

INTRODUCTION

I PROLEGOMENA TO THE DIALOGUE

1.1 Introduction

Whereas a commentary on the *Clitophon* requires no justification – for there is none in either Latin or any of the three major European languages of our time, its scale as offered here does call for an excuse. The *Clitophon* has often been dubbed a ‘riddle’, and so it is. Its authorship is dubious – a decision as to its authenticity would seem to depend mainly on the interpretation of its meaning. Its meaning is therefore a problem prior to (and more interesting than) its authorship. In this connection several questions come to one’s mind.

The *Clitophon* is mainly an attack on Socrates. Is this the Athenian philosopher who inspired a great number of thinkers, was ridiculed by Aristophanes and other comedians and was eventually put to death, or is he the literary character who plays the central part in many fourth-century philosophical texts of a genre called λόγος Σωκρατικός from Aristotle onwards?

This Socrates is said to be an expert in what is called προτρέπειν (I shall translate this throughout the book by ‘exhort’, for lack of a better equivalent). How does this statement relate to several works, called Προτρεπτικός, by pupils of the Athenian philosopher, to an interesting passage of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (1.4.1) which is programmatic for the whole of the rest of that work, and finally to certain passages in Plato where this activity of Socrates’ is described or hinted at? As a corollary, what is the relation of these passages to Plato’s literary production as a whole?

The criticism is uttered by one Clitophon, who we are told is at the same time rather enthusiastic about the teaching of Thrasymachus. In Book 1 of Plato’s *Republic*

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this character appears as a companion and defender of Thrasymachus. To what extent is this significant for the interpretation of *Republic* 1 and *Clitophon*? What further light is shed on this problem by the similarity of statements in the *Clitophon* about the result (ἔργον) of justice to statements about justice in *Republic* 1?

Clitophon gives an extensive report of his questioning Socrates' companions and refuting them. What is this method of interrogation and refutation; how close does it come to methods observed in other Socratic literature and what are the implications of the similarity for the intention and philosophical provenance of our dialogue?

I have tried to answer these questions without any regard to the problem of authorship. Unless I have gravely deceived myself, it is possible to explain the *Clitophon* from the *Clitophon* itself; such other Socratic texts as I have deemed profitable to take into account have been used either to test the hypotheses formed on the basis of the *Clitophon* alone, or, occasionally, to answer questions for which I found no satisfactory answers in the text of the dialogue. In general, I do not think that this strictly 'ergocentric' method is imperative in Plato – on the contrary, the written work is called an εἰδότης ὑπόμνησις in the *Phaedrus*, so that in genuine dialogues a comparative method of interpretation seems to be called for. However, the authenticity of the *Clitophon* has been doubted by many eminent scholars from the early nineteenth century onwards; I have therefore left aside the attribution of the dialogue to Plato, which normally in literary analysis one is obliged to take into account. It has become a platitude to say that in cases of disputed authenticity the *onus probandi* lies with those who want to dispute it – in fact, this is far from being a dogma¹ – but one should not add to the bur-

¹ Cf. the remarks in *Pseudepigrapha* 1 (*Entretiens Hardt* 18 (1971)), 12 (R. Syme); 149 (G. J. D. Aalders), where an exception is made for texts

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den by forming hypotheses based on related texts transmitted within the same Corpus.

The Introduction and the Commentary together contain my interpretation of the *Clitophon*; the questions raised above will be found treated there. Because I find the questions difficult and rather involved, the arguments for my answers take up a fair amount of space and are scattered throughout the book. Therefore I shall outline here, without further argument, such sense as I can make of this dialogue.

The *Clitophon* is essentially a condemnation not of Socrates, nor of another philosopher, but of a specific branch of Socratic literature, to wit philosophical protreptic in its pre-Aristotelian, ethical form. The speech put into Socrates' mouth is a parody² (as Aspasia's speech in the *Menexenus* is generally supposed to be), in which various motifs of this genre are used; it is a parody of thoughts, not of one particular writer. The author is careful not to hit at the core of Socratic philosophy; it is the uselessness of protreptic preaching which is the target, not its ethical values. The choice of Clitophon, admirer of Thrasymachus, as the main character suggests how dangerous protreptic can be.

belonging to a genre which as a whole is open to suspicion. If there is indeed such a genre as the Short Dialogue (section 1.4), these remarks are relevant for the *Clitophon*. – K. Dover, *Marginal Comment* (London 1994), 139 speaks of 'the disastrous principle "presumed genuine until proved spurious"', but gives no arguments for this somewhat extreme view.

