

# Plato's *Euthydemus* and a Platonist Education Program

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## AN ARRANGEMENT OF PLATO'S DIALOGUES AND ITS PLATONIC ORIGIN

I like to believe that the study of later Platonism actively assists our response to Plato's own dialogues.<sup>1</sup> Certainly many of the ancients, usually the most prominent, had ways of reading the dialogues that were often quite strained, and would not be helpful if taken in their entirety. Yet in matters of detail they can still be thought-provoking, and (hopefully) lead to new insights even today. Even lesser figures can be quite helpful, and that may include some whose identity is entirely unknown. The anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus* might perhaps be one example.<sup>2</sup> Here I wish to examine an account of Plato's education program that is preserved in Arabic by al-Farabi, but comes from an unknown Platonist of the pre-Plotinian era, possibly Theon of Smyrna or Galen.<sup>3</sup>

The account purports to reconstruct Plato's own order of investigating problems, and it aligns with this order of investigation almost all of the thirty six dialogues that are included in the standard corpus, which goes back at least to Thrasyllus in the early first century AD. A very few names are

1. This thesis has become popular of late; see for instance Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics Old and New* (Ithaca, 1998), and my own *Plato's First Interpreters* (London and Ithaca, 2000).

2. See the edition of G. Bastianini and D.N. Sedley, Anonymous *In Theaetetum*, in *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini*, iii: Commentari (Firenze, 1995) 227–562. On the author and date see particularly pp. 246–56. For its value for Plato studies see also David Sedley, "A Platonist Reading of *Theaetetus* 145–7," *PAS* suppl. vol. 67 (1993): 125–49, and id. "Three Platonist Readings of the *Theaetetus*," in C. Gill, and M.M. McCabe (eds.), *Form and Argument in Late Plato* (Oxford, 1996) 79–103; also Tarrant, "Where Plato Speaks: Reflections on an Ancient Debate," in G. Press (ed.), *Who Speaks for Plato* (Lanham, 2000) 67–80, and id. "The Criterion 'By the Agency of Which': Anon. *In Theaetetum* fr. D," in *Papiri Filosofici: Miscellanea di Studi I* (= *Studi e Testi per il Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici* 11), (Firenze, 2003) 75–95.

3. Published with Latin translation in F. Rosenthal and R. Walzer (eds.), *Plato Arabus II: Alfarabius De Platonis Philosophia* (London, 1953, repr. Nendeln, 1973). Pages xii–xvi discuss authorship, Theon being a prime candidate; for a leaning toward Galen see Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism* (Ithaca, 1993) 32–38.

either missing or in doubt in the Arabic, but the edition is able to supply most of these at appropriate points, leaving only the brief *Minos* unaccounted for. At some points (16, 17, 26–28, 32) it is clear that Plato is supposed to have written the dialogue concerned at the corresponding point of investigation, though generally the book is simply said to contain the things investigated at the stage concerned. Hence there is clearly meant to be a close correlation between the order of dialogues and the order of composition, though without any promise of an exact correlation. Very often there is good internal logic, so that a given dialogue must inevitably follow the discoveries announced in another dialogue, but the order is quite different from any chronological order that might be proposed today.

I want to examine here a relationship that seems not to have been suspected previously between the account of Plato's investigations and the interludes depicting the education of Cleinias in the *Euthydemus*. I believe that this relationship has been so well thought out as to offer us a valuable ancient interpretation of these scenes, and one that throws light on the ideas that underlie them. Plato had there depicted Socrates leading the young Cleinias through a long chain of reasoning to the discovery, in the first scene, that he needs to pursue knowledge. And to the further discovery, in a second scene, that the knowledge he needs will be of such a type as to both be productive and control the use of good things produced. The primary candidate for satisfying these criteria seems to have been the art of statesmanship, though several difficulties remain to be solved as the second educational scene closes, and as Socrates goes over the difficulties with Crito. Even so, any Platonist with the whole corpus available is likely to see in the discussion of statesmanship some kind of foreshadowing<sup>4</sup> of the doctrine of philosopher-kings in *Republic* book 6. And indeed these individuals, who do provide for the production and continuation of knowledge (and right opinion) in the state as well as managing all other arts within it, may be thought to offer something of a solution to the impasse in the *Euthydemus* (292b–e).

