One, but by no means the only reason for this is that such knowledge (if we characterise it as the knowledge of right use) alone will know how to put the products of other skills and non-skilled possessions (like good birth, inherited wealth etc) to right (=beneficial) use. But we still need to know what this knowledge makes.[57]

Socrates goes on to identify this knowledge with the monarch's art (basilikê technê). That such knowledge will enable one to use the other crafts would make kingship, or the art of politics, a likely candidate, and the second protreptic ends in regress because they are unable to specify a first order product for such an art. In trying to find a product for it, Socrates is led into an infinite regress: Whatever the technê of the monarch makes must be good. But knowledge is the only good (the conclusion of the first protreptic). Hence the monarch's technê, must, whatever else it does for the citizens,

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distinguish the knowledge that he seeks as being different from all other crafts in that it alone both makes and uses (Euth. 289b).

[57] Before Socrates identifies this knowledge with the monarch's craft, he rejects, on this formal ground, several technai whose connexion with happiness or well-being might seem tangential. Even dialectics which is described as the technê which mathematicians hand their discoveries to, is here, as in the Cratylus, described as one of using and not of making. (Euth. 290c, Cra.390c). This makes for an interesting result: dialectic is not the technê Socrates is looking for since it does not both make and use. The only commentator that has, to my knowledge, pointed this out, is Leo Strauss, "On the Euthydemus." Interpretation 1 (1970): 1-20, p. 14 where he says, "if Kleinias' statement were unqualifiedly true, dialectics...being only an art of using, could not possibly be the desired science."

make them wise (=good). But what will this wisdom consist in? If it consists in the wisdom to make others good we are led into a regress.[58]

I take this as the demand that the monarch's art, which is identified with the political art (politikê technê) makes good citizens, this was the sense that Socrates gave to Protagoras' description of his own technê as well as that which he said in the Gorgias that he alone practised.[59] But in order to do this the monarch himself should be in possession of the knowledge which will make him eudaimon. If we look at the structure of the two Socratic discourses in the Euthydemus we find that in the first the appeal is to that knowledge whose pursuit will make Cleinias eudaimon, in the second this knowledge is seen as enabling a person to make use of other possessions (including other skills).

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[58] This does not seem to me to be a genuine regress. What the argument attempts to do is to seek a subject and product for the art of the monarch.Waterfield, "Introduction to Euthydemus," p. 308 thinks that it is a regress and is caused by an equivocation on the word 'good'. That whereas at 281d it was taken in the sense of instrumentally good, at 292b Plato takes it to mean 'good in itself' That if he had taken it instrumentally the regress would not have arisen: if kingship is good in the sense that it makes other things good, it is not self-referential Alternatively, Waterfield thinks that as a superordinate craft, the need for kingship to have a product is misplaced, and so also the argument fails. This is the analysis that R. K. Sprague, Plato's Philosopher King, p. 48-56 offers. We may note however that there is no reason to take 'good' at 282d instrumentally. G. Vlastos, "Happiness and Virtue," p. 211 n. 85. points out that the non-moral goods should be regarded as contingently rather than instrumentally good. And at 292b when Socrates attempts to determine the product of kingship, he specifically says that while it may produce various effects, if it is to be the technê that they are looking for, it must produce something more than contingent goods. That is, it must produce knowledge. The regress can also be stopped by mentioning a first order knowledge. Thus if we regard self-knowledge as the only good, it will make a person good (thus be intrinsically good). It will also enable one to use the other goods rightly (and so be instrumentally good). The Monarch's art in order to be good (instrumentally) must make citizens good (intrinsically). It can only do this if it makes them knowledgeable (that is provide them with a first order knowledge: of themselves). And it can only do this if the Monarch, qua technikos, has this knowledge himself.

[59] Prt. 319a, Grg.521d-e.

There are at least two ways in which contingent goods can be rightly used: either for oneself or of others. The second protreptic slides between the right use (and consequently the benefit) of contingent goods for oneself, to the right use of such goods for others. The practice of philosophy is a condition of either, only one who has the right knowledge (of the self) can know how to use contingent goods for himself, and only such a person will know how to use the products of the other arts for others. Philosophy thus appears as an art that makes men eudaimon, in consequence of which these men can employ rightly various goods for both themelves as well as others. Philosophy has thus a dual role in the life of men, it is that which benefits individuals, as well as that which can benefit states. The results of the Euthydemus are compatible with the two-fold role that was given to the 'art of the soul' in the Gorgias: one component of which had to do with the justice and temperance of individuals, and the other with that of states.[60] This allows for a transition from knowledge that affects the individual who has it, and is beneficial for him, to knowledge that is beneficial by the use to which he alone can put it, beneficial that is to others. Philosophical self-knowledge is the condition of being able to benefit both oneself and others. This dual conception of the role and function of philosophy will resurface in other ways in Plato's philosophy.

At present we may note that Socrates' discourse in the Euthydemus complements in practice the notion of philosophy as the art of virtue that we found in the Gorgias. While Dionysodorus and Euthydemus confused

[60] Grg. 464b-c.

Cleinias, and not only took delight in doing this, but taught this as their version of aretê, Socrates showed himself to be genuinely interested in his education.[61] And steadily led him in a direction where he himself would realise what was the best course to pursue.[62] Unlike the antics of the sophists, Philosophy provides its own justification. The dialogue clearly depicts Socrates as practising the craft of virtue: with the aim of making others good. Socrates thus confirms the claim that he made in the Gorgias on behalf of the art of justice which tends (therapeia) the soul.[63] Socrates' description in the Charmides, of how one goes about curing the soul, is depicted here in his beautiful discourse with Cleinias,[64] who is also shown as having quickly grasped some of the distinctions that Socrates makes, so much so that Crito wonders whether he needs an education at all if he can make such distinctions.[65]

Such a view of philosophy as we have seen emerges from the craft analogy. It satisfies the condition of having a specific subject, the self, as well as providing a distinct and beneficial product, its best condition, the ordered soul. A product that in comparison with other crafts proves to be the most

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[61] Compare Chrm. 154dff. Charmides' exquisite beauty while it may affect Socrates, is of less interest to him than the beauty of his soul.