² I have not tried to define this term. Though I am aware of its deficiencies, I think the following definition is satisfactory, and any rate for *Clit.*: 'Parodie ist Nachahmung mit Polemik gegen den Nachgeahmten' (R. Neumann, 'Zur Ästhetik der Parodie', *Die Literatur* 30 (1927–8) 439–41; for criticism, cf. W. Karrer, *Parodie, Travestie, Pastiche* (Munich 1977), 36–41). My use of the term is therefore much more traditional than that of some recent theoreticians, notably Bakhtin. Cf. P. Morris (ed.), *The Bakhtin Reader* (London 1994), 102–22. Bakhtin's influence is notable in A. W. Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue. Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge 1995), esp. 6–8; 148–9.

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Clitophon's interrogation of Socrates' companions and – to a lesser extent – of Socrates himself serves a double purpose: it proves that mere exhortation towards justice does not lead to knowledge of justice (various discussions of justice are taken over from Socratic literature, not exclusively protreptic literature; these borrowings are not meant to suggest that Socratic theories about justice are worthless); at the same time it is shown that elenchos, not exhortation, leads to insight (and thereby to knowledge).

The author's judgement on the respective effectiveness of exhortation and elenchos is identical to Plato's standpoint. The use of elenchos in the *Clitophon* is typically Platonic. Moreover, the author implies that he assents to an important aspect of Plato's concept of justice, namely that the true politician is he who renders his fellow-citizens more just. In short, the author's intention is to show that his opinion of Socratic literature conforms in every respect to the views found in Plato's literary production, which is, by implication, recommended as a better alternative for protreptic.

In the Commentary, I have endeavoured not only to elucidate questions connected with structure, intention, expression and textual transmission (in so far as these matters have not been treated systematically in the Introduction), but also to furnish material for settling the questions of authorship. I have adduced many parallels for words, phrases and constructions which in themselves needed no illustration, in order to show how these idioms relate to the usage of Plato, to whom the *Clitophon* is ascribed. As I found that, on the whole, the language of our dialogue is very similar to Plato's, I saw no point in increasing the bulk of annotations by referring (more than occasionally) to parallels found in the works of other authors of this period. It goes without saying that apart from the *TLG* CD-ROM, Brandwood's *Word Index* (but also Ast's *Lexicon*) has been an invaluable support.

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In a limited number of cases, I was unable to refrain from treating questions of grammar and lexicon on a more general scale, even though a commentary is not necessarily the best place for having one's say on such matters.

I.2 Summary and analysis of composition

The nineteenth-century division into chapters (Roman numerals), which was abandoned in Burnet's edition, has been reintroduced because on the whole it does justice to the structure of the *Clitophon*.

A. PROLOGUE (406a1–407a4)

I. Socrates says someone told him that, in a conversation with Lysias, Clitophon had criticised Socrates' intellectual guidance and praised that of Thrasymachus. – That is not quite right, Clitophon answers; in part I have indeed not praised you, but in part I did do so. He offers to expound his position. – Socrates gives him the opportunity, hoping to benefit from his words.

B. CLITOPHON'S REPORT (407a5–410b3)

(1) CLITOPHON'S PRAISE (407a5–408c4)

(a) Introductory words (407a5–b1)

II. Clitophon says that he has been struck whenever Socrates delivered a certain speech like a *deus ex machina*:

(b) Socrates' protreptic (407b1–408b5)

(*first part*; 407b1–e2) 'Men do not act as they should, because they focus all their attention on amassing wealth, but neglect to provide their sons, who will inherit it, with the knowledge how to use it justly; they do not find them teachers of justice, if such there be, nor have they taken care of themselves similarly in the past. They and their children have followed the traditional curriculum, and

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they are none the less vicious in matters of money – therefore present education is to be condemned. Discord in the world stems from disharmony, not musical but spiritual. When men say that injustice is the consequence not of bad education but of a free choice, they contradict themselves, as they also think that injustice is hateful to the gods. If man is mastered by his pleasures, he is so involuntarily. Consequently each individual and each state ought to care more in this respect than they do now.’

(III. Interrupting his report, Clitophon again states his admiration, 407e3–4.)

(second part; 407e5–8) ‘Those who care only for their bodies and neglect their souls act likewise: they neglect the ruling part.’