The broad outline of the arrangement in al-Farabi is as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> group (3.1–5.9): Here Plato establishes the necessity for the good life of both knowledge and an appropriate combination of goods; he specifies the general nature of that knowledge; and he shows that it is acquired, and

4. It is particularly easy to see foreshadowing of Plato's mature doctrines in the *Euthydemus*, on which see R.S.W. Hawtrey, *Commentary on Plato's Euthydemus* (Philadelphia, 1981) 5–6; for the notion that many of Plato's dialogues contain proleptic elements that look forward to what has yet to be written, see Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophic Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge, 1996), and more particularly his "Some Puzzles in the *Euthydemus*," in Thomas M. Robinson and Luc Brisson (eds.), *Plato: Euthydemus, Lysis, Charmides* (Sankt Augustin, 2000) 88–97.

able to be discovered *by inquiry*. This corresponds fairly closely to the first educational scene in the *Euthydemus* (278e–282d).

2<sup>nd</sup> group (5.10–7.23): Here Plato examines various known areas of study, and finds out what capacity they might have for providing the required knowledge (5.15–16), and perhaps also for providing the appropriate combination of goods (7.26). The identification of appropriate studies is precisely what Socrates asks from the pair of sophists immediately following the first educational scene, and in a sense the whole dialogue, right up to the closing scene between Socrates and Crito is concerned with this sort of question. Along with sophistry go a variety of associated skills in language, interpretation, persuasion, and dialectic, all of which are looked at in section 2.

3<sup>rd</sup> group (7.24–9.12): Here Plato examines so-called practical arts and the behaviours arising from them (7.25–32), to see whether they can collectively supply the combination of goods and the knowledge required. Arts of acquiring profit, of presenting the right image, and of generating pleasure are all looked at in this context, and found wanting. Again such arts are not foreign to the sophists' overall concerns, but the real basis for following group 1 with groups 2 and 3 is the second educational scene at 288d–290d, in which Socrates and Cleinias begin from where they had left off, with the need for philosophy (there defined as the acquisition of knowledge, 288d8), and proceed to think about what knowledge must be acquired. There is a fundamental distinction here between productive/acquisitive arts and the arts of employing what had been produced, for just as getting good things has been found worse than useless without knowing how to use them (281b–d), so the products of productive knowledge cannot help us without use-knowledge. Strictly, the examination of various arts here is more about the shortcomings of the productive/acquisitive (and hence practical) arts. Wealth-producing arts (288e–9a), arts that would make a big impression like raising the dead (289b), and arts with seductive power like speech writing (289c–290a) are all included.

4<sup>th</sup> group (9.13–12.8): Here Plato demonstrates that the required intellectual and practical arts are philosophy and statesmanship respectively, locates them in the same individual, and investigates qualities that this individual will show. These include temperance, bravery, the correct sort of desire (held with passion), philosophical tools like collection and division, and a mistrust of writing. The *Euthydemus* clearly shows considerable interest in the idea that acquisition of the required art is philosophy of some kind (282d, 288e), and the sophists are assumed to be teaching just that (274e–5a), though they themselves are 'wise' rather than philosophic. However, the real philosopher and promoter of the appropriate wisdom is Socrates himself, and this wisdom is what he continues to promote until the end (307b–c). Like-

wise the work is primarily interested in the identification of the political art with the practical art best able to use what is supplied by all other relevant arts (291c–292e) including generalship (290d2). At the end of the work Plato is critical of those who boast to be somewhere between philosophy and politics, but anybody who knew the *Republic* would want to make a distinction between such a fence-sitter and the Platonic philosopher-king, who is intended to be fully philosopher and fully statesman. One difference is the devotion of the fence-sitter to the mere writing of speeches (304d, 305b–c) making him a practitioner of an art already rejected as unable to make use of its products (289d). By pointing out the kind of combination of politics and philosophy that falls short of the ideal, Plato can be seen to be providing guidelines for the true philosopher-king.

5<sup>th</sup> group (12.9–15.10): The logical step is now to show how these philosopher-kings will function, and we are already far beyond anything that the *Euthydemus* can tell us. We first have to deal with the only known situation thus far, where the person endowed with this double art finds himself in a state which cannot be reformed, affording a glimpse into the death of Socrates himself. Then we go on to the logical step of proposing an entirely new sort of state (*Republic*), the studies conducted within it (*Timaeus*), its laws (*Laws*), and the supreme perfection of its citizens (*Critias*). Note that all this deals, according to the arrangement, with Plato's new reformed state, in which the combined philosopher-politician may be less subject to the criticism of *Euthydemus* 306c that he must be inferior to both philosopher qua philosopher and politician qua politician.

