

PSEUDO-DIALOGUE IN PLATO'S CLITOPHON

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Scholars disagree over why Plato's *Clitophon* ends without any response to Clitophon's criticisms of Socratic method. A close examination of the characterisation of Clitophon provides a potential answer. During the course of his speech, Clitophon shows himself to have misunderstood Socrates, in terms both of method and teaching. The manner in which he reports Socratic conversations suggests that he is more interested in Socrates' personal authority than in entering into productive dialogue. Clitophon represents the kind of young man who wants Socrates to tell him what to think and who will go elsewhere if Socrates will not answer this desire. Socrates remains silent in the face of Clitophon's criticisms because Clitophon has offered no thoughts of his own and, this being the case, there is no possibility of making elenctic progress.

Introduction

The *Clitophon* is a curious little thing. It is unusually brief and, at first blush, unusually critical of Socrates. Its peculiarity has led some to doubt its authenticity and others to ignore it altogether. In fact, as I hope to show, its brevity belies its sophistication. A close reading of the *Clitophon* reveals a subtle text which dramatises and scrutinises one particular (erroneous) way of engaging with Socrates and Socratic methodology.

Three issues dominate scholarship on the *Clitophon*. The first is its authenticity.¹ This seems to have gone undoubted in antiquity.² More recently, it has been doubted on philological and stylistic grounds. It is now, at the very least, generally accepted as a

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Early versions of this paper were presented at meetings of the Northern Association of Ancient Philosophy in Newcastle, the B Club and to an audience at UCL. I am grateful for the detailed and challenging questions presented by each audience. I am also grateful to Nick Denyer, Liz Irwin, Alex Long, David Sedley, Helen Van Noorden and James Warren, as well as to the anonymous readers for CCJ, for reading and offering helpful and illuminating feedback on this piece.

- 1 Slings (1999) 215–34 gives a comprehensive summary of the debate and accepts the *Clitophon* as genuine 'although not without hesitation'. See also Roochnik (2002) 44–9 and Bowe (2007) 246–9.
- 2 Diogenes Laertius 3.60 places the *Clitophon* at the start of the eighth tetralogy (just before the *Republic*). Hippolytus 1.19.20 cites *Clitophon* 407d4–8 as part of the *Republic*.

genuine product of the fourth century BC, written in a style remarkably close to Plato's own.³ Indeed, the consensus is that there are no compelling *philological* reasons for denying that Plato wrote the *Clitophon*.⁴

The second issue is the nature of the relationship between the *Clitophon* and Plato's *Republic* or, more specifically, *Republic 1*.⁵ That there is some relation between the two texts is clear: *Clitophon*, son of Aristonymus, has a brief speaking part in *Republic 1*. There he appears as an associate of Thrasymachus, with whom he is also associated in the *Clitophon* itself. The main concern here is whether the *Clitophon* is drawing on the *Republic* or vice versa.⁶ One suggestion is that *Republic 1* is an expansion or reworking of the *Clitophon*.⁷

The third issue is the so-called 'Riddle of the *Clitophon*'.⁸ Why does it end as it does? The dialogue opens with Socrates' claim that someone has told him that *Clitophon* has been criticising his encounters with Socrates and praising his engagement with Thrasymachus. The bulk of the text is taken up by *Clitophon*'s clarification and justification of his opinion of Socrates. *Clitophon* concludes (410e5–8) that Socrates is marvellously useful for exhorting people to care about virtue. However, for those who have come to care about virtue and who now wish to pursue it, Socrates is not merely useless, he is actually a hindrance. The question here is why Socrates offers no defence against this charge of obstruction. Is the *Clitophon* a seriously intended attack on Socrates?⁹ Is it the case that some defence was intended but that the text is unfinished?¹⁰ Or is the content of the criticism so slight that no defence is considered necessary?¹¹

These three issues are clearly connected. If one thinks the *Clitophon* to be a serious attack on Socrates, one may be rather less inclined to think that it is by Plato.¹² If it is an unfinished draft, lacking the intended defence and abandoned in favour of *Republic 1*, then it is, of course, by the author of *Republic 1*. All three of these issues will feature in the discussion of the *Clitophon* below. My main concern, however, is to answer the riddle. Why does Socrates offer no defence?

3 Rowe (2000a) 306–7 suggests that, although the *Clitophon* is 'not good enough' to be by Plato himself, it demonstrates enough knowledge of Plato to be 'genuinely Academic'. Erler (2008) presents a reading of the *Clitophon* as spurious, on the grounds that it offers 'imitatio in oppositione'.

4 See Grube (1931) 306–7 and Slings (1999) 222–7.

5 Rowe (2000b) 162 notes 'strong verbal correspondences' between *Clitophon* 407e–408b and *Republic 9* 509c–d. He also suggests the Ship of State simile at *Republic 6* 487e7–489a2 as a parallel for 408a5–b5. The reading offered below is compatible with the possibility that the *Clitophon* alludes to the *Republic* beyond Book 1.

6 See Bowe (2007) 249–59 for a useful survey of the possible relations between the two texts.

7 Grote (1865) 25–6. Grube (1931) 305 dates it after *Republic 1* but before Books 2 to 10.

8 A phrase coined by Geffcken (1933).

9 Grube (1931) reads the *Clitophon* as expressing a real Platonic dissatisfaction with the Socrates of the early dialogues, citing the criticism of Socrates in the *Parmenides* as a possible parallel.

10 As suggested by Grote (1865) and dismissed by Slings (1999) 10–18.

11 Proclus in *Tim 7b* (1.20.8–9 in Diehl (1903)) cites Ptolemy's view that *Clitophon* is judged unworthy of an answer from Socrates.

12 Unless, of course, one is happy to think Plato could have composed a seriously intended attack on Socrates.

In the course of trying to answer this question, I will focus on an aspect of the *Clitophon* that seems to have been overlooked, namely the way that Clitophon presents himself and his engagement with Socrates. Discussions of this dialogue tend to focus on the accuracy of the content of Clitophon's criticisms. Although I do have something to say about the content, my main concern is with the *form* of his critique. There is, I think, something suspicious about Clitophon's representation of Socrates and, further, about his representation of himself as someone *au fait* with Socratic methodology. Towards the end of the dialogue (410c6–8), Clitophon states that his experiences with Socrates have brought him to *aporia*. He says that, because Socrates has offered no satisfactory answers about the nature of justice, he finds himself with no choice but to go to Thrasyarchus. In fact, as I will argue, Clitophon's proclamation of *aporia* is misguided, based as it is on a misunderstanding of Socratic methodology. It is a pseudo-*aporia* that results from the pseudo-elenchus in which Clitophon has been engaged. The *Clitophon* is not a Socratic dialogue, it is a pseudo-Socratic dialogue. This need not, of course, imply that it is also pseudo-Platonic.

In assessing the justice of his critique, some scholars have assumed that Clitophon acts as a mouthpiece for the author of the *Clitophon*. Thus Clitophon and the *Clitophon* stand or fall as one. If Clitophon's criticisms are fair, then the *Clitophon*, as the vehicle of those criticisms, can be deemed a success. If Clitophon misses the mark, so too does the *Clitophon*. The worry that Clitophon might be misrepresenting Socrates has added fuel to the fire of those agitating against its authenticity. For if Clitophon's clumsy attack on Socrates represents the views of the author, then that author surely cannot be Plato.¹³ There is, of course, an alternative position: the voice of the character Clitophon can be divorced from that of its author.¹⁴ I will argue that the author of the *Clitophon* intends Clitophon to be recognised as an example of one type of person who misunderstands Socrates.¹⁵ In the most extensive treatment of the *Clitophon* to date, Slings argues that it is an attack on a genre of explicit Socratic protreptic and a defence of the implicit protreptic of the Socratic elenctic dialogue. I think that there is another implicit/explicit dichotomy at work here. The explicit criticism of Socrates should be read as implicitly critical of people like Clitophon.¹⁶

In what follows I will argue that Clitophon's interest in Socrates seems to be motivated more by his desire to find a source of authority than by his interest in personal intellectual engagement with what Socrates has to say. I will demonstrate that Clitophon habitually

13 The perceived clumsiness of the *Clitophon* dominates contemporary debates about its authenticity. Verdenius (1982) 146 cites the 'rambling structure of the argument' as a mark against the intelligence of the *Clitophon*'s author. Rowe (2000b) 161–2 assumes that Clitophon speaks for the author of the *Clitophon* and thus, for example, refers to the conclusion given at 408a5ff as 'the conclusion X [the author of the *Clitophon*] draws from what he has given us in 407e–408a'. See also Gonzalez (2002) 161, n. 1.

