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INTRODUCTION

I. CONTENTS.

THE *Euthydemus* is a conversation between Socrates and his old friend Crito, consisting chiefly of a highly dramatized narrative of a discussion in which Socrates himself had played a principal part, the other chief actor being the Sophist from whose name the dialogue takes its title.

The other persons taking part in the action are Dionysodorus, the elder brother of Euthydemus; Cleinias, an ingenuous and handsome youth of noble birth, first cousin to the famous Alcibiades; and Ctesiphon, an enthusiastic admirer of Cleinias, a high-spirited young gentleman of irascible temper and rough and ready speech, who has been previously introduced in the *Lysis* (204 C, 205 A, 206 C, D) as rallying his sentimental friend Hippothales with a boisterous kind of wit.

There are also present many pupils and admirers of the two Sophists, and on the other hand many young friends of Cleinias.

i. In the opening scene Socrates gives an account to Crito of the two Sophists with whom he had held a discussion in the Lyceum on the previous day. They were natives of Chios, who had migrated to Thurii, and being banished thence had spent many years in various parts of Greece, and had recently come to Athens as professional teachers of wisdom and virtue. The varied accomplishments which they had displayed on a former visit are extolled by Socrates with playful irony. He had never understood before what true pancratiasts were; but these men were perfect in every kind of combat. They could teach men to fight in heavy armour with the weapons of actual war, or to arm themselves with speeches for the harder conflicts of the law-courts. They had now set the crown upon pancratiastic art by making themselves masters of the 'eristic philosophy,' an irresistible method of disputation by which every statement, true and false alike, could be refuted with

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equal certainty. Let Crito come with Socrates to be taught these noble arts; it was not too late to learn, for the teachers themselves were old men, and had only learned this new system last year. If Socrates and Crito took their sons with them, they would, no doubt, be admitted as fellow pupils (271 A–272 D).

As Crito wishes to know what sort of wisdom he is to be taught, Socrates proceeds to describe what had occurred in the Lyceum. He had been sitting alone in the apodyterium, and was just rising up to go away when he was forbidden by the usual sign (*τὸ δαιμόνιον*) to leave his seat. The two Sophists presently enter and walk up and down in the colonnade, followed by an admiring crowd of pupils. Cleinias, accompanied by Ctesippus and other friends, comes in and sits beside Socrates. On seeing this the Sophists approach, and seat themselves, Euthydemus beside Cleinias, and Diodorus on the other side of Socrates, who introduces them to Cleinias with high commendation of their military and forensic skill. But the brothers receive these compliments with rude contempt, for they are no longer proud of such minor accomplishments, but make the loftier boast of imparting virtue more perfectly and more quickly than any other men. 'The possessors of such a power, says Socrates, must be divine: forgive my irreverent speeches, and grant us an exhibition of this marvellous wisdom: we are all eager to learn, and let the first experiment be made on Cleinias, for whose advancement in wisdom and virtue we are all most anxious' (272 D–275 C).

ii. Before attempting to describe the next scene Socrates, like the poets (Hom. *Il.* ii. 484), invokes the Muses and Mnemosyne to aid him in so great a task: cf. *Theaet.* 191 D.

Then comes the wonderful exhibition of the Sophists' skill in teaching virtue.

Euthydemus. Are those who learn the wise or the unwise (*οἱ σοφοὶ ἢ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς*)?

Cleinias. The wise.

Euthydemus. Do they already know the things which they are learning?

Cleinias. No.

Euthydemus. Then the learners are the unwise (*ἀμαθεῖς*), not the wise, as you suppose.

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The chorus of the Sophists' followers laugh and applaud; and before Cleinias has time to recover breath Dionysodorus takes him in hand.

'Which of the schoolboys learn the dictated lesson, the clever or the stupid (οἱ σοφοὶ ἢ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς)?'—'The clever.'—'Then the wise (οἱ σοφοί) are the learners, not the unwise (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς), and your answer to Euthydemus was wrong.'