[62] R. K. Sprague, Plato's Use of Fallacy, p. 2 n. 2 says that Socrates' aim here is "to bring a person to the point at which he conceives it necessary to choose to follow virtue." That in this case dialectic does not teach 'dialectic' but virtue.

[63] Grg. 503a, 504e.

[64] Chrm. 156d-157a The charms themselves are described as beautiful words.

[65] Euthd. 290e. Crito in fact confuses the making of such distinctions with the need for virtue. Crito's own grasp of what is should be the real content of education for the young is shown to be confused. Consider his remarks at the end of the dialogue; while he is unwilling to characterise philosophy as worthless and ridiculous (305a), he has no adequate notion of its content to enable him to distinguish worthy from unworthy practioners of it.

valuable as it is identified with well being. The pursuit of philosophy as Socrates recommends it is not in order to satisfy intellectual curiousity about the nature and composition of the world, but rather, is a means to living well and therefore the question of what knowledge will enable us to do this is one which is marked with the greatest impor tance and urgency.[66] Such a view of philosophy should enable us to take due measure of an attitude to Socratic moral theory which is influential among commentators, one which emphasises the intellectual element in Socratic doctrine. If the conception of philosophy that the craft analogy leads us to is at all plausible, then it should count against a purely intellectualist interpretation of Socratic ethics.

Socratic Intellectualism.

The intellectualist interpretation may be stated, somewhat crudely, in the following way: In order to live morally, one must know what virtue is, and in order to do that, all that one must be able to do is to give a definition of virtue. The Socratic formula, 'virtue is knowledge,' so understood, enjoins us to do what Socrates went about doing, conducting philosophical conversations about the meaning or definition of moral terms.[67] The odd

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[66] Grg. 472d, 487 e," And on no themes could one make more honourable inquiry, Callicles, than on those which you have reproached me with--what character one should have, and what should be one's pursuits and up to what point." and 500c, "For you see that our debate is upon a question which has the highest conceivable claims to the serious interest even of a person who has but little intelligence--namely what course of life is best, whether it should be that to which you invite me, with all those many pursuits of speaking in the Assembly and practicing rhetoric...or this life of philosophy; and what makes the difference between the two."cf. also R. 352d, ("for this is no ordinary matter we are discussing but the right conduct of life.")

[67] This view is held for instance by N. Gulley, The Philosophy of Socrates, (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 83-91, esp. p. 88 where he says that Socrates "considers that moral knowledge is essentially knowledge through general definition and that this knowledge is

conclusion that follows from this account of Socratic ethics, and indeed which makes Socratic moral theory so unsatisfactory, is that Socrates seems to suppose that one who has such knowledge will thereby behave morally. This seems unwarranted, for given that I learn the definition of a moral concept, how will learning this ensure that I will act morally?

A further problem with this interpretation is that commentators also often take seriously the demand described as the 'priority of definition', which requires that one must first know the definition of virtue (or any concept) before one can know anything else about it.[68] This makes the whole

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the foundation of all moral truth." J. Annas, An Introduction to Plato's Republic (Oxford. Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 25, writes, "But the crucial point of the analogy seems always to have been the intellectual grasp that a skill involves, and the consequences of this, such that skills are impartible, and involve an element of generality." G. Vlastos, "Socratic Knowledge and Platonic Pessimism," in Platonic Studies, 2nd ed. Princeton University Press, 1981 pp. 204-207, offers a vigorous defence of the position and a convincing attack of J. Gould's The Development of Plato's Ethics (Cambridge University Press, 1955). Gould provided an attractive alternative to the intellectualist interpretation by emphasising the practical nature of the crafts that Socrates alludes to in his analogy. A. Nehemas, "Socratic Intellectualism," in Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy Vol 2, ed John J. Cleary (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), pp. 275-316, argues against a strictly intellectualist interpretation by alluding to the craft analogy. However, his reading of how the analogy should operate suggests that he is thinking along largely intellectualist lines, thus he remarks (p. 289), "Socrates often wishes that virtue were like a craft, of which there could be recognisable experts." As does T. G. Saunders, "Introduction to Socrates," in Plato: Early Socratic dialogues, ed. Trevor J. Saunders (Harmondsworth. Penguin Books, 1987), p. 22 who sees Plato's aims as essentially practical. See also Martha Nussbaum, Fragility of Goodness, chap. IV. Nussbaum has argued for the intellectualist picture of Socrates in "Aristophanes and Socrates on Practical Wisdom," YCS 26 (1980). 43-97.

[68] On an account of what has been called "the Socratic fallacy" cf. P. T. Geach, "Plato's Euthyphro." Monist 50 (1966): 369-82. However, my analysis of the Euthyphro in chapter two has shown that the demand that is made by Socrates is understandable in view of the action that Euthyphro is contemplating It is Euthyphro who claims knowledge and Socrates who asks him to prove it by giving an account of piety. Irwin, PMT p. 294 n. 3. cites La 190b7-c5, Men. 71b3-7, 100b4-7; Hi. Ma. 286c8-d2, 304d8-e2; R. 354c1-3; Prt. 361c2-6 and Ly. 212a4-7, 223b4-8 as instances where Socrates might be seen to insist on the priority of our knowing virtue. While much of Irwin's as well as other commentator's discussions are taken up with the epistemological problem of the status of examples of virtue that Socrates rejects, the cited texts do not seem to point to the claim made on Socrates' behalf in

enterprise of morality, so far as Socrates is concerned, impossible. For one can not recognise cases of virtue without first knowing what virtue is, and one can not know what that is without having a definition of it. But how are we to get at a definition without being able to know something about virtue in the first place?