Appendix (15.11–16.19): There remains some investigation concerning practical politics, involving four works: the *Epinomis*, *Clitophon*, *Menexenus*, and *Epistles*.

The closest correspondence with what is found in the *Euthydemus* occurs at the beginning. This is hardly surprising, for the dialogue-order assumed by this arrangement of Plato's investigations, means that the *Euthydemus* itself belongs to the second stage, where the theoretical arts that claim to put one on the road to happiness are examined. Any hint of what will come at the third and fourth stages is thus a forward glimpse, and subject to the findings of further investigation. There are plenty of other reasons why one should not expect too great a correspondence with any of the theory that originally supported the arrangement. The work of which we possess an Arabic version survived two translations, the first into Syriac.<sup>5</sup> The original rationale behind the theory of composition and the arrangement of the cor-

5. Rosenthal and Walzer *Plato Arabus II*, xvi–xviii.

pus may already have been compromised by such alterations as often occur when successive Greek philosophers reuse the same material and adapt it for their own purposes. We know that some details behind the arrangement have been lost or obscured. Therefore any similarities with the *Euthydemus* that we can now detect may be less striking than had once been there.

*THE EUTHYDEMUS AND THE FIRST STAGE OF INVESTIGATION*

Since the correspondence with the first group of investigations is the most striking, it is here that we must look for the strongest confirmation that this dialogue underlies the rationale behind the account of Platonic investigations. I therefore present a table that examines the *Euthydemus*' relationship with it in greater detail:

AL-FARABI	SUBJECT MATTER	<i>EUTHYDEMUS</i>
3.1–3	The search for human perfection and happiness	278e
3.3–5	The contribution of health, beauty, strength	279a–b
3.5–7	The contribution of family and friends	279b2
3.7–8	The contribution of wealth	279a7
3.8–10	The contribution of power and honour	279b2–3
3.10–14	None of these suffices for happiness	280b
3.14–16	Their acquisition is not enough	280c–d
3.16–19	They need to be employed in a life and with knowledge	280d–281b?
	[claim: the above discussed in <i>Alcibiades I</i> ]	
3.22–26	The type and extent of the knowledge required if we are to achieve the highest human perfection	281b
	[claim: the above discussed in the <i>Theaetetus</i> ]	
4.1–5	The best life is that which leads to the highest perfection	282a1–4
	[claim: the above discussed in the <i>Philebus</i> ] <sup>6</sup>	
4.7–24	The possibility of becoming wise in this knowledge	282a4–b7
	[claim: the above discussed in the <i>Protagoras</i> ]	
4.26–5.8	The learning process by which this wisdom comes	282c1–d3
	[claim: the above discussed in the <i>Meno</i> ]	

Even allowing for the seductiveness of tabulation of this kind, and the simplifications that may arise from it, there seems to be some kind of correspondence here that is difficult to regard as fortuitous. It was easy enough in

6. This is how Rosenthal and Walzer, *Plato Arabus II*, interpret “Philus,” though the *Philebus* would be the dialogue naturally conforming with the title *On Pleasure* at 9.11; in *Thasyllan Platonism*, 34 n.4, I prefer to see the *Lysis* here, but then the *Lysis* most naturally fits the investigation described at 10.21–24. Furthermore, it is difficult to see what dialogue could be placed here without breaking the natural connection between *Theaetetus* and *Protagoras*.

antiquity to believe that the two educational scenes offered natural and logical step-by-step instruction in the principles of moral education, standing in sharp contrast to the sophistic puzzles that flank them. Plato could be seen as doing for ethics what Euclid was subsequently to do for geometry. If one did believe that this section of the *Euthydemus* offered a natural and rational sequence of investigation, it would be but a short step to the assumption that (a) Plato himself had taken this same path, and (b) others might also be encouraged to approach Platonic philosophy in the same order.

It is when one understands the relationship with the *Euthydemus* that some of the difficulties also stand out. First, what is the first *Alcibiades* doing in prime position, associated with a sequence of investigation best studied in relation to the *Euthydemus*? Second, what is the dialogue associated with 4.1–5, and can we conceive of a way that it will not break the flow from the *Theaetetus* to the *Protagoras*? Third, why has no account been taken of the good things that belong to the soul (279b4–c2) and of the section in which one apparent advantage, getting lucky (*eutychia*), is identified with knowledge (279c–280b)?