Amid shouts of applause Euthydemus returns to the attack.

'Do the boys learn (μανθάνουσιν) what they know (ἐπίστανται), or what they do not know?'—'What they do not know.'—'But they know the letters?'—'Yes.'—'And the letters make up the lesson?'—'Yes.'—'Then they learn what they know, and your answer was wrong.'

Upon this Diodorus again takes up the ball: 'To learn is to receive knowledge: to know is to have knowledge. The learners receive but have not knowledge: therefore they who do not know learn, not those who know' (275 C–277 C).

Cleinias is quite bewildered, and Socrates interposes to shield him from a third attack. The Sophists, he says, are only playing with him, and dancing round him like the Corybantes, and initiating him by these preparatory rites into the Sophistic mysteries. They are tripping him up with their verbal fallacies in order to teach him that a word may be used in more senses than one. But there has been enough of such play: let them now show Cleinias how to improve in wisdom and virtue; he will himself give an example of what he means in his own simple way (277 C–278 D).

All men desire to be happy, in other words to do well (εὖ πράττειν): to this end they count many good things necessary, riches, health, beauty, noble birth, power, honour. To these must be added temperance, justice, fortitude, wisdom, and good fortune. But good fortune is already included in wisdom. In the practice of every art, in playing the flute, in reading and writing, in navigation, in war, in medicine the wise are the fortunate, and he who has wisdom has no further need of fortune.

Moreover all those good things must be used, and used rightly, in order to make men happy; and to use them rightly there must be knowledge for a guide. Without it riches and strength and

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power become even worse than useless, as giving wider opportunities for ill doing. In short all such things are in themselves neither good nor bad: wisdom alone is good, and folly bad, therefore get wisdom.

But how to get it? Can it be taught, or does it come spontaneously? Cleinias replies with youthful confidence, 'In my opinion it can be taught'; and Socrates is delighted to accept so ready a solution of the great question (278 E–282 D).

Socrates now invites either of the Sophists to discuss the same subject more scientifically, or to go on to show whether it is necessary to acquire every kind of knowledge, or only some one science that will suffice to make Cleinias wise and happy. Dionysodorus, after being assured that they truly and earnestly desire to have Cleinias made wise, argues that they wish him to be now what he is not, that is to be no longer what he now is, in fact to be destroyed. Worthy friends, to wish destruction to the boy!

'Destruction on your own head!' cries Ctesippus, 'for telling such an impious lie about us.'—'A lie!' says Euthydemus. 'Is it possible to tell a lie? By telling the thing of which you speak you tell a real thing; and he who tells the real thing tells the truth, and tells no lie. You can do nothing to what is not, you can only speak what is, that is, speak truth.'—'Yes, of course,' says Ctesippus, 'he speaks in a certain way of real things, but not as they really are.'—'What do you mean?' says Diodorus. 'Do any speak of things as they are?'—'Yes, gentlemen, and those who speak the truth.'—'Do good men then speak badly of what is bad?'—'Indeed they do speak very badly of bad men, and if you do not take care, they will speak badly of you.'—'And do they speak greatly of the great, and hotly of the hot?'—'Certainly, and speak frigidly of the frigid and their frigid arguments.'—'You are insolent, Ctesippus, insolent, I say.'—'Not so, but as a friend I advise you never to say so rudely in my presence that I wish destruction to my dearest friends' (282 D–284 E).

Socrates again interposes to keep the peace: 'Let us not quarrel over a word; if by "destruction" they mean making foolish and bad men wise and good, let them try the experiment on me, and boil me, if they please, as in Medea's cauldron.'—'Or they may flay me like Marsyas,' said Ctesippus, 'only let them make virtue, not

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a bottle, out of my hide: but Dionysodorus must not call contradiction insolence.'

'Is contradiction possible?' said the Sophist. 'At all events you could not prove that you ever heard one person contradicting another.'—'That is true; but let us listen now whether I am proving it to you while Ctesippus is contradicting Dionysodorus' (see the note on the passage).