However my analysis of craft-knowledge as the paradigm for knowledge in the early dialogues has shown that it is not suggested that before one has (craft) knowledge one must be able to give a definition, but the rather more plausible claim that before one can be said to know something, one must have understanding of the nature of the object one claims to know.[69] Giving an account (or definition) is not the condition of having such knowledge but its consequence. Giving an account is one of the ways in which such understanding can be exhibited, and such an exhibition becomes important in the case either of problematic claims to know or of claims to be able to teach. In the case of non-problematic technai, producing the product would

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the first place. Socrates certainly claims in the Laches passage that without knowing virtue one cannot be expected to teach it, as he does in the Protagoras passage, ("in order to discover whether virtue is teachable one must first discover what it is") which, as we have seen are reasonable demands to make of anyone who claims to have craft-knowledge and are therefore seen to be reasonable demands on any knowledge claims. It should also be noted that five of the nine passages that Irwin cites from the early dialogues occur at the end of the dialogue in question (Men. 100b, Hp. Ma. 304d, R. 354c, Prt. 364c and Ly. 223b4) suggesting that this is not so much an epistemological principle that Socrates has than a way of formulating an aporetic conclusion. Each of these is also a very general claim about not knowing the what of a particular virtue (except in the case of the Hp. Ma. where the concept that is being discused is to kalon (the fine) which is not one of the standard virtues that Socrates discusses). The generality of the claim counts against the strong epistemological reading that is often given to it. On this see. also, A. Nehemas, "Socratic Intellectualism,' p. 277-293 who concludes "that Socrates' belief in the priority of definition is much less radical than we have often tended to suppose."

[69] This rule is quite generally applied and not restricted to the virtues, for the rejection of the claims of Gorgias and Protagoras are based on their inability to come up with an account of the nature of that which they profess to teach (aretê).

also be sufficient proof of knowledge. This is a criterion that Socrates sometimes also applies to virtue.[70]

By distinguishing and emphasising the importance of both the subject and product of craft knowledge equally as conditions for having the knowledge in question, we can shift the balance from a purely intellectualist understanding of Socratic moral knowledge, to one which comprehends both knowledge of the nature of virtue as well as the ability to produce it.[71]

It seems to me that what makes the intellectualist account most plausible is that we tend to take 'epistemê' in the way we understand 'knowledge' in English: as some form of 'knowing that'. Even opponents of the intellectualist reading take as their alternative, 'epistemê' in some sense of 'knowing how'.[72] But there have been recent attempts claiming that the

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[70] e.g. Grg. 515a.

[71] Alternatives to the intellectualist position, e.g. the view articulated by J. Gould, The Development of Plato's Ethics, err on the other extreme and claim, equally implausibly, that all that Socrates meant by moral knowledge was moral ability, a skill which provides 'knowledge how" rather than "knowledge that". We have already seen that the craft analogy emphasises an understanding of the nature of the subject as much as it does the ability to produce a product. Such an understanding would give us the theoretical component in knowledge, as long as we realise that for Socrates such knowledge had to have both theoretical as well as practical aspects.

[72] That this contrast is not exclusive has been adequately shown by Vlastos in his review of Gould's book, "Socratic Knowledge and Platonic Pessimism," in Platonic Studies, pp. 204-17. But the example that Vlastos cites for a "know that" sense of epistemê, "To fear death is nothing but to think oneself wise while one is not; for it is to think that one knows the unknown." p. 206, citing Ap. 29a, while undoubtedly having such a sense, is not an example of moral knowledge at all, which is how he proceeds to construe it.

nature of epistemê that Socrates and Plato were working with is better served by the English term "understanding".[73]

If philosophy is like a craft and gives us understanding of its own special object, and if this object is the self, then the aim of philosophy will not be to check or discover which body of propositions about the self are true, for while this may give us knowledge about the self, it will lack that self understanding which for Socrates is the very basis of moral action: an understanding which is based on the distinction of the body and the soul, with the recognition of the priority of the latter. A person who has such understanding is the one who is truly aristos in the Socratic sense. It is this self-understanding that Socrates equates with virtue, not the accumulation of true propositions about the self. Such an accumulation would be like the natural philosophy that Socrates rejected.[74] If we model the nature of moral knowledge on the crafts, as we have done, we may better appreciate the reasons why the question of any 'intellectualist' bias is not itself taken up in the dialogues themselves. Nor do we find Socrates advising his compatriots to search after definitions of virtue. He doesn't want them to become knowledgeable about virtue, he wants them to become virtuous. In consequence of this the teaching of virtue will not proceed in the way that teaching ordinary crafts takes place, although there will be some

[73] See, for instance, Julius Moravcsik, "Understanding and Knowledge in Plato's Philosophy." Neue Hefte für Philosophie Vol. 15/16 (1979): 53-69, as well as the articles by J. Hintikka refered to in the bibliography which have emphasised the notion of process and the telic or goal directed notion of knowledge that Plato seems to be employing with. Moravcsik deals more with the Republic and the theory of forms, but his insights are valuable in understanding the notion of knowledge in the early dialogues as well.
[74] Ap. 19b-c.

similarities. But virtue cannot be learnt by following a series of rules, even under the guidance of experts. It involves rather, coming to knowledge of oneself, and of one's own nature, which is seen as the real basis for all moral action. This is something that cannot be taught by books or by formulas. Moral knowledge, while it is modelled on the crafts is nevertheless crucially different from crafts.

There is, however, one problem that is raised in the dialogues about moral knowledge, a problem that has in fact to do with its analogy with the crafts. A problem that is central to Socrates' radical notion of virtue as self-knowledge. It is this which I will outline and examine next.

The Paradox of Moral Knowledge.

The paradox of moral knowledge is raised by Socrates in the Hippias Minor.[75] Hippias is an obvious target of the sort of argument that Socrates launches in this dialogue, an argument based on an aspect of craft-knowledge which sees all such forms of knowledge as 'Janus-type' skills. Technical ability, Socrates claims, is two-fold: the very skill which enables a man to produce a certain result can be used deliberately either to withhold that result or produce its opposite. Socrates has mentioned this consequence of technical knowledge in passing elsewhere in the early

[75] Some of the dramatic features are brought out in M. J. O'Brien's remarks on the dialogue in The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind, pp. 100-103.

dialogues.[76] In the Hippias he makes it the basis of a paradox for moral knowledge.