14 As suggested by Rutherford (1995) 100.

15 Kremer (2002) 2 also reads the *Clitophon* as about Clitophon's limitations rather than any real Socratic failings. See also Roochnik (2002) 49–55 and Orwin (2002) 61.

16 Bowe (2007) 249 notes the possibility 'that the dialogue is intentionally clumsy and hence its real purpose is not an attack on Socrates'.

misrepresents and misunderstands Socrates, just as he seems to misunderstand another possible source of authority, Thrasymachus, in the *Republic*. As someone who just wants to be told what to think, Clitophon is not an appropriate interlocutor for Socrates, for all that he may proclaim himself to be an expert in Socrates and his views. I will conclude that Clitophon is presented as an example of the kind of young man who goes to Socrates (or Thrasymachus *vel sim.*) looking for straightforward answers and who fails to see that philosophical progress requires engaging oneself and one's own beliefs in elenctic discussion.

There is a warning here. If one attempts to engage with Socrates in a certain way, one will inevitably end up in the pseudo-aporetic impasse in which Clitophon finds himself. In conclusion, I will suggest that, once we recognise the implicit criticism of Clitophon within the dialogue, the grounds for doubting its authenticity seem to fall away.

Reportage and interpretation in the *Clitophon*

The opening of the *Clitophon* is typically idiosyncratic:¹⁷

Κλειτοφῶντα τὸν Ἀριστωνόμου τις ἡμῖν διηγείτο ἔναγχος, ὅτι Λυσίαι διαλεγόμενος τὰς μὲν μετὰ Σωκράτους διατριβὰς ψέγοι, τὴν Θρασυμάχου δὲ συνουσίαν ὑπερπαίνοϊ.¹⁸

Someone recently filled us in about Clitophon, son of Aristonymus, that, in conversation with Lysias, he criticised the times he had spent with Socrates, but was full of praise for his discussion with Thrasymachus.

Rather than being addressed with the vocative most frequently found at the opening of a Platonic dialogue, Clitophon is named in the accusative, as the subject of some other reported conversation.¹⁹ Socrates refers to himself with the formal plural (ἡμῖν) and, more strikingly, in the third person (Σωκράτους).²⁰ It is not immediately clear who is speaking, nor to whom.²¹ It is only through Clitophon's response that we learn that he has been addressed by Socrates. This gambit is illustrative of the *Clitophon's* general theme of the dangers and difficulties of reporting and interpreting the views of others. This theme is clear not just in the form of the opening, but in its content. For Socrates' introduction is a report (by Socrates) of a report (by some anonymous source, τις) of a conversation

17 On the singularity of the *Clitophon's* opening, see Slings (1999) 40–1. Grube (1931) 304 thinks the 'abrupt introduction' suggests that the *Clitophon* 'lacks final revision'.

18 *Clitophon* 406a5–13. Except where noted, I employ Slings's (1999) text.

19 On the prevalence of the vocative at the beginning of Plato's dialogues, see Slings (1999) 40.

20 Note that Clitophon refers to himself in the third person in summarising his own position at 410d5. Denyer (2008) 136 notes, in reference to *Protagoras* 335a, that 'a hero reflecting on his own reputation loves to utter his own name'.

21 As noted by Blits (2002) 71–2.

Clitophon has had with Lysias about Socrates and Thrasymachus.²² Clitophon's response makes clear the dangers of relying on hearsay:

ὅστις, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἀπεμνημόνευέ σοι τοὺς ἐμοὶ περὶ σοῦ γενομένους λόγους πρὸς Λυσίαν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἔγωγε οὐκ ἐπήνουν σε, τὰ δὲ καὶ ἐπήνουν. ἐπεὶ δὲ δῆλος εἶ μεμφόμενος μὲν μοι, προσποιούμενος δὲ μηδὲν φροντίζειν, ἥδιστ' ἂν σοι διεξέλθοιμι αὐτοὺς αὐτός, ἐπειδὴ καὶ μόνω τυγχάνομεν ὄντες, ἵνα ἦττόν με ἡγήη πρὸς σέ φαύλως ἔχειν. νῦν γὰρ ἴσως οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἀκήκοας, ὥστε φαίνει πρὸς ἐμέ ἔχειν τραχυτέρωσ τοῦ δέοντος εἰ δέ μοι δίδωσ παρρησίαν, ἥδιστα ἂν δεξαίμην καὶ ἐθέλω λέγειν.²³

Someone, Socrates, who gave a false report to you of what was said by me about you to Lysias. For I didn't praise some things about you, but some I did. But since you are clearly taking issue with me, whilst pretending not to mind, I shall gladly spell things out for you, especially since we are alone, so that you'll be less inclined to believe that I think poorly of you. For at present you have perhaps not heard an accurate account, so that you seem to be harder on me than I deserve. But, if you grant me freedom of speech, I'll gladly take it since I want to tell you.

Two things are immediately striking here. The first is Clitophon's claim to have been misrepresented (οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἀπεμνημόνευε) to Socrates by someone who has, at best, reported only the critical half of his conversation with Lysias. The second is that Clitophon is encouraged to give his own account by the fact that he and Socrates are alone (ἐπειδὴ καὶ μόνω τυγχάνομεν ὄντε).²⁴ In this case, unlike his conversation with Lysias, there is no one present to misreport his views at a later date.

Clitophon's worries about misrepresentation are repeated towards the end of his speech. At 410d5–e3, he summarises his case for Socrates:

θὲς τὸν Κλειτοφῶντα ὁμολογοῦντα ὡς ἔστιν καταγέλαστον τῶν μὲν ἄλλων ἐπιμέλειαν ποιῆσθαι, ψυχῆς δέ, ἧς ἔνεκα τᾶλλα διαπονούμεθα, ταύτης ἡμεληκέναι· καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα οἷοι με νῦν οὕτως εἰρηκέναι τὰ τούτοις ἐξῆς, ὡς καὶ νυνδὴ διήλθον.²⁵

22 The reference to Lysias may also be significant here. He is, after all, someone paid to put words into the mouths of others.

23 406a5–13.

24 The dual μόνω confirms that the 'we' in question are Socrates and Clitophon alone.

25 Slings (1999) 332–4 emends ἄ in e2 to ὡς, arguing that the former 'contribute[s] to make this an obscure sentence'. On the reading to be developed below, such obscurity would not be out of character for Clitophon. In fact, it would be typical of his approach for his summary to be more confusing than clarifying. I am encouraged to follow Slings because, on his reading, the clause then 'indicates in what way Clitophon's report and the remarks following should be taken'.

Take it that Clitophon agrees that it is ridiculous to take care of other things, but not to take care of the soul, for the sake of which we go to all the other troubles. And believe that, beyond this, all the other things I said I meant in this way, as I have just made clear.

