

Introduction

In 1992 Myles Burnyeat published an essay he entitled ‘Is an Aristotelian philosophy of mind still credible?’, labelling it ‘A draft’. As he stated, he did so ‘with reluctance’. He had intended it as a working paper only, ‘to provoke discussion’. It had provoked not just discussion and as much lively interest as anything he ever wrote, but attempted refutations in print. Hence his own reluctant eventual decision for publication. Many have regretted that in Volumes I and II of *Explorations* he included neither this nor a closely connected article, published in its final English version in 1995 as ‘How much happens when Aristotle sees red and hears middle C? Remarks on *De Anima* 2, 7–8’. But as Burnyeat had intended, he continued to work on refining and developing his interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of perception, and the main result was the major extended essay of 2002 on *De Anima* II.5, reprinted here in Part I as Chapter 5 (in which he also comments on those earlier publications). Chapter 6 is an allied treatment of the same topic in Aquinas’s writings.

Chapter 4 deals connectedly and at length with a much-discussed passage found in some manuscripts of the *Metaphysics* – a ‘freak performance’, in Burnyeat’s view – that presents a very different version of the notion of actuality from that central in *De Anima* II.5. This preoccupation with questions of ontology in his later period (as notably evidenced in the 2001 monograph *A Map of Metaphysics Zeta*) was not confined to Aristotle. Key passages in the *Apology*, *Euthydemus*, and *Timaeus*, all in one way or another concerned with Plato and the verb ‘to be’, are a particular focus in Chapters 1–3 respectively. Especially striking, perhaps, is Burnyeat’s radically novel treatment in Chapter 2 of the puzzle of speaking what is not, as Plato explores it in the *Euthydemus*. Chapter 7 on *epistēmē*, by contrast, represents a return on his part to a quite different topic, first broached by him in the influential 1981 paper ‘Aristotle on understanding knowledge’ (reprinted as Chapter 5 of Volume II of *Explorations*). Plato as well as Aristotle figures prominently here, too.

Chapters 4 and 5 are both designed in part as studies in ‘how to read an Aristotelian chapter’, comparable in aim, if not in scale, to *A Map of Metaphysics Zeta*. Reading Plato and Aristotle and their philosophical vocabulary with enhanced textual and philosophical attention is likewise a major preoccupation of other essays on ontological and epistemological themes reprinted in Part I of this volume, as indeed of Chapters 8 and 9 in Part II. Chapter 8, a study of what Burnyeat proposes we should construe oxymoronically as the ‘rational/reasonable myth’ of the *Timaeus*, already widely considered a classic of Platonic interpretation, here joins in Part II essays on Aristotle’s writings in natural philosophy, and on neglected but intriguing evidence for ancient optics.

PART I

Ontology and epistemology

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Myles Burnyeat , Prepared for publication by Carol Atack , Malcolm Schofield , David Sedley

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I A

Apology 30b2–4: *Socrates, money,
 and the grammar of γίγνεσθαι*

THE PROBLEM

οὐκ ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ
 ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ.

This sentence is standardly translated, ‘Virtue does not come from money, but from virtue money and all other good things come to human beings in both private and public life’, *vel sim.* The objection is philosophical. Nowhere else does Plato represent Socrates as promising that virtue will make you rich. Quite the contrary, the promise is that virtue will make you happy whatever fortune brings (*Gorg.* 507c–508b, 522ce, 527cd), for whether you fare well or ill is completely determined by the good or bad character of your soul (*Prot.* 313a, *Gorg.* 470e). And this promise is backed by a warning: the more worldly possessions you have, the more unhappy you will be if you do not know how to use them for the good of your soul (*Meno* 87e–89a, *Euthyd.* 280b–281e; the idea is still going strong at *Laws* II.661ad). If Socrates was in the habit of promoting virtue as a money-maker, it would be disingenuous of him to say that his words do not recommend pursuing virtue *in order to* make money. Strictly speaking, they do not – but he would know that lots of his listeners would take them that way unless he explicitly corrected a misapprehension which, if left uncorrected, would bring him many more followers.

Some have thought to make the usual translation respectable by quoting the Bible. The first to invoke ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things [*sc.* food, drink, clothing, etc.] shall be added unto you’ (*Matthew* 6:33) was Sir Richard Livingstone.¹ The same comparison with Jesus turns up in the recent huge commentary on the *Apology* by De Strycker and Slings.² But the Bible, as so often, cuts both ways: ‘A rich man shall hardly [*i.e.* with difficulty] enter into the kingdom of heaven’

¹ Livingstone 1938: 26. ² Strycker 1994: 140.