The craft analogy provides the premises for this paradox. Socrates argues that one who knows is better than one who doesn't, and since every craft enables one who is an expert in it to bring about something as a result of his knowledge, the one who can do so is better than one who cannot.[77] A further assumption which Socrates employs in his argument is that one who can produce a result can also deliberately either a) refrain from producing that result or b) produce the opposite result. We may generalise Plato's claim for all forms of knowledge and deliberate action as saying that anyone who has some knowledge is 'better' than anyone who, lacking such knowledge, acts without skill with regard to the same matter.

One aspect of this claim which will acquire greater importance later is the belief that any kind of technical knowledge can be misused. The medical art can be used to kill efficiently, the art of engineering enable one to blow up bridges. This aspect of Plato's claim has also received less scrutiny than the

[76] e.g. at Prt. 336a. "If you want to have the spectacle of of Crisco and me running together, you must ask him to adapt his pace; for whereas I cannot run fast, he can run slowly." cf. also Aristotle Met., 1046b7. Some commentators do not see the dialogue as essentially investigating a conception of moral knowledge that is modeled after the crafts, and as a result fail to understand the motive and direction of the dialogue. Thus J.J. Mulhern, "Tropos and Polutropia in Plato's Hippias Minor," Phoenix, Vol. 22 (1968) No. 4. pp. 283-288, identifies the equivocation of key terms as based on unsignalled shifts between what he calls dunamis-concepts and tropos-concepts. He ignores however the premises that make such a shift possible. Nor can he account for the moral equivocation that Plato seems to advocate here. James Leake, "Introduction to the Lesser Hippias," in The Roots of Political Philosophy, ed. Thomas L. Pangle (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987): 300-306, concludes that the dialogue "emphatically develops the point that art, knowledge and capability are in themselves adaptable to good or evil."

[77] These claims are quite general and 'better' has no clear ethical import at all. As Socrates says to Protagoras (Prt. 318b), "even you, though so old and so wise, would be made better if someone taught you what you happen not to know."

inference which he draws from it about moral knowledge, but we should be careful about accepting the the claim that knowledge can be misused even for craft-knowledge. Plato seems to think that no art can only achieve a negative result. To us it seems evident that there could be a technê, on his conditions for technê-hood, which only aimed at killing efficiently, and that such a technê need not involve the ability to heal as well. A expert poisoner, for instance, might know a great deal about what substances did irreparable harm to the body, without knowing anything about those that did it any good.[78]

But in the Hippias Minor it is stated that craft-knowledge can be used to produce either of two opposite results. This conclusion is then applied to moral knowledge. If justice is either a power or knowledge of the soul then such a soul, "whenever...it does disgraceful acts, does them voluntarily, by reason of power and art.[hence] it is the nature of the good man to do injustice voluntarily, and of the bad man to do it involuntarily."[79] Socrates' point here is that if it is a form of knowledge, virtue too should be liable to misuse. It would be strange to say that the just man because of his knowledge, is capable of injustice, and even stranger to say that he alone is capable of injustice. Yet this is precisely what Socrates says.[80]

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[78] Even here it seems to me that Plato's view is defensible: in so far as such a person has a technê and not a mere knack, this would demand in depth knowledge of the principles of the particular body of knowledge, and would thereby mean that such a person would have (in principle) to know about the chemistry of the human body, and thereby of what benefitted it as well.

[79] Hp .Mi.376a-b. "agathou men ara andros estin hekonta adikein, kakou de akonta, eiper ho agathos agathên psuchên echei.

[80] Roslyn Weiss, "Ho Agathos as Ho Dunatos in the Hippias Minor." CQ 31 (ii) (1981): 287-304, is right in pointing out (p.302) "that what is at stake is skill, and skill is determined not by result but by the control that the agent has over the result." That is, that Socrates does

This has been labelled, 'voluntary' or 'intentional incompetence,'[81] or, the 'ambivalence principle'[82]. In the Hippias minor it is initially introduced as the ability to speak truths and falsehoods about a particular subject, but is extended to the ability to act in ways appropriate to specific sorts of knowledge. If virtue too is knowledge, then the best condition of the soul will be when it is able to do evil voluntarily rather than involuntarily.[83]

The paradox that arises suggests that only one who has this knowledge, let us call him the moral agent, can deliberately do wrong. Both Socrates and Hippias find this counter-intuitive; the good man they think, will never deliberately do wrong. In the Hippias in fact the paradoxical conclusion is rather guardedly made.[84]Socrates here seems to be arguing against a central tenet of his: no one does wrong willingly. Or at the very least against

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hold that the man in question performs both kinds of action, or even any action at all. Someone who performs noble and just actions may or may not be the good man, for if he performs them unintentionally, then he will not, according to Socrates, know what he is doing, and hence will not be an agathos: he will only be an agathos if he performs these actions intentionally. A confusion between action and capability in this sense is to be found in Santas' treatment of the logic of this dialogue (Socrates, p 154, cf. n. 86 below).

[81] By Santas, Socrates, p. 152.

[82] By T. Penner, "Socrates on Virtue and Motivation," in Exegesis and Argument, Phronesis Supplement 1 ed. E. N. Lee, A. P. D; Mourelatos,.and R. M Rorty, (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973): 133-151, p.137.

[83] psuche, is consistently used as the principle of agency in the dialogue (variously translated as 'mind' or 'spirit' by Walter Hamilton). At 375a it is applied to horses and dogs, but even here the emphasis is on the voluntary actions that the human agent will or can perform.