Just as Clitophon opens with an expression of his desire to correct Socrates' understanding of someone else's account of his own view, so he concludes with an attempt to straighten out Socrates' understanding of his own account of his view. From start to finish, Clitophon is at pains to ensure that his position is reported accurately and that it is properly understood by Socrates.²⁶ The expression of his concerns along with the hearsay reported by Socrates provides a frame for the dialogue that serves to emphasise the potential pitfalls of attempting to report and represent the opinions of others or even, perhaps, the difficulties of representing one's own views.

Clitophon representing Socrates

From the outset, Clitophon presents himself as someone who understands Socrates. The first indication of this is his willingness to pass judgement on Socrates, as in both his reported conversation with Lysias and his current encounter with Socrates. Further hints of this assumed understanding are to be found throughout his speech. As we have seen, at 406a7–11, in responding to Socrates' charge, Clitophon suggests that Socrates is hiding his true feelings:

But since you are clearly taking issue with me, whilst pretending not to mind, I shall gladly spell things out for you, especially since we are alone, so that you'll be less inclined to believe that I think poorly of you.

Clitophon believes he knows what Socrates really thinks, no matter that Socrates may try to dissemble. In fact, with his last words in the dialogue, Socrates seems to admit the possibility that Clitophon may know him better than he knows himself:

ἀλλ' αἰσχρὸν μὴν σοῦ γε ὠφελεῖν με προθυμουμένου μὴ ὑπομένειν· δῆλον γὰρ ὡς γνοῦς ὅπῃ χεῖρων εἰμι καὶ βελτίων, τὰ μὲν ἀσκήσω καὶ διώξομαι, τὰ δὲ φεύξομαι κατὰ κράτος.²⁷

²⁶ Note that Clitophon refers to himself in the third person. See Denyer (2001) 131 on Alcibiades 113b8–9: 'when remarks addressed to somebody speak of him in the third person to set out his views, there is some suggestion that they are, as it were, an official and binding declaration, a minute of what has been said, so that he cannot later deny having said it'.

²⁷ 407a1–4.

Well, it would be shameful for me not to submit to you when you are so keen to help me. For clearly, once I have come to know my faults and my good points, I shall practise and pursue the one and avoid the other as far as I can.

Socrates' response here is reminiscent of his submission to Euthyphro:

ἄρ' οὖν μοι, ὦ θαυμάσιε Εὐθύφρων, κράτιστόν ἐστι μαθητῆ σὼ γενέσθαι, καὶ πρὸ τῆς γραφῆς τῆς πρὸς Μέλιτον αὐτὰ ταῦτα προκαλεῖσθαι αὐτόν, λέγοντα ὅτι ἔγωγε καὶ ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν χρόνῳ τὰ θεῖα περὶ πολλοῦ ἐπινοοῦμην εἰδέναι, καὶ νῦν ἐπειδὴ με ἐκεῖνος αὐτοσχεδιάζοντά φησι καὶ καινοτομοῦντα περὶ τῶν θείων ἐξαρματάνειν, μαθητῆς δὴ γέγονα σός.²⁸

It's certainly vital, my excellent Euthyphro, for me to become your pupil and, on the matter of the indictment, to challenge Meletus himself about these same things, saying that even before now I thought it most important to know about divine matters and, now, when he says that I am at fault in improvising and innovating, I have actually become your pupil.

In the *Euthyphro*, Socrates' submission, whether wholly sincere or not, is prompted by Euthyphro's claim to expertise in matters pious (4e9–5a2). Similarly, Socrates' deference to Clitophon about his own character is, I take it, a response to Clitophon's assumption of understanding about matters Socratic.²⁹

Clitophon opens his apology with the claim that he finds Socratic protreptic most agreeable. In Socrates' company, he has often been stunned (πολλάκις ἐξεπληττόμην) by what the older man has had to say. Clitophon goes on (407a8–b2) to demonstrate his familiarity with these exhortations by offering an impersonation of Socrates' censuring mankind with hymns like a tragic *deus ex machina* (ὅποτε ἐπιτιμῶν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὥσπερ ἐπὶ μηχανῆς τραγικῆς θεός ὕμνοις). From the outset, Clitophon presents himself as someone who understands Socrates and the kind of thing Socrates tends to say.

Having given his impersonation of Socratic protreptic, Clitophon describes how, once Socrates had interested him in virtue, he tried to find out what was coming next by questioning Socrates' companions. Here Clitophon makes clear that he is sensitive to Socrates' unusual relationship to his circle:

προσεῖχον δὴ τὸν νοῦν τὸ μετὰ ὡς ἀκουσόμενος, ἐπανερωτῶν οὐ τι σὲ τὸ πρῶτον, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀλλὰ τῶν ἡλικιωτῶν τε καὶ συνεπισημητῶν ἢ ἐταίρων ὧν, ἢ ὅπως δεῖ πρὸς σὲ περὶ αὐτῶν τὸ τοιοῦτον ὀνομάζειν.³⁰

²⁸ *Euthyphro* 5a3–8.

²⁹ It is worth noting that, in both the *Euthyphro* and the *Clitophon*, this Socratic submission comes at the opening of the dialogue.

³⁰ 408c5–7.

I paid attention so as to hear what would come next, questioning first not you, Socrates, but your contemporaries and fellows in enthusiasm or companions, or however one is supposed to describe their relationship to you.

Clitophon proceeds to give an account of his discussions with Socrates' comrades and, once again, he claims familiarity with Socratic methodology:

τούτων γὰρ τοὺς τι μάλιστα εἶναι δοξαζομένους ὑπὸ σοῦ πρώτους ἐπανηρώτων, πυνθανόμενος τίς ὁ μετὰ ταῦτ' εἴη λόγος, καὶ κατὰ σὲ τρόπον τινὰ ὑποτείνων αὐτοῖς,³¹

I began by questioning those thought by you to be really something, asking what argument would be next and making suggestions to them, roughly as you do.

Clitophon presents himself as someone capable of conducting elenchus (more or less) in the manner of Socrates.³² But he does not limit himself to asking questions like Socrates; he even feels able to answer for Socrates, as he makes clear at 408e10–409a2:

εἰ δ' ἐπανηρόμεθα τὸν ταῦθ' ἡμᾶς προτρέποντα 'Λέγεις δὲ εἶναι τίνας ταύτας τὰς τέχνας;' εἶπεν ἄν ἴσως ὅτι γυμναστικὴ καὶ ἰατρικὴ.

And, if we asked the one exhorting us to these things 'What do you say these crafts are?', he would perhaps say that they are physical training and medicine.

A final indication of Clitophon's assumed understanding of Socrates comes towards the end of his speech. At 410b4–c6, he expresses the true source of his dissatisfaction with Socrates. Someone may well be able to eulogise any craft without actually being a practitioner of the craft:

ταῦτὸν δὴ καὶ σοὶ τις ἐπενέγκοι τάχ' ἂν περὶ δικαιοσύνης, ὡς οὐ μᾶλλον ὄντι δικαιοσύνης ἐπιστήμονι, διότι καλῶς αὐτὴν ἐγκωμιάζεις. οὐ μὴν τό γε ἔμὸν οὕτως ἔχει, δυοῖν δὲ θάτερον, ἢ οὐκ εἰδέναι σε ἢ οὐκ ἐθέλειν αὐτῆς ἐμοὶ κοινωνεῖν.

Someone could reproach you in just the same way about justice, that you have no more knowledge of justice for being able to praise it well. Although I don't think this, but one of the two must be true, either you don't know or you are not willing to share your knowledge of it with me.

Clitophon claims that, on the basis of Socrates' apparent lack of firmly pronounced doctrine, people might well conclude that he simply does not have any real knowledge about justice;

³¹ 408c7–d1.