Problem 1: The *Alcibiades I* was a dialogue known to have been much used in an introductory position in antiquity. It was the second on a list of dialogues with which educators were supposed to have begun in Diogenes Laertius (3.62), and possibly the most important—for the first listed was from the reading order of Aristophanes of Byzantium that had just been mentioned. It was the first member of a brief reading order advocated by Albinus (*Prologus* 6) for the ideal student. Subsequently it became the standard starting point of Neoplatonist reading programs from Iamblichus on. Its importance as a starting point may have caused it either to oust another work from this position or simply to be moved ahead of the *Theaetetus*—for this was another dialogue on Diogenes' list of starting points.

Let us not, however, dismiss the role of this dialogue too readily. The *Alcibiades I* was concerned with the importance of knowledge and of the moral virtues in the good life, and in particular in the political life. It started by noting a lot of the good things that the young man saw as his own advantages in political life: bodily attributes, family connections, power, and wealth (104a–c). Much of the first section, to 119a, is devoted to demonstrating Alcibiades' acute need of knowledge before he embarks on politics. Later he is given reasons why he should strive for self-knowledge (124a–134a). This gives way to a demand for the traditional moral virtues (134c–e), since this is essential for happiness (135a). But can we find the same correspondence with the initial stage as we can in the *Euthydemus*?

AL-FARABI	SUBJECT MATTER	<i>ALCIBIADES I</i>
3.1–3	The search for human perfection and happiness	135b
3.3–5	The contribution of [health], beauty etc., [strength]	104a4–5
3.5–7	The contribution of family and friends	104a6–b3
3.7–8	The contribution of wealth	104b8–c1
3.8–10	The contribution of power [and honour]	104b3–8
3.10–14	None of these suffices for happiness	134a–b, 135b
3.14–16	Their acquisition is not enough	104e–105a
3.16–19	They need to be employed in a life and with knowledge	124b3?
	[claim: the above discussed in <i>Alcibiades I</i> ]	

What we see is that this dialogue deals with related subjects at a variety of widely separated points. It can therefore be seen to be of some *relevance* to the first stage, but it cannot supply a coherent rationale for it. It has been fitted into the scheme, but the scheme has not been devised with it in mind.

Problem 2: “Then he next investigated what true happiness was, the knowledge as a result of which it arose, its character, and its deeds. He distinguished it from what was falsely thought to be happiness, and explained that the best life was the one through which we obtain that happiness.” These words (4.1–5) seem so general that they obscure the identity of the dialogue at this stage. It is very far from a good description of the *Philebus*, and equally far from the content of the *Lysis* and any other single whole dialogue. The place where Plato most obviously examines the life that leads to blessedness, the knowledge that will be associated with it, the character of the person approaching it, and what he does, all the while contrasting this life with the life *thought* to be blessed, is still in the *Theaetetus*. It is the so-called moral digression, which alone reflects 3.22–26 because it contains the only positive teaching about the all-embracing character of a knowledge or wisdom associated with the supreme goal for mankind (176c). This knowledge is part of a life, whose character (*tropos*, 175d7), has been described along with the character of its opposite (172c–176a), and whose paradigm of happiness is then discussed along with the opposite paradigm (176e–177a). Hence 4.1–5 describe further this central content of the *Theaetetus*, and any mention of the *Philebus* in the original theory would have been incidental only. When one considers that this section of the *Theaetetus* was in late antiquity the classic text on Plato’s human *telos*, its key position at the head of this investigation is perhaps to be expected.

The place of the *Philebus* at this stage was therefore never part of the original theory behind the arrangement. It seems that the words “These things are in the book that he named *Philebus*, whose meaning is ‘friend’ ...” actu-

ally should be placed at 9.11, immediately before the words “This book is called *On Pleasure* by Socrates,” which does not conform with the way in which dialogues are usually named in this text, and does actually capture something of the directness with which the characters of the dialogue announce what it is about.