'Would you undertake to argue this? We should not contradict each other at all, if we both knew the right definition (λόγον) of each thing; but when neither knows the right definition, then we should contradict each other, or in this case neither would speak of the thing at all. So when I give the right definition and you some other, you do not speak of the thing itself at all, and, if you do not speak, you cannot contradict' (284 E–286 B).

Ctesippus kept silence, but Socrates said that this argument was as old as Protagoras or older, and had a wonderful way of tripping up the speaker himself as well as others. 'But you can best tell us the truth about it. Is it impossible to speak or even think what is false? Is there no such thing as ignorance, or an ignorant man? Do you really mean this?'—'Refute me if you can,' said Dionysodorus.—'Is refutation possible, if according to your argument no one speaks what is false?'—'No, it is not,' said Euthydemus.—'Neither then did I bid you refute me,' said Dionysodorus.—'Was it you then that bade me, Euthydemus: for I do not clearly understand these subtleties. However, I am going to ask perhaps a stupid question: If it is impossible to contradict, to speak or even think what is false, to be ignorant or in error, pray what are you come to teach?' (285 A–287 A).

Dionysodorus tries to evade this troublesome question: 'Why go back to former arguments? Can you make nothing of the present?'—'They are very difficult,' says Socrates, 'for what does this last phrase, "make nothing of them," mean (νοεῖ), except that I cannot "refute" them?'

Dionysodorus has heard enough of that word 'refute' (286 E), and insists on passing to a new question: 'Can a mere lifeless word "mean" anything?'—'It was my stupidity,' says Socrates; 'but was I right or wrong? If I was right, you cannot "refute" me: and if I was wrong, you cannot be right in saying that error

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is impossible (287 A). This is not going back to the past: for your present argument can only trip one up and then itself fall' (287 A–288 A).

Ctesippus begins again to jeer at the Sophists, but is checked by Socrates: 'They are not yet in earnest, but are playing tricks like Proteus, and must be held fast till they show themselves in their true form.' He will give them another example of the sort of teaching which he wishes them to impart, by continuing his argument with Cleinias.

It was agreed (282 D 1) that philosophy or the acquisition of knowledge is necessary to make men happy. But what kind of knowledge? Such as teaches them to make the right use of all other acquirements and advantages. Not the knowledge of healing or money-making, nor even a knowledge that would make us immortal without teaching us to use immortality aright: not the art of the speech-maker, sublime and inspired though it sometimes appears; for some know not how to use the speeches they have themselves made, and after all it is only a kind of charm for fascinating judges and assemblies. Is it then the strategic art that makes men happy?—No, says Cleinias, that is only a kind of man-hunting; and hunters and fishermen give over what they catch to cooks, and geometers and astronomers give their discoveries to dialecticians to make use of them.

iii. At this point the narrative of Socrates is interrupted by Crito, who is astonished that one so young as Cleinias should be so wise. A long conversation follows, in which Socrates explains that even the kingly art is found wanting, because it does not impart wisdom or knowledge, and its claim is only an empty boast like ὁ Διὸς Κόρινθος (290 E–293 A).

iv. Socrates being thus unable, as he pretends, to find the kind of knowledge that will make men happy entreats the Sophists to be serious and rescue them from their difficulty. Euthydemus boldly undertakes to prove that Socrates already possesses the knowledge of which he is in search: he knows something, nay many things, therefore he knows everything; for he cannot be both knowing and not knowing.

'Then you two also,' says Socrates, 'know everything.'—'Yes,' says Dionysodorus, 'and all men know all things, if they know

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one.'—'Good heavens!—for now I see you are in earnest—do you really know all things, such as carpentering, shoemaking, astronomy, and the number of the sands?'—'Of course we do.' At this Ctesippus bursts in with an impudent jibe: 'Does each of them know how many teeth the other has?' Some lively bantering follows, and then Euthydemus, still maintaining that Socrates, as well as themselves, knows all things, insists on having his questions answered categorically, 'Yes' or 'No,' without any exception or limitation, and thus proves to his own satisfaction that Socrates knew all things even before he was born or begotten, and before the earth and the heaven were made (293 A–296 D).