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(*Matthew* 19:23) is much closer to the Socrates we meet elsewhere in Plato. This is a case where philology should take its cue from philosophy. ||

ALTERNATIVE TRANSLATIONS

Long ago, when contributing to a collection of essays on Socrates edited by Gregory Vlastos, I complained that the standard translation cannot be right. I translated χρήματα more generally as ‘valuables’ and spoke of ‘the Socratic challenge to common notions of what is a valuable possession’.³ My idea was that Plato meant to leave the sentence open to both a Socratic and a non-Socratic understanding of what counts as a valuable possession, allowing readers to choose for themselves between a philosophical and a non-philosophical interpretation. Vlastos as editor was not convinced, but he printed me nonetheless. He was right not to be convinced.

πλοῦτος (‘wealth’, ‘riches’) is the word that lends itself to that kind of figurative extension, not the mundane χρήματα (‘money’). Socrates’ companion Antisthenes discourses on ‘wealth (πλοῦτος) in the soul’ at Xenophon, *Symposium* 4.34–44. At the end of Plato’s *Phaedrus* (279c) Socrates prays, ‘May I consider the wise man rich (πλούσιος). As for gold, let me have as much as a temperate man can bear and carry with him.’ Similarly, at *Republic* VII.521a he speaks of the philosopher rulers as those who are really rich (οἱ τῷ ὄντι πλούσιοι), not in gold, but in the wealth that the happy must have: a good and wise life.⁴ The pseudo-Platonic *Eryxias* does extend the word χρήματα to cover anything useful (χρήσιμον), including skills (402de), but it takes lengthy argument (cued no doubt by *Rep.* VIII.559c3–4) to make this intelligible, and Plato was dead by the time the dialogue was written.

Even though Vlastos was not convinced, he sympathised with my worry, and later came to endorse a solution we had both shamefully overlooked.⁵ The solution had been sitting there all along in Burnet’s commentary of 1924:

‘It is goodness that makes money and everything else good for men.’ The subject is χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἅπαντα and ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις is predicate. We must certainly not render ‘from virtue comes money’! This is a case where interlaced order may seriously mislead.⁶

³ Burnyeat 1971: 210 [Chapter 10 in *EAMP* vol. 1].

⁴ Cf. the contrast between mortal gold, which the Guards of the ideal city are not allowed to possess, and the divine gold they have in their souls from the gods (*Rep.* III.416e–417a), a contrast echoed later as their being not poor (save financially) but by nature rich (VIII.547b).

⁵ Vlastos 1991: 219, with n. 73. ⁶ Burnet 1924: 124.

So too, without reference to Burnet, Léon Robin's French translation in the Pléiade series: 'mais c'est le vrai mérite qui fait bonne la fortune' ['but it is true worth that makes fortune good'].⁷ But this, like Burnet's rendering, seems not to have caught on. More recently, Luc Brisson in the Flammarion series translates as usual, but in his note to the passage offers a non-standard interpretation (borrowed from a *distinct* point in Vlastos): virtue does get you money, but this is of minor importance compared to the perfection of your soul, which Socrates has just said should be your primary goal.⁸

The story in Germany is much the same. I have found only two exceptions to the rule. Kurt Hildebrandt, in his ominously titled *Platons Vaterländische Reden: Apologie, Criton, Menexenos*,⁹ translates as follows: 'Nicht aus dem Gelde Tüchtigkeit entsteht, sondern aus Tüchtigkeit Schätze und alle andere Güter der Menschen, in der Familie und im Staate' ['It is not from money [Gelde] that virtue comes into being, but from virtue valuables [Schätze] and all other human goods, in the family and in the state']. The switch from 'Gelde' to 'Schätze' is a version of my own youthful indiscretion. Later, again without || reference to Burnet, Konrad Gaiser construed ἀγαθὰ as 'dem Sinne nach prädikativ' ['in a predicative sense'] and offered this translation: 'Nicht aus dem Geld wird einem ἀρετή, sondern aus ἀρετή werden Geld und die anderen Dinge, insofern sie ἀγαθὰ sind, für die Menschen, für jeden einzelnen wie für die Gesamtheit' ['It is not from money that any ἀρετή comes into being, but from ἀρετή money and the other things – insofar as they are good – for humans, for each individual as for the whole community'].¹⁰ All honour to the French and German scholars who in their different ways have manifested unease with the standard translation.