Problem 3: The key thing that the account of Plato’s investigations postulates is that the human goal should be found to involve both a way of life and some kind of knowledge. This combination frequently occurs (3.18–19, 4.7–8, 7.26), but of the two the emphasis is rather on knowledge. The *Euthydemus* makes the corresponding demand for both “good things” that will constitute the ingredients of a potentially good life, and a superior kind of knowledge that will understand how best to use them. The difficulty is that a different knowledge is listed among the good ingredients (279c1–2), and even regarded as the most important of them. This complicates the way that the knowledge-requirement can be represented from the point of view of anybody trying to summarise. The dialogue is very clear in demanding two sorts of knowledge in the first instance, the first of which is the kind of knowledge<sup>7</sup> that allows one to obtain one’s immediate goals, such as safety at sea, health, etc. One does not miss one’s mark (280a7), for which reason it is seen as sufficient to give us that power by which we successfully achieve our goals: *eutychia* (279c–280b).<sup>8</sup> The second is the knowledge of how to put what we have achieved to good use, whether it is wealth (280d), other material goods (281a), or health and beauty (281a–b). Hence it is noted that in all these areas we need knowledge not just for *eutychia* (its acquisitive power) but also for *eupragia* (its power to contribute to well-being) “in every acquisition and operation” (281b4).<sup>9</sup> Plato has deliberately gone about establish-

7. The terms initially used are rather wisdom or cleverness (*sophia*) and clever (*sophos*), 279c1–280b2 x 12; the term for expertise in the use of good things (281a x 3) is the standard term for knowledge, *epistēmē*. But both roles are conflated at 281b, so that one may now use *epistēmē*, *sophia*, and *phronēsis* indifferently (280b3, b6, d8, 281a4, a6, b3, b6, c1, c8).

8. A reasonable treatment of *eutychia* may be found in Hawtrey, *Commentary*, 77–80. See also my “Plato’s *Euthydemus* and the Two Faces of Socrates,” *Prudentia* 27 (1995): 4–17, at 15–17. I am less happy with Thomas H. Chance, *Plato’s Euthydemus: Analysis of what is and what is not Philosophy* (Berkeley, 1992) 58–63, and Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, “Making things Good and making Good Things in Socratic Philosophy,” in Thomas M. Robinson and Luc Brisson (eds.), *Plato: Euthydemus, Lysis, Charmides* 76–87, at 76–80; this is principally because the translation “good fortune” immediately misses the mark. In Hawtrey’s words Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1361b39ff.) “uses the word to describe the acquisition or possession of ‘goods’ that come by chance,” and this “getting” is essential to the meaning of the word (otherwise rare in Plato) in the *Euthydemus*. It is perhaps the hasty use of the standard translation that causes Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 40 n.30, to refer to 279c–280b as a “puzzling section.”

9. Compare here the phrase *tên de orthotêta kai eutychian* (i.e., correct use and successful acquisition), 282a4.

ing here the relevance of a *double knowledge*, involving knowing how to obtain things and knowing how to use them. That distinction will be made still clearer at 288e–290d, during the attempt to discover which knowledge is the one needed for happiness. But as soon as Plato has found two types of knowledge that apply to two different aspects of the good life, he puts the two together at 281b as if we were dealing with only one thing only. So perhaps an epitomator would see some unnecessary doubling up in the demonstration of knowledge's importance: and it does seem that our text has been subject to the epitomator's knife at some stage of its history.<sup>10</sup>

This does not mean that the al-Farabi text has in any way forgotten the fact that knowledge is not simple; it has merely been temporarily left aside so that the *overall* knowledge required (corresponding to *Euthd.* 281b2–4) could be discussed in relation to the *Theaetetus*: and in particular to the most didactic and platonizing passage (172c–177b), where wisdom is seen as belonging to the intellectual world, and the philosopher's interests are supposed to include the extremities of the universe and “the entire nature of each totality of existent things.”<sup>11</sup> At 281b2–4 the *Euthydemus* had emphasised the overall breadth of the knowledge requirement (*en pasêi ktêsei te kai praxei*),<sup>12</sup> and this is platonized somewhat by the arabic text along the lines of the *Theaetetus*: “knowledge of the essence of all individual existent things” (3.24–25). Regardless of this temporary focus on what we may recognise as the knowledge of the *Republic's* philosophers, there is still another knowledge that remains to be investigated, perhaps alluded to at 4.2,<sup>13</sup> that is made explicit with the advent of the practical arts at 7.26, which are considered as possible candidates for the suppliers of *both* the required knowledge of all existent things *and* the life that is sought after (cf. 9.13–17). Ultimately the source of the required knowledge will be philosophy (9.23), while the source of the life will be the royal or political art (9.33). That the two are to be found in the same individual does not make them identical (10.2–5).

Thus, while problem 3 in particular has taken some sorting out, nothing prevents us claiming a remarkably tight correspondence between the first

10. Rosenthal and Walzer, *Plato Arabus II*, xviii–xix.

11. 174a1: *pasan pantêi physin ereunômenê tôn ontôn hekastôi holôi* ....