(third part; 407e8–408b5) ‘What one cannot handle, one should leave alone, so with the senses and the whole body; likewise, one who cannot handle his own lyre will not be able to handle his neighbour’s. Finally, one who does not know how to handle his soul had better leave it alone and cease to live, or at any rate be a slave and hand over the rule of his mind to an expert.’ These experts are identified by Socrates with those who have learned politics, which is identical to judication and justice.

(c) Concluding words (408b5–c4)

IV. Clitophon quite agrees with this and similar speeches and considers them very suitable for exhortation and very useful.

(2) CLITOPHON’S CRITICISM (408c4–410b3)

(a) Introduction (408c4–409c1)

Therefore he asked those companions whom Socrates esteemed most how Socrates’ exhortation is to be followed up, supposing that exhortation itself is not the goal of life. After Socrates’ fashion, he offers an analogy: one who had exhorted them to the care of the body would reproach them on the grounds that they care only for agrarian

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products instead of the arts which improve the body. Which art is it that improves the soul?

V. The man who seemed best equipped answered that this art is none other than justice. Clitophon wished to hear more than a name. Medicine has a double effect, the production of new doctors and health (of which the latter is a result of the art, not art itself), and likewise carpentry can be divided into doctrine and result. Similarly justice will on one hand produce new just men, on the other it must have a result of its own. What is the latter?

(b) First definition of the result of justice (409c1–d2)

This pupil answered ‘the beneficial’, others, ‘the fitting’, ‘the useful’, ‘the profitable’. Clitophon replies that all these epithets are also valid for the results of each of the arts, such as carpentry; but the meaning of these epithets will be defined by the arts in question; let the result of justice be defined similarly.

(c) Second definition of the result of justice (409d2–410a6)

VI. Finally the most elegant answer given was: to effect friendship in the cities. Friendship was said by this man to be always a good, so that the friendships of children and animals (which as a result of a debate he concluded were more often harmful than beneficial) had to be excluded: real friendship was concord. Being asked whether concord was unanimity in opinion or knowledge he rejected the former, as being often harmful. At this point those present were able to accuse him of circular reasoning: medicine, too, is concord in this sense, but unlike the arts, justice has still failed to grasp the object of its knowledge; its result is yet unclear.

(d) Third definition of the result of justice (410a7–b3)

VII. Then Clitophon asked Socrates himself, who answered that the special result of justice was harming one’s

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enemies and benefiting one's friends. Subsequently it turned out that justice never harms anyone.

C. CLITOPHON'S VERDICT (410b3–e8)

(a) Criticism (410b3–c8)

Having endured this a long time, Clitophon has given up. He thinks that Socrates is still the best in exhorting others to justice but either he can do nothing more, like a layman who can eulogise steersmanship – this is not Clitophon's view, but either Socrates does not know what justice is or he is unwilling to impart his knowledge to Clitophon. That is why Clitophon visits Thrasymachus and others: he is at a loss.

(b) Last appeal (410c8–e5)

If Socrates is prepared to stop exhorting him and act just as if, having exhorted Clitophon to the care of the body, he were going to explain the nature of the body and the treatment pertaining to it, then let it happen. Clitophon agrees that the care of the soul is all-important and says he has uttered his criticism with this intention. He implores Socrates to do this so that he can stop partly praising, partly blaming him.

(c) Summing-up (410e5–8)

Socrates is invaluable for those who have not been exhorted; for those who have been, he is almost a stumbling-block in their attainment of the core of virtue and becoming happy.

For the relation between content (as analysed here) and form, cf. section 1.4.2(5).

Among other attempts³ at schematisation of the structure

³ By far the most satisfactory is that of Pavlu ('Pseudopl. Kleitophon', 3–5: 'Einleitung' (406a–407a), 'Hauptteil', divided into 'I. Was Kleitophon an Sokrates lobenswert findet' (407a–408c); 'II. Was Kleitophon an Sokrates zu tadeln findet' (408c–410b), 'Schluss' (410b–e)).