³² He is also, it seems, privy to Socrates' opinion as to which of his companions are best.

he's only good for exhortation. Clitophon, however, knows better (οὐ μὴν τό γε ἔμὸν οὕτως ἔχει), for there is an alternative to thinking that Socrates knows nothing at all: it may be that he is unwilling to share the knowledge he does have. Above, I noted that Clitophon opens his defence with the suggestion that Socrates is withholding his true feelings. Here, the accusation is that Socrates is withholding his knowledge about justice. In both cases, Clitophon presents himself as someone able to see through Socrates' pretence. Indeed, at this point, Clitophon sets his own criticism of Socrates against the charge that could be brought against him by others.³³ Not only does he understand Socrates, but, it seems, he understands him better than most.

Clitophon presents himself as someone with a special insight into Socrates. He claims that he can see through Socrates' attempts at dissemblance, first in pretending not to be annoyed with Clitophon and second, in withholding his knowledge of justice. Clitophon also sets himself up as someone who has mastered Socratic methodology: he can mimic both Socratic protreptic and Socratic elenchus. He can even suppose the answers that Socrates would give when pressed. I shall argue below that there is something distinctly fishy about Clitophon's version of Socrates. First, it is worth taking the time to consider a passage that is, I think, intended to make us reconsider the value of Clitophon's account.

Representing Socrates' circle

From 408c7–410a6, Clitophon recounts his questioning of Socrates' companions. I have suggested that Clitophon is particularly sensitive to the possibility of being misreported (as he claims he has been) or misunderstood (something he tries to avoid by clarifying his view at 410d5–e3). Such hermeneutic concerns are strikingly absent from his summary of his conversations with others. Throughout his report, Clitophon recounts his own side of the conversation in *oratio recta*; the contributions of his interlocutors, meanwhile, are more or less exclusively reported in *oratio obliqua*.³⁴ So, for example, Clitophon quotes himself addressing Socrates' circle at 408d1 ff., summarises the answers he received in indirect speech from 409a4 ff. and then quotes himself again from 409b7. In addition, the interlocutors remain anonymous throughout.³⁵ In fact, at one point, Clitophon does not seem altogether sure who said what:

³³ Contra Gonzalez (2002) 164.

³⁴ The unbalanced nature of Clitophon's account is noted by Slings (1999) 53–4 who sums it up thus: 'There is no dialogue.' Slings (1999) 98–100 also notes the slide from *oratio recta* to *oratio obliqua* in Clitophon's version of Socratic protreptic from 407b2–408b5, arguing that this results from the author's desire to include three potentially conflicting exhortative speeches.

³⁵ At 410a1–6, Clitophon describes the intervention of some 'bystanders' (οἱ παρόντες). What they have to say is reported in direct speech, but Clitophon's lack of concern for an accurate report is, I take it, demonstrated here by their anonymity.

οὗτος μὲν ὡς οἶμαι τὸ συμφέρον ἀπεκρίνατο, ἄλλος δὲ τὸ δέον, ἕτερος δὲ τὸ ὠφέλιμον, ὁ δὲ τὸ λυσιτελοῦν.³⁶

This man, I think, answered ‘what is useful’, another ‘what is fitting’, yet another ‘what is beneficial’, and yet another ‘what is profitable’.

At 410a7–b3, Clitophon recounts Socrates’ own answer to his questioning, again in indirect speech and, notably, with the final conclusion attributed to no one at all:³⁷

ταῦτα ὃ Σώκρατες ἐγὼ τελευτῶν καὶ σὲ αὐτὸν ἠρώτων, καὶ εἶπές μοι δικαιοσύνης εἶναι τοὺς μὲν ἐχθροὺς βλάπτειν τοὺς δὲ φίλους εἰ ποιεῖν. ὕστερον δὲ ἐφάνη βλάπτειν γε οὐδέποτε ὁ δίκαιος οὐδένα· πάντα γὰρ ἐπ’ ὠφελίαι πάντας δρᾶν.

So finally, Socrates, I asked you yourself about these things, and you told me that justice is harming one’s enemies and helping one’s friends. But later it transpired that the just man never harms anyone, for everything he does to anyone is for their benefit.

The uneven nature of Clitophon’s report of his elenchus indicates two things. First, his concern for the accurate and detailed representation of his own opinions does not extend to the views of others. Clitophon’s defence is framed by his concern that his own view should not be misunderstood. Notwithstanding this concern, his apology is founded upon an account of conversations in which the views of his interlocutors are filtered through indirect speech, whilst Clitophon’s own words are more or less set in stone. If, as Clitophon implies at the opening of the dialogue, accurate representation comes via a direct and detailed report, what value is there in Clitophon’s vague and brief account of what the others had to say?

There is one point at which Clitophon does report the other side of the conversation with a snippet of direct speech. At 409a4–6, he repeats one of the answers prompted by his questioning:

ὁ δὲ δοκῶν αὐτῶν ἐρρωμενέστατος εἶναι πρὸς ταῦτα ἀποκρινόμενος εἶπέν μοι ταύτην τὴν τέχνην εἶναι, ἥνπερ ἀκούεις σὺ λέγοντος ἔφη Σωκράτους, οὐκ ἄλλην ἢ δικαιοσύνην.

The one thought to be the most formidable gave an answer to this and told me that this craft ‘which’, he said ‘you hear Socrates talking about’ is none other than justice.

It is telling that what Clitophon reports directly here is not the substance of his interlocutor’s answer but rather the reference to Socrates.³⁸ I argued above that Clitophon presents himself

³⁶ 409c1–3.

³⁷ Bailly (2003) 134 notes the lack of substance in Clitophon’s summary of Socrates’ view.

³⁸ Slings (1999) 306–7 suggests Republic 364b5–c5 as a possible parallel for the shift from *oratio obliqua* to *oratio recta* and back again but concludes, rather disappointingly, that ‘the author deliberately inserted the clause in *oratio recta* for a stylistic reason’.

as having a special understanding of Socrates and Socratic methodology. I take the present passage to indicate that Clitophon's *primary* interest is in Socrates and Socrates' opinions.³⁹ Below, I will argue that Clitophon's preoccupation with Socrates is symptomatic of his general misunderstanding of Socratic methodology. At this point, however, I turn to Clitophon's brief appearance in *Republic* 1. For there too, he is characterised as someone who claims, but fails, to understand someone else's view.

Representing Thrasymachus

At *Republic* 1 328b4–c4, Clitophon is named as one of the crowd gathered at Polemarchus' house (as is Lysias). He has nothing to say until 340a3–b8. Socrates has been questioning Thrasymachus about the nature of justice and Thrasymachus has suggested that 'justice is the advantage of the established rule' (338b6–339a4), that is, 'the advantage of the stronger'. He has also agreed (339b7–8) that it is just to obey those who rule. Further, he has agreed that rulers sometimes make laws 'incorrectly' (339c4–5), i.e. they sometimes make laws to their disadvantage. At 339e1–8, Socrates notes that there appears to be an inconsistency in Thrasymachus' position: if it is always just to obey laws, and some laws are to the disadvantage of the rulers who make those laws, then Thrasymachus seems to have 'agreed that it is just to do what is disadvantageous to the rulers and those who are stronger'. It is at this point that Polemarchus and Clitophon break into the conversation:⁴⁰

By Zeus, Socrates, that's absolutely clear, said Polemarchus.

If you are to act as his witness, interrupted Clitophon (Ἐὼν σύ γ', ἔφη, αὐτῷ μαρτυρήσης, ὁ Κλειτοφῶν ὑπολαβὼν).

Who needs a witness? Polemarchus said. For Thrasymachus himself agrees (αὐτὸς γὰρ Θρασύμαχος ὁμολογεῖ) that the rulers sometimes order what is bad for them and that it is just for others to do those bad things.