12. Compare 281a8: *pasi tois toioutois*.

13. After the knowledge supposedly revealed in the *Theaetetus* we are supposed to get investigation of “true happiness, the knowledge from which it arises, its nature, and its manifestation in action” (4.1–3). Now this *seems* to be the investigation of another knowledge, although it is difficult to see how what has just been investigated had not already been an investigation of happiness-producing knowledge. If however we understand this “happiness” as the combined ingredients of the happy life, we can then see this new knowledge as an essentially acquisitive knowledge, as opposed to the broader and more abstract management-knowledge.

stage of the al-Farabi account of Plato's investigations and the content of the first educational scene in the *Euthydemus*. According to the account, the *Euthydemus* reflects part of the second stage of these investigations, so that further correspondences would be the result of some foreshadowing in that work. Thus there is no problem with the second educational scene being aporetic, since Plato has yet to discover that the knowledge he is looking for is double. He doesn't yet see that he needs both statesmanship for providing the overall conditions required for the good life, and philosophy for providing the knowledge required for converting those conditions into actual happiness. Yet he already realises that statesmanship seems to fall short in its own right. He cannot see what goal statesmanship sets for itself, in the way medicine aims at health, or agriculture at food-production (291e–292a). And he cannot see quite how statesmanship produces for the state the one thing that has been discovered to be unequivocally good—knowledge (292b–d). It would be perfectly reasonable, however, to claim that Plato here needs philosophy, as conceived in the *Republic*, firstly to discern the ultimate end of all human life (the good), and secondly to ensure that the state is a knowledgeable state.

Yet the *Euthydemus* is assuming all along that philosophy is the art that must be practised by able young men. The educational scenes have as their primary purpose the conversion of Cleinias to philosophy, something which the sophists are assumed to be able to achieve (282d–283b, 293a). The end of the work (307a–c) finds Socrates trying to persuade Crito to value philosophy in spite of the deficiencies of its assumed practitioners. And while the sophists' initial claim is the ability to teach virtue (273d), this soon becomes “turning people to philosophy and the careful pursuit of virtue.”<sup>14</sup> The goal is thus for Cleinias “to become wise and good” (282e). In these double expressions there is already the sense that the goal at which the sophists' teaching, and Cleinias' learning, should aim, has both a theoretical and a practical aspect. After all, statesmanship and political life had become, in democratic Athens and much of Greece besides, the supreme arena for demonstrating one's *goodness* (*aretê*);<sup>15</sup> men like Pericles, Themistocles, Cimon, and Miltiades were thought to be supreme examples of it.<sup>16</sup> Philosophy was almost by definition the pursuit of *sophia*, which in one of its meanings designated theoretical rather than practical abilities. That Pericles was not wise (*sophos*), though he studied with men like Anaxagoras who were, was a thesis of the first *Alcibiades* (118c–119a). So wisdom and political goodness, though they needed to be brought together, were different human qualities.

14. 275a1–2: *eis philosophian kai aretês epimeleian*, cf. a6: *philosophein kai aretês epimeleisthai*.

15. See for instance *Meno* 91a.

16. *Gorgias* 503c, *Protagoras* 319e–320b, *Meno* 93b–94e.

Hence the *Euthydemus* does actually anticipate the need for politics and philosophy to come together—while still deeply suspicious of the idea that they could come together in the same man.

#### THE REST OF THE ARRANGEMENT

After the initial focus on the Platonic *telos* and the knowledge that will enter into it, the second stage deals with the rejection of various known theoretical arts as either irrelevant or insufficient to provide the knowledge needed. This provides a home for two of those dialogues that were acknowledged to be polemical attacks on rival arts, the so-called *anatreptic* dialogues *Gorgias* and *Euthydemus*; for milder criticisms of persons who claimed expertise such as the *Euthyphro* and *Ion* (both known as *peirastic* dialogues); and for long investigations of logical methods not usually associated with Socrates, found in the so-called *logical* dialogues *Cratylus*, *Sophist*, and *Parmenides*. It is quickly seen that the group has little to do with the division of the dialogues into eight “characters” found in Diogenes Laertius (3.50–51) and elsewhere, since none of those categories is wholly to be found here. The only concession to the usual concerns of corpus-organisers is that natural sequences, where Platonic texts imply that one dialogue precedes another, are respected. Hence the *Theaetetus* (2) precedes the *Euthyphro* (5), which it looks forward to (210d), as well as the *Sophist* (9), which looks back to it (216a). The *Statesman* (18) naturally follows this last, being simply a continuation of the same conversation. Likewise the *Euthyphro* has preceded *Apology* and *Crito* (25 & 26),<sup>17</sup> and the *Crito* precedes the *Phaedo* (27); the *Republic* (28) precedes the *Timaeus* (29) and *Critias* (32); and *Laws* (31) precedes *Epinomis* (33).