Sadly, although there have been numerous English-language translators of the *Apology* since Burnet's edition (all of whom will, if they had sense, have worked with Burnet to hand), for a long time they ignored his advice. To my knowledge, only in one short article and a quotation here and there could his influence be discerned. An early example is F. M. Cornford, who in his delightful little book *Before and After Socrates* (1932) found occasion to quote a lengthy chunk of the *Apology*, including this: 'Goodness does

⁷ Robin 1955.

⁸ Brisson 1997: n. 173, referring to Vlastos 1991: 303–8. A similar account of the traditional translation in Brickhouse and Smith 1994: 20 with n. 33.

⁹ Hildebrandt 1936. The ominous title [*Plato's Patriotic Speeches*] heralds Hildebrandt's long introduction, where he enlists both Socrates and Plato for the Fascist cause.

¹⁰ Gaiser 1959: 109 with n. 113.

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not come from wealth, but it is goodness that makes wealth or anything else, in public or private life, a thing of value for man.¹¹ In 1973 John Hammond Taylor published a brief article advocating this construal.¹² A more recent book to quote 30b2–4 in Burnet's translation is C. D. C. Reeve, *Socrates in the Apology: An Essay on Plato's Apology of Socrates*.¹³ But of late the situation has changed. Suddenly we have two complete translations of the *Apology* which follow Burnet on the crucial point.

(a) John Cooper, editor of the new Hackett *Plato: Complete Works*,¹⁴ reprinted G. M. A. Grube's translation of the *Apology*,¹⁵ but with the disputed sentence put as follows: 'Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively.' Grube's original rendering, a version of the standard translation, was relegated to a footnote as 'an alternative'.

(b) In the same year, Michael Stokes brought out a text and translation of the *Apology* in which he adopted the Burnet construal on the grounds that, although linguistically difficult, it is philosophically preferable.¹⁶ In the Anglophone world, the arguments of Burnet and Vlastos are at last beginning to tell.

The only reasoned opposition is that of De Strycker and Slings:

[Burnet's] construction . . . cannot be accepted. The parallelism of the two pointedly antithetical members requires (1) that the sentence could be ended with χρήματα, and that καὶ τὰ ἄλλα κτλ should be considered an afterthought; (2) that γίγνεται should in both members mean 'comes from'. Besides, the collocation of ἅπαντα shows that ἀγαθὰ cannot be separated from τὰ ἄλλα and ἅπαντα. If Plato had wanted to say what Burnet makes him say, he would certainly not have said it in such an ambiguous and misleading way.¹⁷

SOCRATES, PLATO, AND ARISTOTLE ON THE VALUE OF MONEY

Let me start from the third point, Burnet's separation of ἀγαθὰ from καὶ τὰ ἄλλα. Anyone who refuses to allow this has to meet a philosophical (not

¹¹ Cornford 1932: 36; Cornford does not cite Burnet, because he is writing for a non-scholarly audience.

¹² Taylor 1973. ¹³ Reeve 1989: 124–5, with n. 21.

¹⁴ J. M. Cooper and Hutchinson 1997. This will be the standard complete works in English translation for a good while to come.

¹⁵ Grube 1975.

¹⁶ Stokes 1997, note *ad loc*. See also Stokes's review of De Strycker and Slings, Stokes 1996.

¹⁷ Strycker 1994: 334.

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of course a philological) objection. If χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ is a unitary phrase, it implies that Socrates thinks money a good. But where else does Socrates, speaking *in propria persona* as he does throughout the *Apology*, call money or wealth a good? ||

The only pertinent passages I know are ones where he is appealing to his interlocutor's values, not his own (e.g. *Prot.* 353c–354b, *Gorg.* 452c, 467e), or where he is preparing to correct the idea that money is good in itself (*Meno* 78e, *Euthyd.* 279a, *Lys.* 220a).¹⁸ At *Crito* 48c he disdains Crito's readiness to sacrifice money to help him escape from prison; justice is the only value that counts for him, money is simply irrelevant. Again, it is Crito's beliefs he is appealing to when at *Euthydemus* 307a he includes money-making among arts it is fine to have (Crito emphatically agrees that it seems so to him). Contrast *Republic* 11.357cd, where money-making is an example given by the aristocratic Glaucon to illustrate the burdensome type of good one pursues only for its consequences, not for itself: Socrates accepts the existence of that *kind* of good, but remains non-committal about the examples.