That, Polemarchus, is because Thrasymachus proposed (ἔθετο Θρασύμαχος) that it is just to do what is ordered of the rulers.

He also proposed (ἔθετο), Clitophon, that the advantage of the stronger is just. Having proposed both these things, he then agreed that (ταῦτα δὲ ἀμφοτέρωθεν θέμενος ὁμολόγησεν), sometimes, the stronger order the weaker and those who are ruled to do what is to the disadvantage of the stronger. With these things being agreed, the advantage of the stronger would be no more just than what is not to their advantage.

But, said Clitophon, he meant (ἔλεγε) that the advantage of the stronger is what the stronger believes to be to their advantage. This is what must be done by the weaker, and this is what he proposed to be just.

³⁹ See also 408d2–3.

⁴⁰ *Republic* 340a1–c6.

But that's not how he put it, replied Polemarchus. (Ἄλλ' οὐχ οὕτως, ἦ δ' ὅς ὁ Πολέμαρχος, ἐλέγετο.)

It makes no difference (Οὐδέν...διαφέρει), Polemarchus, I said. But, if Thrasymachus now says this, let's accept it from him (ἀλλ' εἰ νῦν οὕτω λέγει Θρασύμαχος, οὕτως αὐτοῦ ἀποδεχόμεθα). Tell me, Thrasymachus, was this what you wanted to say: that the just is, namely, what the stronger believes to be to his advantage, whether it is to his advantage or not? Should we say that you mean this? (οὕτω σε φῶμεν λέγειν;)

Not in the least (Ἦκιστά γε), Thrasymachus said.

Here, we see Clitophon up to much the same sort of thing as in the *Clitophon*. He implies that Socrates' refutation is not as straightforwardly successful as Polemarchus claims ('if you are to act as his witness') and then attempts to clarify and defend Thrasymachus' position. In his brief appearance in the *Republic*, as in the *Clitophon*, Clitophon is characterised as alert to a potential misrepresentation and keen to offer his own interpretation. But, as both Polemarchus ('that's not how he put it') and Thrasymachus ('not in the least') make clear, he actually misrepresents Thrasymachus' argument. In the next section, I will argue that Clitophon's representation of Socrates in the *Clitophon* also misses the mark.

I have claimed that Clitophon's primary interest in the *Clitophon* is in Socrates and Socrates' own opinions. Something similar can be said about his Republican incarnation: on the one occasion that Clitophon speaks in the *Republic*, it is not to give his own opinion, but to rather to clarify Thrasymachus' view. Now, it has been suggested that, when Clitophon speaks to defend Thrasymachus, he is really trying to push forward his own view of justice.⁴¹ But, even if this legal positivism is his own position, Clitophon does not admit that it is such. He is explicit in claiming that this is what Thrasymachus was getting at (ἔλεγεν) and, of course, Thrasymachus dismisses Clitophon's version as a misrepresentation. The line that Clitophon suggests is pursued no further and he does not speak again.

As I noted in my introduction, the nature of its relation to the *Republic* has been a dominant theme of literature on the *Clitophon*. My concern here is simply to emphasise the similarities in Clitophon's hermeneutic behaviour in both dialogues. For this purpose, it is more or less immaterial whether the *Clitophon* is drawing on the *Republic* or vice versa. For what it is worth, I find it more plausible that the author of the *Clitophon* was working with the episode from the *Republic* 1 than that Plato, for whatever reason, dropped his (or someone else's) ready-made character from the *Clitophon* into the *Republic* for this single episode of misinterpretation. Of course, it is quite possible that the historical Clitophon was renowned for misunderstanding what people said.⁴² What is

⁴¹ Roochnik (2002) 49–55 and Nails (2002) 103.

⁴² On what little we know of the historical Clitophon, see Nails (2002) 102–3.

most significant for my case is that, in the *Republic*, Clitophon gets Thrasymachus wrong. This is because, as I will argue in the next section, more than once in our dialogue Clitophon gets Socrates wrong.

Misrepresenting Socrates

Clitophon presents himself as someone with a special understanding of Socrates. However, as I hope to show, several aspects of his representation of Socrates seem to be something more like misrepresentations.⁴³ I will begin by considering the views he attributes to Socrates. Here I will concentrate on Clitophon's account of Socratic exhortation (407b2–408b5) and his description of the answers given by Socrates to Clitophon's questioning (4107–b3).⁴⁴ I will then turn to Clitophon's representation of Socratic methodology, in particular his description of Socratic protreptic and the manner in which he goes about Socratic elenchus. In both cases, Clitophon's impersonation of Socrates seems to miss its mark.

At the beginning of his speech, Clitophon makes clear that 'I didn't praise some things about you, but some I did' (406a6–7). He reserves his approbation for Socrates' paraenetic activities. From 407b2–408b5, he describes the kind of exhortation he has heard from Socrates. He begins by giving a direct impersonation of a Socratic protreptic speech (from 407b2–e2) before lapsing into a summary in *oratio obliqua* (from 407e3–408b5).

Clitophon's Socratic speech is replete with elements that have an authentically Socratic ring.⁴⁵ However, both the expression and the combination of these elements are somewhat awkward.⁴⁶ So, for example, there is something hasty about b2–8:

οἵτινες χρημάτων μὲν περί τὴν πᾶσαν σπουδὴν ἔχετε ὅπως ὑμῖν ἔσται, τῶν δ' ὑέων οἷς ταῦτα παραδώσετε ὅπως ἐπιστήσονται χρῆσθαι δικαίως τούτοις,⁴⁷ οὔτε διδασκάλους αὐτοῖς εὐρίσκετε τῆς δικαιοσύνης, εἴπερ μαθητόν, εἰ δὲ μελετητόν τε καὶ ἀσκητόν, οἵτινες ἐξασκήσουσιν καὶ ἐκμελετήσουσιν ἰκανῶς, οὐδὲ γ' ἔτι πρότερον ὑμᾶς αὐτοὺς οὔτως ἐθεραπεύσατε.

You expend all your effort on the acquisition of wealth, but none on whether your sons, to whom you will leave that wealth, will know how to use it with justice, nor do you find teachers of justice for them (if it can be taught), or, if it can be

43 Contrast Erler's (2008) 233 suggestion that 'Clitofonte dimostra di aver appreso alla perfezione il metodo di Socrate'.

44 Leaving aside Clitophon's account of his conversations with Socrates' companions, since there no views are directly ascribed to Socrates (although Clitophon's interlocutors claim to be explaining those views).

45 See Slings (1999) 103–27 and Bailly (2003) 131–47.

46 Slings (1999) 273 suggests that the speech's lack of clarity results from the 'author's desire to allude to as many protreptic themes as he can possibly manage'.

47 Noting an imbalance in Clitophon's contrast, Slings (1999) 277–80 proposes a lacuna after παραδώσατε, to fill which he suggests <οὔτε φροντίζετε>. I follow Burnet in letting the clause stand without a verb. On my reading, this kind of confusion and lack of clarity is not out of character for Clitophon.

learned via training or practice, men up to the task of training or drilling them. And you've yet even to take care of yourselves in this respect.

Clitophon runs together several Socratic motifs to produce this exhortation. The whole passage is reminiscent of Socrates' account of his exhortations to the Athenians at *Apology* 29d8–e3:

χρημάτων μὲν οὐκ αἰσχύνη ἐπιμελούμενος ὅπως σοι ἔσται ὡς πλεῖστα, καὶ δόξης καὶ τιμῆς, φρονήσεως δὲ καὶ ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται οὐκ ἐπιμελῆ οὐδὲ φροντίζεις;

Aren't you ashamed to be so preoccupied with the acquisition of wealth, and of reputation and honour, without any concern or thought for wisdom and truth and the perfection of your soul?