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of the *Clitophon*, that by Geffcken ('Rätsel', 436) deserves closer investigation because of the conclusions he draws from it. He considers Clitophon's report of Socrates' speech, which he denies to be ironical (section 1.5.3), to be the prooemium, constructed so as to make Clitophon appear an equitable critic; the interrogation of Socrates' pupils is the narrative part, followed by 'eine philosophierende Erörterung, die den Satz von der Nichtigkeit der blossen Protrepik endgültig beweisen soll' – I am not quite sure whether 408d1–6 or 410b6–c2 is meant; finally Socrates is addressed directly for the second time (from 410a7 onwards?), and is now 'more than once sharply criticised'. This disposition is said (437) to correspond exactly to the ἔργον τοῦ ῥήτορος as defined by Theodectes of Phaselis: προοιμιάσασθαι πρὸς εὔνοιαν, διηγῆσασθαι πρὸς πιθανότητα, πιστώσασθαι πρὸς πειθῶ, ἐπιλογίσασθαι πρὸς ὀργὴν ἢ ἔλεον.⁴ The individual traits of the *Clitophon* are manifest also in Theodectes. According to Geffcken, the *Clitophon* is unmistakably an Aristotelising text, and Theodectes was a friend of Aristotle and was influenced by him. Finally, the *Clitophon* is a riddle, and

This schema is taken over by Brünnecke ('Kleitophon wider Sokrates', 451–2; cf. Blits, 'Socratic teaching'), who besides distinguishes three protreptic speeches, as Kesters (*Kérygmes*, 39–44) after him. Souilhé (163–4) places a dichotomy at 408e2; the first part is about protreptic, the second about justice. Kunert (*Necessitudo*, 4) recognises two parts, the first dealing with Socrates, the second (from 408b5) with his so-called pupils. The return to Socrates at 410a7 is explained 'non ex veritatis sed ex artis quasi scaenicae, qua in dialogo opus est, rationibus' – this solution (if it deserves the name) is rightly rejected by Pavlu (5 n. 1).

⁴ *Oratores Attici* II 247 Sauppe; on the problems concerning the versions and ascription of this fragment, cf. Geffcken, 'Rätsel', 437 n. 1; Radermacher, *Artium scriptores*, 203. – Geffcken's analysis of the dialogue as a judicial accusation was foreshadowed by Brünnecke, who makes Socrates the accuser and Clitophon the defendant in a fictitious slander suit ('Kleitophon wider Sokrates', 452–7). This idea was taken over by Orwin: 'we might regard this dialogue as a kind of counter-*Apology*' ('Case against Socrates', 744). See section II.3.4 n. 272.

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Theodectes is, in his dramas, fond of riddles. Geffcken concludes (439) that Theodectes (rather than a pupil of his) is the author of the *Clitophon*.

Quite apart from the dubious quality of the remaining arguments, I am unable to make sense of Geffcken's analysis of the *Clitophon*; if the pattern of rhetorical κατηγορία is followed at all, I would suggest A as prooemium, B as a very lengthy narrative, C (a–b) as roughly equivalent to πίστις and C (c) – the closing sentence – as epilogue (section 1.3.2).

1.3 Is the *Clitophon* unfinished?

1.3.1 Historical Survey

Socrates' silence after Clitophon's plaidoyer does not seem to have caused especial surprise in antiquity. One explanation of it is known to us. It is attributed by Proclus to Πτολεμαῖος ὁ Πλατωνικός, who identified the missing fourth person of the *Timaeus* (17a1) with Clitophon: τοῦτον γὰρ ἐν τῷ ὁμωνύμῳ διαλόγῳ μηδ' ἀποκρίσεως ἤξιῶσθαι παρὰ Σωκράτους.⁵ This Platonist Ptolemy, who is mentioned also by Iamblichus,⁶ again in connection with

⁵ Procl. in *Tim.* 7b = 1.20.8–9 Diehl; apparently Clitophon was thought to have stayed away through pique (slightly different A.-J. Festugière, *Proclus, Commentaire sur le Timée I* (Paris 1966), 48 n. 6). Proclus does not think much of the identification: τὸ δὲ Κλειτοφῶντα [sc. λέγειν] παντελῶς ἄτοπον· παρῆν γὰρ οὐδὲ τῆι προτεραίῃ Σωκράτους διηγουμένου τίνα εἶπεν ὁ Κλειτοφῶν (namely in the *Republic*, 340a3–b8), *ibid.* 1.20.18–20 Diehl. An ingenious distortion of Ptolemy's view is given by Yxem ('Über Platon's Kleitophon', 13–14): the *Republic* is in fact Socrates' answer (on the premise that Ptolemy must have regarded the eighth tetralogy as a whole, so that Clitophon was in fact one of the persons to whom Socrates reported the *Republic*); ἐν τῷ ὁμωνύμῳ διαλόγῳ κτλ. is taken to mean 'not at any rate in the *Clitophon* (but in the *Republic*)'. This theory is taken over by Susemihl (508).

⁶ Apud Stob. 1.49.39 = 1.378 W.; cf. Festugière, *Révélation*, III 218 and n. 2.