Socrates now turns their own mode of argument against them: 'Do I, or do I not, know that the good are unjust?'—'Yes,' says Euthydemus. 'You know that they are not unjust.'—'But that is not what I ask. How do I know that they *are* unjust?'—'You do not know it at all,' says Dionysodorus; but he is reproved by Euthydemus for spoiling the argument, by admitting that Socrates is at the same time knowing and not knowing.

'Must not your brother, who knows all things, be right?'—'Am I his brother?' says Dionysodorus, trying again to change the argument. To this Socrates replies: 'I cannot fight two at once; even Hercules called his nephew Iolaus to help him.'—'Was Iolaus any more Hercules' nephew than yours?'—'As you will not let Euthydemus answer my question, I must, I suppose, answer yours: Iolaus was Hercules' nephew, not mine at all, not being the son of my brother Patrocles.'—'Is Patrocles your brother?'—'Yes, on the mother's side, not on the father's.'—'Then he both is and is not your brother.'—'Not on the father's side: Chaeredemus was his father, Sophroniscus mine.'—'Then Chaeredemus, being different from a father, was not a father; and so Sophroniscus, in like manner being different from a father, was not a father: so you, Socrates, had no father' (296 D–298 B).

This style of argument suits Ctesippus: 'Your father, you say, is also my father, and father of all, both men and beasts; you therefore are the brother of gudgeons and puppies and little pigs.'—'So are you,' says Dionysodorus: 'your dog is a father of puppies, and he is yours; therefore he is your father, and you are the puppies' brother. When you beat your dog, you beat your own

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father.'—'I would much rather beat your father for begetting such wise sons,' replies Ctesippus.

Then follows an argument with Euthydemus about having too much of a good thing: a whole cartload of hellebore would be too much for a sick man, unless he were as big as the statue at Delphi; but one shield and spear would not be enough for a Geryon or Briareus (298 B–299 C).

Diodorus here comes to his brother's aid: 'Gold you admit is good; then the happiest man must be one who has most gold: gold in his stomach, and skull, and both eyes.'—'Yes, indeed,' said Ctesippus, turning to Euthydemus, 'they say that among the Scythians the happiest and bravest men have much gold in their own skulls, and drink out of their own skulls, and holding their own heads in their hands, see into the inside.'

Euthydemus, catching at the word 'see,' carries on the argument by quibbling about the double meaning of *δυνατὰ ὁρᾶν*, 'able to see,' or 'able to be seen,' of *σιγῶντα λέγειν*, and *λέγοντα σιγᾶν*, until Ctesippus asks, 'Do all things speak, or all keep silence?'—'Neither and both,' cries Dionysodorus; and Ctesippus with a loud laugh declares that by this 'both' he has ruined his argument and is beaten and done for (*ἀπόλωλε* alluding perhaps to 283 D, E).

Cleinias laughs with delight, and Ctesippus swells with pride. 'Why do you laugh,' says Socrates, 'at things so important and beautiful?'—'Are beautiful things different from beauty or the same?' asks Dionysodorus. Socrates pretends to be puzzled and sorry to have spoken, but answers that they are different from beauty itself, though some beauty is present with each.—'Then if an ox be present with you, you are an ox, and because I am present with you now, you are Dionysodorus?'—'Heaven forbid,' said Socrates.—'But in what way must one thing be present to another in order that this other may be other (than it was)?'—'Do you doubt about that?'—'Of course I doubt about what is not possible.'—'Is not the same same, and the other other? Even a child could not doubt that the other is other.' (Socrates here confounds the Sophist by his own device of using 'other' in different senses; see the note on 301 B 1). 'This point, Dionysodorus, you missed on purpose, but in other respects your dialectic is excellent.'