Clitophon's expression of doubts about whether there are teachers of justice is also familiar from, among other dialogues, the *Meno*.⁴⁸ Parallels for both the worry about leaving wealth rather than justice to one's children and the suggestion that one should have not just one's children but also oneself instructed in justice can be found in the *Euthydemus*.⁴⁹

This passage certainly hits several Socratic notes, but the tune they produce is more of a jingle than an anthem. So, for example, Clitophon's Socrates draws not the Apologetic contrast between care for wealth and care for wisdom, truth and the soul, but the rather less forceful contrast between care for wealth and care for one's sons' ability to use that wealth justly.⁵⁰ Further, whilst this Socrates does express doubts about whether justice can be taught or acquired by exercise or training, these doubts are parenthetical in both expression and thought.⁵¹ Having berated his audience for failing to seek teachers of justice for their sons, Socrates admits some uncertainty. At 407c5–7, however, he appears to assume the existence of teachers of justice:⁵²

πῶς οὐ καταφρονεῖτε τῆς νῦν παιδείσεως οὐδὲ ζητεῖτε οἵτινες ὑμᾶς πάσουςι τούτης τῆς ἀμουσίας;

How can you not despise the present education system and not seek out men to put a stop to this philistinism?

⁴⁸ See, for example, *Meno*'s opening question at 70a1–4 and Socrates' explicit discussion of whether virtue is teachable from 89e–96d. Similar concerns about the acquisition of virtue can be found in *Alcibiades I*, *Laches*, *Protagoras* and *Euthydemus*.

⁴⁹ On the former point, see *Euthydemus* 282b4–c1, on the latter, 307c3–4.

⁵⁰ See Slings (1999) 106. Bailly (2003) 132 notes that this is a combination of two points.

⁵¹ As noted by Bailly (2003) 133.

⁵² Slings (1999) 109 suggests that this assumption is motivated by the desire to dispose of the possibility that virtue could be acquired by nature.

Indeed, at 408b5–c1, Clitophon explicitly praises the suggestion that virtue can be taught, an assertion he claims to have found in Socrates' exhortations. Clitophon has heard Socrates questioning whether virtue can be taught but he has also, it seems, heard Socrates asserting that it can be taught and it is the latter point that has left a lasting impression.

A similar assessment can be made of Clitophon's summary from 407e3–408b5. Again, many of the points listed sound authentically Socratic although, again, they are rather imprecisely assembled. The final section (408a3–b5) of Clitophon's account of Socratic protreptic is significant:

καὶ τελευτᾷ δὴ καλῶς ὁ λόγος οὕτως σοι, ὡς ὅστις ψυχῆι μὴ ἐπίσταται χρῆσθαι, τούτῳ τὸ ἄγειν ἡσυχίαν τῆι ψυχῆι καὶ μὴ ζῆν κρεῖττον ἢ ζῆν πράττοντι καθ' αὐτόν· εἰ δέ τις ἀνάγκη ζῆν εἴη, δούλωι ἄμεινον ἢ ἐλευθέρῳ διάγειν τῷ τοιούτῳ τὸν βίον ἐστὶν ἄρα, καθάπερ πλοίου παραδόντι τὰ πηδάλια τῆς διανοίας ἄλλωι, τῷ μαθόντι τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων κυβερνητικὴν, ἣν δὴ σὺ πολιτικὴν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐπονομάζεις πολλάκις, τὴν αὐτὴν δὴ ταύτην δικαστικὴν τε καὶ δικαιοσύνην ὡς ἐστὶν λέγων.

And so your speech produces the fine conclusion that whoever lacks knowledge of how to use his soul would do better to leave his soul in peace and not to live than to live doing whatever he fancied. But if he must live, it is better that he pass his life as a slave than as a free man, handing over the rudder of his thinking, like that of a ship, to another who has learned the art of steering men, which you frequently call 'the political art', Socrates, claiming that it is the same as the art of judging and justice.

Clitophon has incorporated several Socratic motifs familiar from other dialogues, most prominently from the *Republic*.⁵³ The lesson he has gleaned from his encounters with Socrates is that he should subjugate himself to someone with superior knowledge. This is particularly telling because, as his account of his elenchus and his general attitude to Socrates throughout the dialogue make clear, he has chosen to 'hand over the rudder of his thinking' to Socrates. Clitophon has understood Socratic protreptic as a promise of Socratic authority.

It is notable that at no point in his imitation and paraphrase (and, indeed, at no point in the entire speech) does Clitophon attempt to represent a Socratic profession of ignorance.⁵⁴

53 See Slings (1999) 117–24. Rowe (2000b) 162 suggests a plausible parallel in *Republic* 6's Ship of State simile (487e7–489a2).

54 As noted by Slings (1999) 121–2, who proposes that the omission is motivated by the fact that 'it is the *raison d'être* of our dialogue that Clitophon should find out for himself that Socrates is ignorant'. In fact, Clitophon does not find out that Socrates is ignorant as his accusation that Socrates is concealing his knowledge at 410b4–c6 makes clear.

Such professions are not obviously incompatible with exhortation.⁵⁵ In *Alcibiades I*, an explicitly protreptic text, Socrates reminds Alcibiades that he is as much in need of help as the younger man:

ἀλλὰ γὰρ κοινὴ βουλή ὦτινι τρόποι ἂν ὅτι βέλτιστοι γενοίμεθα. ἐγὼ γὰρ τοι οὐ περὶ μὲν σοῦ λέγω ὡς χρὴ παιδευθῆναι, περὶ ἐμοῦ δὲ οὐ· οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ' ὅτῳ σου διαφέρω πλὴν γ' ἐνί.⁵⁶

But let's put our heads together about how we can become as good as possible. For what I said about needing to be educated I said not just about you but about me too. For, except in one way, I am no better than you are.⁵⁷

As I have noted, Clitophon concludes his speech by drawing a contrast between his own view that Socrates is withholding knowledge and the opinion of those who think Socrates is simply ignorant. It seems that Clitophon has taken Socratic protreptic to be a promise of indoctrination and, in this, he has been disappointed. This disappointment is founded on his misunderstanding of Socrates, a misunderstanding signalled by the way in which he chooses to emphasise certain aspects of Socratic exhortation and to omit others altogether.

There is something equally intriguing about Clitophon's account of his attempt at questioning Socrates himself at 410a7–b3:

So finally, Socrates, I asked you yourself about these things, and you told me that justice is harming one's enemies and helping one's friends. But later it transpired that the just man never harms anyone, for everything he does to anyone is for their benefit.

The definition of justice as helping one's friends and harming one's enemies is mooted and refuted in *Republic I* but there it is, of course, presented as Polemarchus' view. If, as I suspect is the case, the *Clitophon* postdates the *Republic*, Clitophon's attribution of this view to Socrates is grist to my mill. Clitophon would then be misattributing to Socrates a view he has, at *Republic 332c ff.*, heard Socrates describe as Polemarchus' interpretation of Simonides poetry. This would, I take it, be further evidence of his tendency to misrepresent the views of others. Even if this is not a direct allusion to the *Republic*, Clitophon is attributing to Socrates a definition of justice that both Plato and Xenophon

55 It is notable that, although Clitophon criticises Socrates on the grounds that some people may think he is exhorting people to something about the nature of which he is ignorant (410b3–c5), he never considers the further point that it might be illegitimate to exhort x in the absence of knowledge of x. Of course, since Clitophon seems to be blind to Socrates' self-professed ignorance, such a criticism is beyond him.

56 *Alcibiades I* 124c1–4.

57 As 124c9–11 makes clear, Socrates is superior to Alcibiades insofar as his guardian (god) is superior to Alcibiades' guardian (Pericles).

suggest is un-Socratic.⁵⁸ On either reading, Clitophon is misrepresenting Socrates.⁵⁹ In fact, his misrepresentation of Socrates' view of justice parallels his distortion of Thrasymachus' view at *Republic* 340a3–b8.