[84] Hp. Mi. 376b "He who voluntarily errs and does disgraceful and unjust acts, Hippias, if there be such a man, would be no other than the good man." While this is stated as a contrary to fact future conditional, in Rep.1 (334a) we get a more direct claim: the good man is like a thief. Penner, ibid. p. 141 referring to Hp. Mi. 367a8-b thinks that "Socrates goes out of his way to assert the corresponding existential hypothesis in the case of the first example of ambivalence he brings up, the art of numbers." Penner thinks this principle is true (for Socrates) for all arts except the art of virtue.

the view that virtue is a craft.[85]Perhaps he is denying one or both of these positions .The identification of virtue and crafts seems easier for Socrates tc give up (as it is seen as the more dubious of the two doctrines).[86]

Socrates of course expresses some misgivings about this conclusion and adds the words, "if such a one exists" to his final claim at 376b. This qualification has not gone unnoticed; commentators accordingly point out that the conclusion in fact supports the claim that no one does wrong willingly.[87] Only the man who is capable of knowing what is just and unjust will be able to choose to do injustice, should he decide to; but no one willingly does wrong; hence the just man while he knows what is unjust, will never choose to do or be unjust. While this is generally a correct

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[85] He could retain his claim 'no one does wrong willingly' if he gave up his claim that justice is like a craft. But this latter claim is the same as the Socratic claim, virtue is knowledge: one which it does not seem to me that Plato ever renounces. Other commentators seem to agree, but for rather different reasons. eg. Santas, Socrates, p. 154, Penner, "Socrates on Virtue and Motivation," p. 144, Waterfield, "Introduction to the Hippias Minor," in Plato: Early Socratic Dialogues, ed. T.J. Saunders (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1988),p. 269. Irwin, PMT p. 77.

[86] As Santas, Socrates p. 154, puts it, "...while in the case of geometry it seems all right and in the case of medicine problematic, in the case of justice it seems to be a clearcut mistake to say that we can say both that a man intentionally does injustice always and uniformally and that he is a just man." This is certainly true, but Santas' solution, to insist that justice is a practical craft where knowledge of justice is not sufficient to be just but in addition requires the doing of just acts, doesn't help either. For one thing it makes an unwarranted distinction between theoretical and practical crafts that Plato does not make in the early dialogues. More importantly it ignores Plato's insistence on self-knowledge as a pre-condition for determining what acts are just or not. So far as the Hippias paradox is concerned, Socrates' unpalatable conclusion is compatible with his belief that there are no just (=wise) men at all, and hence no cases of deliberate or voluntary justice or injustice!

[87] Noted for instance, by Taylor, PMW p. 37, Crombie, An Examination of Plato's Doctrines Vol. 1 p. 225, Guthrie, HGP IV p. 198. Penner, "Socrates on Virtue and Motivation," holds that the theses virtue is knowledge' and 'no one does wrong willingly', when taken together do not appear crazy (as they do when taken apart). Other commentators are less comfortable with the doctrines that Socrates seems to espouse, Jowett, in his introduction to the dialogue (Plato: Collected Dialogues, translated with analyses and introductions by B. Jowett, 4 vols. 4th ed. Oxford, 1953, Vol 1, p. 603), lays the blame on Plato, "who is very far from making Socrates always argue on the side of truth."

analysis of the paradox in the Hippias Minor, it does not tell us the whole story. To suppose that the just man, though capable, will nevertheless not deliberately do wrong is really to beg the question. Though the Hippias itself offers no explanation of it, this paradox does force us to look at the premises that lead to such a conclusion. Why will the just man not deliberately do unjust actions on occasion? In what sense does he alone have the ability to do wrong?[88]

The most frequent line that is taken in understanding this paradox, and Socrates' puzzlement over it, is to claim that it draws a sharp distinction between virtue and other kinds of knowledge and, in effect, restricts considerably the application of the craft analogy. The real conclusion, of the dialogue, on this view, is that virtue is either really unlike crafts, or, at the very least, is a peculiar sort of craft.[89]

I think that if we accept the premise of the argument of the Hippias, that all forms of craft-knowledge are Janus-type skills which can bring about both their usual result or its opposite, and each skill provides an ability to do

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[88] Some commentators think that Plato is himself wrestling with problems to which he has no solution, as Guthrie seems to (ibid. p. 199). Kraut, Socrates and the State , p.310 thinks that the perplexity is genuine and that Socrates' confessions of doubt "should be taken at face value." By this I presume that he agrees with those who think that Plato had no solution to the problems that he raised in this dialogue.

[89] Those who think the dialogue demands abandoning the craft-analogy include, Joseph, Essays Ancient and Modern, p. 10. J. Gould, The Development of Plato's Ethics, p. 42. Those who think that Plato is not abandoning the analogy but qualifying it importantly include Irwin, PMT p. 299 n. 48. Penner, ibid. p. 140ff. and J. Hintikka, "Knowledge and its Objects in Plato," in Patterns in Plato's Thought, ed by J. M. E. Moravcsik, (Dordrect,1973): 1-30 who says, (p. 29), "As far as skills are concerned, Plato may be suggesting, only virtue is knowledge, for it alone always leads to its typical product."

either, as well as the premise, which crucially Socrates himself provides in the course of the conversation, that justice is a form of knowledge, then we should expect that justice too will have a typical product which it can bring about or whose opposite it can bring about.[90] If we regard the real effect or product of Socratic self-knowledge as an ordering of the self, or what we might call psychic health; if this is what self-knowledge, or the philosophical art whose aim it is, brings about, then its opposite, psychic imbalance or injustice, is something which it alone can also deliberately bring about.

This claim is similar to what Socrates says about Sophistic teaching: it does not know when it harms and when it benefits people, as a result of its ignorance of the nature of its real object. Most people, Socrates holds, actually do end up harming themselves, but they do this from ignorance of the real nature of the self and therefore from ignorance of where its benefit lies.[91]This conclusion is quite compatible with that of the Hippias: the only person who can deliberately do harm (to himself) is one who knows what it is for him to be harmed: one who has knowledge of himself. Now we can understand Socrates' rider at 376b, 'if there is such a man' (eiper tis estin houtos), for there could be no such person at all. While he possesses a power conferred by the particular knowledge that he has which makes him

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90 Hp. Mi.375e, "justice is either a power (dunamis) or knowledge (epistemê) or both." Guthrie, HGP IV p. 195 n. 3 wonders why Hippias should accept this at all. He does not seem to notice that this is the Socratic doctrine 'virtue is knowledge' and the premise is in fact crucial to Socrates' assimilation of justice to other types of knowledge.