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Thus encouraged Dionysodorus proceeds in his own fashion to prove the propriety of boiling the cook, smiting the smith, and making pots of the potter. Further he makes Socrates admit that he may give, or sell, or slay his own animals, and that since his gods Zeus, Apollo, or Athene having souls are animals, he may give, sell, or slay them. Socrates is struck dumb, but Ctesippus cries 'Bravo Hercules, what a fine argument!' 'Is "Bravo Hercules," or "Hercules Bravo"?'—'O Poseidon, what clever arguments! I give up,' says Ctesippus; 'they are irresistible.'

Not only are the admirers of Euthydemus bursting with delight, but the very columns of the portico seem to ring with laughter and applause. Socrates, as if enchanted by the Sophists' wisdom, extols ironically their utter disregard of other men's opinions, who would be ashamed to conquer by such arguments, and slyly adds that by denying all predication (301 B 3), and declaring that nothing is either beautiful, or good, or white, they sew up other men's mouths and their own also, a delightful result that does away all offence. But the most marvellous thing is that they can teach others so quickly, as was seen when Ctesippus beat them with their own weapons. So they must not exhibit their skill in public, but only argue with each other alone, or with those who will pay them: such rare wisdom is of too great price to be made as common as water; but he begs them to receive him and Cleinias as pupils (303 B–304 B).

v. Having ended his narrative of the discussion with the Sophists Socrates playfully invites Crito to become his fellow-pupil. But Crito declines the proposal, and tells how he had met a certain person who had heard the discussion, and criticized it as an unworthy fuss about worthless matters. Philosophy itself he said was good for nothing, and Crito would have been ashamed if he had heard how Socrates gave himself up to the Sophists. Socrates ascertains that the critic was no orator, but one of the speech-writers who being neither philosophers nor statesmen, but halfway between the two, tried to disparage real philosophers as their only rivals in wisdom, and shrank from all personal discussion lest they might be worsted by the fallacious tricks of the Sophists, which they supposed to be practised by the philosophers also. Crito might well be afraid of entrusting the education of his sons to

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impostors such as the Sophists, but let him satisfy himself as to the value of true philosophy, and then both study and practise it himself, and encourage his sons to do the same (304 B–307 C).

II. THE LITERARY FORM.

In the foregoing sketch of the contents of the dialogue we see that its general form and arrangement are clearly marked.

The main subject is the narration by Socrates of a discussion between himself and the Sophists ; but this is set in the frame of a conversation between Socrates and Crito, which both forms the introduction (271 A–272 D), and is resumed in the middle (290 E–293 A) and at the end of the discussion (304 B–the end).

Apart from this conversation the narrative of the discussion itself may be regarded as a drama in five scenes distinguished by the different characters who speak in each. Cf. Bonitz, *Platonische Studien*, ii. p. 258.

Sc. 1. Euthydemus, Dionysodorus, Cleinias, Socrates (272 E–277 C).

Sc. 2. Socrates, Cleinias (277 D–282 E).

Sc. 3. Dionysodorus, Socrates, Ctesippus, Euthydemus (283 A–288 B).

Sc. 4. Socrates, Cleinias (288 B–290 D).

Sc. 5. Euthydemus, Socrates, Dionysodorus, Ctesippus (293 D–304 B).

This dramatic form is more prominent in the Euthydemus than in any other of the Platonic dialogues, and from the allusions to a chorus and choric dancing in 276 B and 277 D we may infer that it was consciously adopted by Plato in order to give the most vivid expression to the contrast between the methods of argument practised by Socrates and the Sophists. This peculiar character of the dialogue has been noticed by nearly every critic, and particularly by Archer Butler, *Lectures on Ancient Philosophy*, ii. 24 : ‘We can never rightly estimate the labours of Plato unless we regard his writings as themselves works of art no less than transcripts of doctrine. His versatility in the dramatic representation of character has made some of his dialogues far more resemble what we should call “Genteel Comedy” than a philosophical exposition. Thus the entire *Euthydemus* is nothing

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