Clitophon's misrepresentation is not limited to the views he attributes to Socrates. There is also something suspicious about Clitophon's version of Socratic methodology. It is worth considering the way that Clitophon introduces his impression of Socrates' exhortative speeches at 407a5–b2. He has, he says, been deeply impressed with Socrates' 'whenever you censure mankind with hymns like a tragic *deus ex machina*' (ὅποτε ἐπιτιμῶν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ὡσπερ ἐπὶ μιχαίνης τραγικῆς θεός ὕμνοις λέγων). He begins the exhortation itself with the words 'Whither are you going, human beings?' (ποῖ φέρεσθε, ὄνθρωποι). Now, Slings suggests that 'what is really un-Platonic is his addressing this speech to a crowd' for, in the *Apology*, 'Plato takes great care to stress that the exhortations are directed at individuals.'⁶⁰ At *Apology* 36b5–d1, for example, Socrates says that he goes to each person individually (ἰδίᾳ).⁶¹ In fact, Xenophon does have Socrates addressing crowds: *Memorabilia* 1.7 presents a speech to Socrates' associates (τοῦς συνόντας), whilst the speech of 1.5 is addressed to 'men' in general (ὁ ἄνδρες). In neither case, however, does Socrates achieve the register of ὄνθρωποι.⁶² Clitophon has Socrates address 'mankind' in general. This is, of course, in keeping with his comparing Socrates to a *deus ex machina*. The implication is that Socrates speaks from a position of superior understanding, a charge that Clitophon will make explicitly at the end of his speech in accusing Socrates of withholding knowledge.

If this is the implication of likening Socrates to a god, then Clitophon may well have hit on something important. For the extent and nature of the knowledge that Socrates is prepared to claim or disavow is a notoriously thorny issue. Presenting it as he does, however, Clitophon seems once again to miss the mark, for one thing the *Apology* makes clear is that, whatever knowledge or wisdom Socrates is prepared to admit to, it certainly is not *divine* wisdom. Thus, at *Apology* 20d6–e3, Socrates admits the possibility that his unfortunate reputation may have been caused by some kind of wisdom, but insists that it could be no more than *human* wisdom (ἀνθρωπίνῃ σοφίᾳ). In fact, he claims that it would

58 See *Republic* 335e1–5 (where Socrates states the view that Clitophon claims 'transpired' and attributes to no one in particular), *Crito* 49c10–11 and Xenophon *Memorabilia* 4.8.11. At *Memorabilia* 2.3.14, Socrates notes that 'most people think that it is worthy of the highest praise that one should anticipate the ill deeds of one's enemies and the good deeds of one's friends'. I take it that this is not a Socratic endorsement of the position. Nor, I think, is *Memorabilia* 4.215–17, when read in the context of Socrates' attempt to get Euthydemus to decide his own position.

59 Rowe (2000a) 305–6 suggests that the misattribution is a symptom of the author's own clumsiness. He goes on to propose that this misattribution may be taken as evidence that the Clitophon is a (non-Platonic) attack on Plato as 'it is after all Plato who puts Polemarchus' proposal into Polemarchus' mouth, only to knock it down again'.

60 Slings (1999) 45. Olympiodorus in *Gorg.* 20.2 takes this passage as evidence that Socrates did address crowds on some occasions.

61 See also *Apology* 29d2–e3 and 30a7–b4. Of course, not every Socratic remark is addressed to only one person. The emphasis seems to be on addressing small groups of individuals as individuals, rather than orating to the masses.

62 On which, see Denyer (2008) 79, in reference to *Protagoras* 314d5.

be slander to suggest that he possesses anything more. To this extent, then, Clitophon is once again misrepresenting Socrates. For Clitophon's Socrates exhorts from a position of special and superior knowledge, rather than as someone who, whilst committed to the idea that thinking about how to be good is important, still claims to be trying to work out for himself what being good actually entails.

What of Clitophon's version of Socratic elenchus? There is something odd here too. Clitophon claims to have questioned Socrates' companions in a Socratic fashion (κατὰ σέ). There are, however, two aspects of Clitophon's elenchus that encourage me to classify it as a misrepresentation. The first is the uneven nature of the exposition, as discussed above. Insofar as Clitophon privileges his own side of the engagement, he does not seem to be representing a conversation as such. The second is the fact that Clitophon goes in the first instance to Socrates' companions in order to find out how they interpret Socrates, rather than going straight to Socrates. Of course, it is not uncommon for Socrates to engage in conversation with the pupils of sophists. So, in the *Meno*, Meno is a pupil of Gorgias and, as they launch into their investigation of virtue (71c8–d8), Socrates asks Meno to 'remind me of what he [Gorgias] said' but, even here, Socrates is interested in Gorgias' thought only insofar as it is what Meno thinks too:

ἐκεῖνον μὲν τοίνυν ἐώμεν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἄπεστιν· σὺ δὲ αὐτότος, ὃ πρὸς θεῶν, Μένων, τί φῆς ἀρετὴν εἶναι;

Let's leave Gorgias out of it, since he's not here. But Meno, for god's sake, what do you yourself say virtue is?

If Socratic elenchus is questioning individuals about the beliefs to which they themselves are committed, then Clitophon has started his investigation in the wrong place. He has gone wrong in asking others what Socrates thinks rather than in asking Socrates himself because elenchus, properly conducted, should be the scrutiny of an individual regarding their own beliefs.

Misrepresenting aporia

Finally, I turn to Clitophon's assertion at the end of his speech that he has been brought to aporia (410c6–8). But before I do so, it worth restating the so-called 'Riddle of the Clitophon': why does Socrates remain silent in the face of Clitophon's criticisms? One recent suggestion is that the *Clitophon* is an aporetic dialogue.⁶³ On this line of interpretation, insofar as Socrates, i.e. the Socrates of the aporetic dialogues, has succeeded in bringing Clitophon to aporia, there is nothing left to say. Only a Socrates with doctrinal commitments could offer Clitophon the kind of answers he is seeking. I have suggested that Clitophon

⁶³ Bowe (2007) 259–64.

repeatedly misrepresents Socrates and that his attempt at elenchus, although claimed to be undertaken in a Socratic manner, is not a genuinely Socratic elenchus. It is, at best, a pseudo-elenchus and so, I think, it necessarily ends in no more than a pseudo-aporia. All Clitophon's elenctic efforts are focused on attempting to work out what Socrates thinks about justice, rather than what he, Clitophon, thinks. As a result, his aporia is not comparable to that claimed by, for example, Theaetetus or Meno. The latter pair answer for themselves and the aporia that results is a genuinely felt confusion, brought about by the recognition of some problem within their own set of beliefs. It is as if Clitophon knows that the right thing to tell Socrates is that he has become confused, but this confusion falls short of Socratic aporia. In fact, it seems that Clitophon is not even as confused as he claims to be:

διὰ ταῦτα δὴ καὶ πρὸς Θρασύμαχον οἶμαι πορεύομαι⁶⁴ καὶ ἄλλοσε ὅποι δύναμαι, ἄπορων·

That's why, I think, I go to Thrasymachus and whoever else I can, because I am at a loss.

Clitophon explicitly states that it is because he is at a loss (ἄπορος) that he goes (πορεύομαι) to Thrasymachus and beyond. So, in the same breath, he claims both that he cannot find a way out and that Thrasymachus *et alii* offer a way out. As he makes clear in what follows, he just wants to be told what to think. He is, as Rutherford has it, someone who is determined to find "Truth" on a plate'.⁶⁵ If Socrates will not serve it up, he will go off and dine with another.