91 A sentiment that Socrates expresses strongly in the Crito (44d): "I only wish, Crito, the people could accomplish the greatest evils, that they might be able to accomplish the greatest good things Then all would be well. But now they can do neither of the two."

capable of misusing it, unlike other skills, this will not be misused because such knowledge alone has the self as its object, and the effect that it produces is concerned with the person himself.

Analogously, a pilot whose art enabled him to drive a ship onto a reef rather than around it, could be expected not to do so under normal circumstances, for being on board himself he could hardly expect to benefit from such an action. But even if we imagine an extreme situation in which he actually did shipwreck himself, we could characterise this as a case of deliberate misuse of his knowledge. But there could be no analogous case for the virtuous man: if he had the knowledge to harm himself, he would not, for there could be no reason for him to do so; alternatively, if he did harm himself, it would be only because he lacked self-knowledge. A person who had the soul as his primary concern, would not, Socrates thinks, have reason to pursue the sorts of things that would lead to psychic harm: the pleasures of food and drink, for instance, would not count as pleasures at all for him. Those for whom such pleasures constitute temptations, which they may or may not on occasion resist, lack this self-understanding.

That one who has knowledge and understanding of his own nature will not act in ways that will harm himself, is a conclusion that is also arrived at in the Gorgias. Here the notion of wrong doing or injustice is identified with what is bad for the agent. This, coupled with the premise that everyone desires their own good, give us an acceptable interpretation of the paradox of the Hippias Minor which sees it as compatible with the claim that no one

willingly or knowingly harms themselves.[92] The virtuous man though capable of harming himself, will not because no one harms himself willingly.

Socrates utilises the conventional view that injustice consists in pleonexia ('taking advantage,' or 'having more than one's share') to elaborate the notion of being harmed.

> Taking more is shameful and unjust, and that doing injustice is this, seeking to have more than other people.[93]

The idea here that unjust acts are all pleonectic, is offered as a view that the many hold; that is, is a conventional view about what constitutes injustice. In the Gorgias Callicles questions this and insists that pleonectic action is in fact reflective of natural justice. The many, who hold this conventional view about injustice are also said to share in the belief that pleonectic acts are really to the benefit of the one who does them successfully.[94]

In refuting Callicles, Socrates attempts to show that all such actions are done for the sake of something else (happiness, well being) and are desired

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[92] Grg. 467d-468b, with the conclusion, "It is for the sake of the good that the doers of all these things do them."

[93] Grg 483c.

[94] The many (hoi polloi), however, are attributed with more than just this view. For it is also the opinion of the many that to have one's equal share (to ison echein), and not more than others, is just; that it is fouler to wrong than to be wronged (Grg. 474b, 475d, 489a); that self-rule is characterised by temperance and self-mastery over one's pleasures and desires (491e). What is perhaps conventional about these beliefs is that they are all held by people but there is no account or justification given for them and hence they are often shown as compatible with their anti-theses.

only if they are seen as a means to or or constitutive of something which is in itself desirable. Pleasure, in an extended sense, is seen by Socrates to be the motive for doing such pleonectic acts. On Callicles' view, however, the man who is able to gratify his desires is better off than the one who cannot. And the one with the greatest (political) power can gratify all his desires. Callicles also holds that all men by nature desire the gratification of the appetites, i.e. seek pleasure. Socrates however holds that all men desire their own good. He does not dispute that all or most men regard the satisfaction of their appetites as their chief goal or good. Indeed on the Socratic view of the extent of general ignorance this is not at all surprising. What Socrates does dispute is that this is really to their advantage.

He contrasts the Calliclean notion of advantage or pleonexia with his own notion of benefit or ophelia, showing that the pleonectic cannot benefit himself because i), the desires that he seeks to satisfy cannot in principle be satisfied. So that even if the satisfaction of these desires were to his advantage, he could never attain to this state of satisfaction. ii) some pleasures are bad[95] because a). shameful[96] (e.g. scratching) or b). harmful. Harmful pleasures[97] harm the individual psyche.[98] But there are pleasures

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[95] Callicles finally capitulates at 499d, claiming that he always held that some pleasures were better, others worse.

[96] Presumably shameful pleasures, like those of unmitigated scratching will not harm the psyche in the same way, if at all, as those that are 'morally wrong'.

[97] This is elliptical for actions that are done for the sake of such pleasures. cf. Irwin, Plato's Gorgias, n. on 499b p.208.

[98] Once Callicles admits a difference between good and bad pleasure, Socrates can claim that beneficial pleasures are good, and harmful ones bad. As the good is the end and aim of of all action (499e), the pleasant is to be chosen on the basis of whether it is conducive of the good.

(e.g. those which produce health) which are good. Hence pleasure per se is not the proper motive for deciding what to do.

One's benefit or good is thus contrasted with one's pleasure and must be looked at in deciding what to do. No actions which cause psychic disorder are really in the interest of the agent, and hence would not be desired if the agent knew this. The Socratic account of moral action as a consequence of knowledge of oneself and its resultant orientation, attempts to show that such a person will lack the motivation for injustice, and hence not seek to "have more" than others.