There are other features of the order that reveal some thought on the arranger's part. The *Phaedrus* and its discussion of the comparative merits of oral and written *teaching*<sup>18</sup> comes before the group of dialogues that offer Plato's program of political teaching. Dialogues displaying dissatisfaction with the idea that the philosopher can ever function properly within the

17. 12.24–26 is confused in that it offers *Apology of Socrates* as an alternative title for *Crito*, while 13.9–12 involves the *Apology* under the different title of *Defence of Socrates before the Athenians* as sharing with the *Phaedo* the view that death is preferable to an inferior life. What seems clear, however, is that the *Apology* fits the earlier section better than the later one, and indeed that it fits the earlier section quite as well or better than the *Crito*. I suspect that some error has occurred in the transmission because of a reference to the new “defence” Socrates makes at 63b–69e, which is far more relevant than the *Apology* to the subject of willingness to die. If that is the case I doubt that there is any reason for suspecting that *Crito-Apology-Phaedo* was the order of original appearance.

18. Teaching is the key concept here, for it is to teaching that Plato's reservations about writing are interpreted as applying, 12.1–5.

confines of existing states (*Apology-Crito-Phaedo*) precede the outline of a new state in the *Republic*, of the arts needed for it in the *Timaeus*, and of its legislation in the *Laws*. The discovery that not only Socrates' but also Thrasymachus' methods of education can be useful in the *Clitophon* (34) follows all works of a dialectical character, but precedes the use of a simple didactic speech in the *Menexenus* (35). It does in fact agree extremely well, not only with the claim that from the *Epinomis* on the focus shifts from the political art to its actualisation in the practitioner (15.11–13), but also with the manner in which the *Euthydemus* had come round in its final pages (note 306b–c) to a discussion of philosophy and political activity together.

The names of various dialogues are missing from the list, but the only two that present any difficulty in locating are *Symposium* and *Minos*. I detect the *Symposium* in between 10.21–24, which seems an obvious reference to the *Lysis*, a dialogue that follows *Charmides* and *Laches* in the Thrasyllan arrangement also, and 10.35–12.8, all of which fits the *Phaedrus*. This part (12.25–35), still linked with *Phaedrus* by Rosenthal and Walzer, actually praises the single-minded devotion to one's goal that can go by the name of *erôs*, and distinguishes between good and bad *erôs*. This fits the *Symposium* (and the speeches of Pausanias and Eryximachus, as well as that of Socrates) much better than the *Phaedrus*. The brief *Minos* cannot be placed so easily, and is unlikely to be the only one of the 36 dialogues from the Thrasyllan canon to have been omitted. It is relevant to the arrangement generally, in so far as it represents Minos as having been educated by Zeus so as to acquire the royal art (319d–320c). But it is most relevant to the transition from statesmanship (seen in the *Republic*) to legislation (seen in the *Laws*), since the nature of law is its primary topic, and the laws of Minos were the best known example of early law. It would not be a surprise if the work were placed immediately before *Laws* in the arrangement, as by Thrasyllus, and there are good reasons for suspecting that it had been there. First there is only one short sentence that describes what Plato had in mind when writing the *Laws*, the shortest entry for the longest work of all. It seems that the epitomator was at his most savage here. Second, the entry for the *Timaeus* (14.30–36) is strange:

After that state (i.e. the state in the *Republic*) had been achieved in words, he shows in the *Book of Timaeus* the divine and natural entities that can be understood and mastered by that knowledge,<sup>19</sup> and the kinds of knowledge that are to be placed in that state. The remaining part of these [kinds of knowledge] are still not properly understood and investigated, and need to be given further consideration by men who are to succeed one another, investigating that knowledge and preserving its findings, until all has been understood.

19. Perhaps a combination of political and philosophical knowledge appropriate to somebody thought to belong to the Pythagorean school.