This, I think, is the answer to the riddle. It is not that Socrates, having brought Clitophon to aporia, has finished his work, but that there was no work to be done with Clitophon in the first place. At no point in the dialogue has Clitophon committed himself to a belief, beyond his opinion of Socrates and his approval of Socratic protreptic. I suggested that something similar was the case for his appearance in the *Republic*, where his interjection is presented as defence of Thrasymachus' view, rather than as an original thought. Clitophon is, it seems, precisely the sort of person Socrates describes at *Theaetetus* 151b2–6:

ἐνίοις δέ, ὦ Θεαίτητε, οἱ ἄν μοι μὴ δόξωσί πως ἐγκύμονες εἶναι, γνούς ὅτι οὐδὲν ἐμοῦ δέονται, πάνυ εὐμενῶς προμνῶμαι καί, σὺν θεῷ εἰπεῖν, πάνυ ἱκανῶς τοπάζω οἷς ἄν συγγεγόμενοι ὄναιτο· ὧν πολλοὺς μὲν δὴ ἐξέδωκα Προδικῶ, πολλοὺς δὲ ἄλλοις σοφοῖς τε καὶ θεσπεσίοις ἀνδράσι.

64 For a relatively convincing rejection of the variant πορεύσομαι, see Slings (1999) 329–30. For my purposes, it makes no difference whether Clitophon is stating that he does now go or that he will go in the future to Thrasymachus; the issue is that he goes (or will go) motivated by a misunderstanding of what Socrates has to offer him.

65 Rutherford (1995) 100.

But sometimes, Theaetetus, there are some who don't seem to be to be pregnant. Realising that they have no need of me and wishing them all the best, I match them up, and, touch wood, I think I do quite well at working out with whom they would benefit from spending time. I've sent many of them to Prodicus, and many others to other wise and inspired chaps.

There is no pregnancy in Clitophon to which Socrates can tend, for Clitophon seems to have no thoughts of his own. As a result, Socrates lets him go off to Thrasymachus, as he says in the *Theaetetus* that he has let the empty-headed young men go off to Prodicus and the others. Socrates makes no response to Clitophon because to do so would be to engage in elenchus and a prerequisite of elenchus is that the interlocutor has some thoughts to offer up for scrutiny. Clitophon is characterised as someone unprepared to take ownership of his own beliefs. As such, genuine Socratic elenchus and genuine aporia are beyond him. On this reading, the Clitophon is not aporetic, it is pseudo-aporetic.

Misrepresenting Clitophon?

Some may feel that I am too hard on Clitophon. For all that the formulation of his critique may be somewhat awkward, it may be felt that he has hit upon something important about Socratic methodology or that his misunderstanding is not quite as extensive as I have claimed. After all, he seems to have learned to care about virtue and perhaps for that, at least, he deserves some credit. In fact, as I have suggested, I think Clitophon cares more about finding out what Socrates thinks than about discovering the nature of virtue. Clitophon is looking for someone to tell him what to think, irrespective of whether this is the right thing to think. His focus is on finding an answer, but he seems to be determined to look for that answer anyhow other than by scrutinising his own beliefs. Of course, some may think that this, in itself, is a rather successful representation of Socratic methodology. It is hardly unheard of for Socrates, having claimed to be ignorant of the matter at hand, to ask others to offer up their beliefs for scrutiny. Perhaps, in this respect at least, Clitophon has captured an essential aspect of Socratic elenchus. However, as I have already emphasised, Clitophon approaches Socrates' companions before he engages with Socrates himself. So, although he seems to want to engage with Socrates' beliefs, he approaches them via a perversely circuitous route. Further, his engagement with those beliefs as represented by Socrates' companions is a mere shadow of the kind of testing to which Socrates puts his interlocutors in the elenctic dialogues.

Others may want to defend Clitophon on the grounds that he has, at least, come to care for virtue. They may want to claim that, in the end, there is nothing more that he could have learned from Socrates. Either, as he claims, Socrates is withholding his knowledge of virtue or, as others think, he lacks knowledge of virtue altogether. If Clitophon has been encouraged to care for virtue by Socrates then maybe he has succeeded in learning all that he could have. Without doubt, Clitophon represents himself as someone who has come to care for virtue, but, as he demonstrates throughout his speech, his primary concern is that

he should be taught the nature of virtue. If we want to ask what it is Clitophon has failed to learn from Socrates, it is that real learning involves thinking for oneself.

Misrepresenting Plato?

I have argued that Clitophon presents himself as someone with a special understanding of Socrates and Socratic methodology. I hope to have demonstrated that his representation of Socrates is, in several ways, a misrepresentation. Clitophon is misguided both in what he thinks Socrates does and in what he thinks Socrates can do for him. Clitophon is a bad 'reader' of Socrates. He is also, I have argued, someone well aware of the possibility that what one says can be misrepresented and misinterpreted especially, although by no means exclusively, when it is reported by some third party.

I conclude with a tentative suggestion for the broader implications of this characterisation of Clitophon. On the reading I have offered, Clitophon's plight can serve as a cautionary tale about what happens when one puts all one's efforts into trying to work out what someone else thinks. Such endeavours are conducive to neither philosophical nor ethical progress, not even progress towards the painful but necessary stage of *aporia*. This problem is spelled out in the *Clitophon* as the result of an obsession with Socrates. But perhaps something more is happening here. In a sense, Clitophon is, during the course of his defence, writing his own dialogue about justice. It is not a very good *dialogue*, because only one side is adequately reported. One might even call it a 'pseudo-dialogue'. This is despite the fact that Clitophon is aware of the difficulties inherent in working out what someone thinks from what others say they think. My proposal is that the *Clitophon* is, in a sense, a dialogue about the dangers of relying on the genre of philosophical dialogue to gain insight into the views of some particular philosopher. I want to suggest that the *Clitophon* is a reflection on the difficulties faced by someone reading philosophical dialogues.

This suggestion can be expanded in two ways. The first is as a genuinely intended criticism of philosophical dialogues. On this reading, the *Clitophon* is an attack on the dialogue form on the grounds that such works encourage us to mine the reported speech for easy answers, rather than to think for ourselves. In this case, Clitophon's obsession with things Socratic might be symptomatic of what the author thinks is the inevitable distraction caused by relying on a character as seductive as Socrates. The criticism could be that, if faced with a dialogue in which clever old Socrates talks about *x*, one will inevitably attempt to work out what clever old Socrates (or Plato) thinks about *x*. The dialogue form makes Clitophons of us all.

The second and, to my mind, more attractive possibility is that the *Clitophon* is not a criticism, but an admission and a warning. It is an admission that Socrates is indeed seductive and that there is a great temptation to attempt to work out what he (or Plato) thinks about *x* from what he says about *x*. But it is also warning that this is not how one should go about reading dialogues. If one tries to find easy answers within the texts,

one will end up like Clitophon. Should that happen, there is nothing Socrates or Plato can do to help.

If the Clitophon is authentic, the second option seems a rather more plausibly Platonic position. Against authenticity, it has been objected that Clitophon's speech is clumsily put together and that it alludes too obviously and extensively to the corpus to be Platonic. On my reading, however, the clumsiness and the allusiveness are Clitophon's. Clitophon is explicitly a bad reader of Socrates and implicitly a bad reader of Plato; I see no reason to attribute those faults to his creator. In fact, once we recognise that Clitophon is deliberately characterised as a clumsy imitator of Socrates, what remains of the case against authenticity rather seems to collapse. For Clitophon's hotchpotch of Socratic philosophy has been deliberately composed as such and should not be held in the balance as evidence against the skill of its author. Quite the opposite, in fact. Some may continue to want to hypothesise an unknown author, capable of writing such a subtle and allusive dialogue in the period and style of Plato. For my money, however, to do so seems rather extravagant when we already have Plato himself.

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