But there must be, one might suppose, more to the paradox than this.[99] After all, in the Hippias Socrates does not speak of self-knowledge at all, nor does he have anything to say about psychic health. In fact Socrates specifies that "doing injustice is doing evil acts, and not doing injustice is doing good acts".[100]

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[99] Not all commentators seem to think so. Penner, for instance, sees the appeal to the agent's own happiness as final; he believes that "there is no danger that the just man will ever willingly excercise his potentiality for doing bad acts. For bad acts are acts which tend to lead to unhappiness, and no one wishes unhappiness." ("Socrates on Virtue and Motivation" p. 142). It should be clear that while I agree with the main lines of Penner's interpretation, it seems to me that on the question of doing wrong willingly, Socrates's claim is much stronger: no one can do wrong willingly. Penner's mistake it seems to me is his inability to identify a subject for the craft of virtue (cf. p. 146), and his supposition that justice is to be distinguished from other crafts mainly because of this. But it is precisely because justice (or virtue) has a subject which is unlike the subject of other crafts, that the ambivalence principle does not apply to such a skill.

[100] kai to men ge adikein kaka poiein esti, to de mê adikein kala. Fowler's translation is not accurate. Socrates does not use agatha ('good') here at all, but kala ('noble' or 'fine'): the contrast is between kaka and kala. Agathos, in fact, usually in Plato refers to what is good for the agent. (cf. Vlastos, Platonic Studies, p. 11 n. 27). Kala does not have these connotations. It means what is considered noble, and is often contrasted with aischron (shameful). cf. Irwin, PMT p.290 n. 29 who distinguishes actions that are kalon from those that are sumpheron (advantageous) in common parlance.

This is a clear formulation of conventional beliefs about injustice which see it as the performance or non-performance of certain sorts of actions, and not, as Socrates does, in terms of a state of the soul. Further, the nature of such actions is here not further specified: do they essentially have to do with the agent who performs them, or are they to be evaluated by the effect that they have on others? The conventional view of justice, for instance, judges actions in terms of the effect they have on other people and on their possessions. The problem that Plato seems to be considering is, how will the one who has knowledge of virtue, such that he knows both how to act justly and unjustly, actually behave? What sort of actions can we expect from him and why?

The paradox puts a burden on the Socratic conception of moral knowledge. For even if we accept the Socratic account of wrongdoing and allow that such a man will never harm himself and therefore never do wrong, we are left with the question of the good of others. And we can see the problem that the Hippias raises as having to do with the problem of how such a craftsman, with the ability both to harm as well as to aid, will actually behave. The Gorgias' account of injustice as pleonexia is only a part of Socrates' answer: Socrates has at most shown that the psychically ordered man will lack the usual motives for unjust action: and perhaps will as a result generally satisfy conventional moral standards. But how is such self-knowledge appropriate to decide "who should live and who should die?"[101] While the life-saving techniques of the pilot and the doctor may be approved

[101] Grg. 511e

of for the benefit that they bring to persons, nevertheless they fall far short of the art which, concerned with the soul, is alone capable of deciding the question of the real good of others. And we still need to determine how such a man will act in respect of the welfare of others: why should he, qua craftsman of virtue, direct his energies to making other people happier (more psychically ordered)?

In the first book of the Republic the objection is raised once more and again in connection with the characterisation of moral knowledge as we saw it in the Hippias. In the paradoxical conclusion to the second argument with Polemarchus, the just man appears to be a kind of thief: he is seen to have all the Janus-type abilities that accompany any specialist knowledge. What guarantee is there that he will not misuse this knowledge? What is the connection between the self-controlled and self-knowing moral expert and the rules by which conduct in civil society is regulated? How do we know that the just man will not harm others?[102]

In Rep. 1 Socrates' strategy is first to delimit the notion of what it means to harm anyone at all, and then to claim that if the just man is a craftsman, he will not harm anyone because no craftsman makes his subject worse.[103]

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[102] Socrates observes that the just man will be a 'sort of thief' (kleptês tis), as Joseph, Essays Ancient and Modern, p. 11, notes Joseph however thinks that the absurd conclusion is designed to show that justice is not to inform a man's conduct only on special occasions, that there are no erga for such an art and that is what distinguishes it from all the others But the problem, as I see it is deeper than this, that the platonically just man's behaviour may conflict with accepted accounts of what is just; and that this conflict is made inevitable given the radical nature of such knowledge according to Plato.

[103] Rep.1 335b-336a.

He does this by denying that any craft will work to the detriment of its subject or make its subject worse. Socrates is not denying either the conclusion for moral knowledge confers an ability to do just as well as unjust acts. Nor is he denying the premise that leads to such a conclusion, that knowledge of a craft confers a Janus-type skill. What he now denies is that any craftsman, in so far as he is a craftsman, will exercise his skill contrary to the demands of his craft. If this is so, then we can no longer claim, as commentators do, that virtue is a peculiar sort of craft, instead we must suppose that for Plato no craft can be misused. This does not of course mean that a craftsman cannot on occasion misuse his knowledge, only that such misuse will not constitute, for Plato, an employment of the craft in question. "Speaking, precisely...no craftsman errs." as he tells Thrasymachus.[104]

The notion of harm that Socrates uses here, while it is an advance on the notion of injustice as pleonexia, is still in keeping with the idea that justice has to do primarily with selves: to harm some one is to cause him psychic damage. In the Gorgias (475a-b), Socrates introduces a distinction between pain and evil which he uses as a crucial premise in the refutation of Polus' claim that it is worse to suffer than to do wrong. The distinction enables Socrates to hold that what is painful need not necessarily be harmful. Given the body-soul dichotomy worked out in the dialogue, this distinction allows him to contrast bodily suffering with psychic-harm: the latter though not

[104] Rep. 1 340e.

painful, is to be less preferred because it is in fact fouler and more evil than the former.