The *Apology* is a defence of philosophy. Socrates is a philosopher, not a money-maker like his friend Crito, nor an aristocrat like Glaucon. Only philosophical values are relevant to the syntax of our sentence. Given Burnet's construal, *Apology* 30b is in perfect harmony with the famous declaration we meet later at 41d:

οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ κακὸν οὐδὲν οὔτε ζῶντι οὔτε τελευτήσαντι, οὐδὲ ἀμελεῖται ὑπὸ θεῶν τὰ τούτου πράγματα.

For a good man no evil comes either in life or in death, nor are his affairs neglected by gods.

Everyone recognises that Socrates is saying something profound and unusual here. It would be absurd to suppose he means that virtue guarantees a decent income, thereby warding off the evil of poverty. Burnet's construal of the earlier passage allows us to interpret him as saying that virtue will make not only money, but *lack* of money and *everything else* that happens in your life or after death, good rather than bad for you. Both in this life and the next, a virtuous person will make good use of even the

¹⁸ Several of these texts are cited by Vlastos 1991: 214–32 to argue that in Socrates' own view wealth is a 'non-moral good' whose value, however, is minuscule compared to the good of virtue. His argument, which has been influential (see nn. 8 above and 25 below), ignores the dramatic contexts within which wealth is called good.

most unfavourable circumstance. The two passages 30b and 41d stand to each other as positive and negative expressions of the same moral faith.

De Strycker and Slings agree that the two passages should be interpreted together – in their sense. To these they add other texts, notably *Laws* 1.631bc and this passage from *Republic* x, which they describe as ‘an authorized commentary’ on *Apology* 41d:¹⁹

οὕτως ἄρα ὑποληπτέον περὶ τοῦ δικαίου ἀνδρός, ἔάντ’ ἐν πενίᾳ γίγνηται ἔάντ’ ἐν νόσοις ἢ τινὶ ἄλλῳ τῶν δοκούντων κακῶν, ὡς τούτῳ ταῦτα εἰς ἀγαθὸν τι τελευτήσῃ ζῶντι ἢ καὶ ἀποθανόντι. οὐ γὰρ δὴ ὑπὸ γε θεῶν ποτε ἀμελεῖται ὃς ἂν προθυμείσθαι ἐθέλῃ δικαίως γίγνεσθαι καὶ ἐπιτηδεύων ἀρετὴν εἰς ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀνθρώπῳ ὁμοιοῦσθαι θεῷ. (613a)

This, then, must be our conviction about the just man, that whether he fall into poverty or disease or any other *supposed* evil, for him these things will end in some good while he lives or even after death. For a man is never neglected by gods if he is willing to try hard to become just and, by the practice of virtue, to liken himself to god as far as is humanly possible.²⁰

On the face of it, Socrates is allowing here that virtue may well fail to ward off poverty. His language also seems incompatible with the standard translation of *Apology* 30b, because if poverty || is only a supposed evil, then wealth is only a supposed good. Most people do suppose that poverty is bad, wealth good. But the Socrates of *Republic* x does not endorse their view.

In order to show that these first impressions are correct, and that neither *Republic* x nor *Laws* 631bc supports the De Strycker–Slings interpretation of *Apology* 30b, I need to track down the mistakes in their reasoning. Admittedly, some scholars are likely to find this superfluous. They would insist that the *Apology* represents the views of Socrates (or: Plato in his early, Socratic period), the *Republic* and *Laws* those of Plato (or: Plato in his middle and late periods), and it is not safe to interpret the *Apology* from the very different dialogues of Plato’s maturity. I shall not take that easy way out. On the subject of money, I believe that Plato, who had lots, and Socrates, who did not, are at one. Leaving the *Laws* aside for the moment, let us turn to *Republic* II.

Glaucon has challenged Socrates to show that justice is worth pursuing for its own sake, as an intrinsic good. He insists on postulating a just man

¹⁹ Strycker 1994: 234–5; I extend their quotation by one further sentence.

²⁰ On the nuances of the combination ἢ καὶ (which De Strycker and Slings render ‘or else’), see Denniston 1954: 306: ‘Sometimes καὶ means “also”, or marks a climax, “even”.’