In Rep.-1, the harm that a just man can but will not inflict, has again to do with a thing's essential nature. The just man is seen as able not to inflict pain (which anyone can do) but harm. To harm someone is to make that person unfit qua person. As the Hippias paradox had it, only one who knows what justice is will be able to make a man less just and thereby harm him. It might be (falsely) supposed from this that corporeal punishment in general, decapitation of the limbs etc., will not make someone less just than he happens to be, and hence that such actions should not be regarded as blameworthy.[105] By claiming that the just man will not harm others Socrates is arguing for a notion of justice which is closer to the conventional view according to which justice involves 'another's good' (allotrion agathon).[106] On Socrates' account of self-

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105 This is presumably the basis for the question posed by Bernard Williams in M. I. Finley (ed). The Legacy of Greece (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 249: "Why, if bodily hurt is no real harm, is bodily hurt what virtue so strongly requires you not to inflict on others?" Quoted by T. J. Saunders, ed. Plato: Early Socratic Dialogues, p. 26 n.2. While this question does focus on the problematic relationship between platonic virtue as psychic order and the conventional view where virtue is broadly concerned with other people's rights, a response may be made on Plato's behalf. For one thing, if we assume that a man's essential function is to have reason rule, or something like that, then, to suppose that depriving him of his life or limbs does not harm him, ignores the fact that such actions prevent him from carrying out his essential function. In the Phaedo Plato holds that the essential function of the soul is to live, and hence any obstacle to pursuits conducive to this can count as harming a person: so that while Plato's notion of harm seems to be narrow, it can be interpreted broadly enough to admit many of the sorts of activities the pursuit of which might be regarded as important to living well. As Socrates says in the Gorgias (473d): neither the one who unjustly punishes nor the one who is unjustly punished, is to be envied. Neither is to be regarded as happier (eudaimonesteron).

106 Rep.1 343c. Thrasymachus' phrase captures the heart of the objection to the Socratic conception of justice as self-advantage. Paul Shorey, Republic Vol.1 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press,1937) p. 67 n. c cites Aristotle EN 1130a3,1134b5 for the view that justice is primarily other-regarding.

knowledge, the virtuous man would neither have any need nor any special ability to perform vicious actions. But Plato goes further, he has Socrates argue that such a man will, in consequence of his knowledge, not harm anyone at all.

This is, however, not very persuasive, especially since Plato only seems to stipulate his claim. But the general point seems to be something like this: since crafts in the first place come about in order to provide some benefit: it is not the function of a craft to harm people at all. For crafts exist for the sake or the benefit of people. Hence while it is indeed ludicrous to suppose that the shoemaker's craft is designed to benefit the leather that he is working on, and the shepherd's art, as Thrasymachus is quick to point out, scarcely looks at what is in the best interest of the sheep; it is by no means absurd to suppose that human beings, or Athenian citizens, are the real beneficiaries of the technai. For Plato, then, to say that no art is designed to harm or damage those whom it is designed to serve or benefit appears to be less gratuitous a claim than has been sometimes supposed.

This may enable us to appreciate the role of the craft analogy in Platonic conclusions about the nature of political expertise. The notion of the ruler that emerges from the analogy is as someone who is chosen on the basis of some special knowledge that he alone has.[107] This special knowledge, we

[107] Renferd Bambrough, "Plato's Political Analogies," In Plato II, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978) pp. 187-205. In the Timeaus (75aff), the vocabulary of the crafts is applied to the activity of the creator. cf. F. Solmsen, "Nature as Craftsman in Greek Thought." JHI 24 (1963): 473-96. I am in sympathy with many of

have seen, involves self-knowledge. Plato's demand is that the ruler must himself be psychically ordered before he can be entrusted with the task of making other citizens good.[108] Further, that one who is so ordered will only be interested in making others good (and not in harming them).

This shows how philosophy, which is introduced as the art that benefits a person by providing him knowledge of himself, is also the only basis for any real benefit to others: and how the philosopher, as one who is himself ordered is the only one who is in a position to help others. This is a claim that we find is common to the Gorgias, the Euthydemus and Republic. In the Gorgias Socrates says that both the power to avoid suffering wrong as well as the power to avoid doing wrong requires special training.[109] So far as the knowledge that will prevent one from doing wrong is concerned, it will require an understanding of oneself as affected by one's own actions. To avoid suffering wrong we will require this knowledge in one who rules the city, and his endeavour will be "in tending our city and its citizens, to make those citizens as good as possible." It is this service which Socrates thinks can be given only by one who has already in private (i.e. in his own person) proved that he has the knowledge to make men good.[110]

Bambrough's remarks; so far as Plato's account in the early dialogues is concerned, there is, as Bambrough says, "no body of political knowledge, analogous to the medical knowledge of the physician, to which the politician could aspire." (p. 197) I have argued for a similar conclusion in this thesis.

[108] Socrates specifically asks Callicles this: " Is there no need of ruling oneself, but only of ruling others?" (Grg. 491d).

[109] Grg. 509d-510.

[110] Grg. 515a-e.

At the end of the Euthydemus, Socrates contrasts philosophy and politics on the basis of their distinct subjects. Both practices he thinks are good. Although he does not tell us what these distinct subjects are, in view of his two discourses made earlier (and discussed above), philosophy appears to be concerned with individuals and politics with states (i.e. with a collection of individuals, the citizens). Here too the knowledge which confers an ability to benefit oneself (the subject of the first discourse) is seen as the basis for any benefit that can accrue to the state (the subject of the second).[111] The Republic's claim that the philosopher ruler will exhibit in his person all the moral qualities that one who has knowledge of himself will, is the subject of a long disquistion whose aim is to show that one who is psychically ordered will also act in ways that are conventionally thought to be virtuous.[112]

That philosophical knowledge alone can provide for the genuine welfare of the city arises out of the notion of moral knowledge as conceived on analogy with the crafts. While crafts in general are concerned with the welfare of men, moral knowledge provides for the welfare of the individual who acquires it. According to Socrates, philosophy is the only craft which will enable him to do so. This is what enables a person to benefit himself, by enabling himself to arrive at knowledge of himself: such knowledge will not simply ensure that he will not harm others, but that he alone will be able to benefit them.

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[111] This also forms the core of the discussion in the Alcibiades 1.

[112] R. 485a-486d; compare this with the Gorgias' claim that one whose soul is in order will exhibit all the virtues of temperance, courage, piety and justice (Grg. 507a-c).

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