This is a bizarre description, even given the fact that the arrangement ultimately attributes to Plato a moral and political goal. It looks as if the *Timaeus* has been turned into a political treatise charged with bringing new skills for society to light. But if we suppose that something has dropped out, and the kinds of knowledge to be placed in the state were meant to be connected with a new investigation and a new dialogue, then it is not hard to locate the *Minos* at this point. It sees Minos learning the entire ruling art from Zeus, and then training Rhadamanthys in the arts of justice (320c). And yet it ends with a clear indication that there is work to be done in understanding the ways in which the royal art will set about making the souls of its subjects better (321d).

With some hesitation I restore to the arrangement the following order of dialogues:

Group A: 1. *Alcibiades I*; 2. *Theaetetus*; 3. *Protagoras*; 4. *Meno*.

Group B: 5. *Euthyphro*; 6. *Cratylus*; 7. *Ion*; 8. *Gorgias*; 9. *Sophist*;  
10. *Euthydemus*; 11. *Parmenides*.

Group C: 12. *Alcibiades II*; 13. *Hipparchus*; 14. *Hippias Major*;  
15. *Hippias Minor*; 16. *Philebus*.

Group D: 17. *Theages*; 18. *Erastae*; 19. *Politicus*; 20. *Charmides*; 21. *Laches*;  
22. *Lysis*; 23. *Symposium*; 24. *Phaedrus*.

Group E: 25 & 26. *Apology*, *Crito*; 27. *Phaedo*; 28. *Republic*; 29. *Timaeus*;  
30. *Minos*; 31. *Laws*; 32. *Critias*.

Appendix: 33. *Epinomis*; 34. *Clitophon*; 35. *Menexenus*. 36. *Epistles*.

The entire arrangement is an attempt to give a unified account of Platonic philosophy, as an investigation with one ultimate goal in view: how the well-being of an entire community might be achieved. Obviously any goal that was postulated needed to be in some sense political, as Plato was known to have been working on the *Laws* at the end of his life.<sup>20</sup> If anything, the *Critias* looks even more unfinished, so that comes after, but it is still concerned in some way with politics and a response to the ideal state of the *Republic*, as seen from the prefatory pages of the *Timaeus*. The *Epinomis*, involving more of the hand of Philip of Opus than the *Laws*, would have to be placed still later, so that any chronological arrangement needed to end with political teachings. All dialogues that seem to have other purposes, therefore, whether these purposes involve protreptic, polemic, or the investigation of logic and physics, are ultimately subordinated to the political project. The alternative was to deny that there had ever been a single project.

20. D.L. 3.38; Plut. *Mor.* 370f; anon. *Proleg.* 24.

The arrangement also assumes steady progress towards this ultimately political goal. It was widely presumed by ancient Platonists that Plato does nothing in vain. He is at no stage thought to have been ignorant of where his investigations were leading, even if not everything had at that stage been worked out. That being the case, any dialogue might be thought to contain some foreshadowing of where Plato was heading. Even at the beginning, when Socrates declares his interest in Alcibiades, the ultimate concern is how the state may eventually be directed for the best, but the enormous gulf between knowledge currently available and the knowledge needed for such a project is already beginning to be appreciated. In an inspirational passage of the *Theaetetus* the distance from the reality of Athens both of the key knowledge and of the paradigm of the happy life are already understood. The demand for real steps toward goodness rather than apparent steps is constantly reiterated, making for an early rejection of Protagoras' relativism, and for the embrace of investigation rather than weak acceptance of popular ideas. All through the testing of rival arts there is a strong sense of direction. The aim of exposing each art's weakness must at all times be allowed to take precedence, but then, as now, there was not much doubt for the experienced reader as to where Plato's own views were heading.

In these circumstances we should not be surprised if the ancients saw in the *Euthydemus* in particular a summary of where "Socrates" has been (in the first education interlude), a notion of what he is now doing (the critical investigation of would-be important arts, in the second such scene), and an indication of where the path seemed to be leading (in the subsequent reflections with Crito). Just as we find further forward hints, particularly to the doctrines of the *Republic* and virtually any dialogues up until the *Sophist*,<sup>21</sup> so one must assume that the ancients saw here clear references or allusions to materials that we, and sometimes they too, would assume to have been written later. In particular the work could be seen as feeling its way towards the philosopher-king (in the interlude with Crito), but ultimately frustrated, either because of the distinctions between the philosophic and political art that would have to apply under inferior constitutions (but seen as unnecessary in al-Farabi, 10.2–5), or because contemporary practitioners of the combined art fell short in both.

21. Besides Hawtrey, *Commentary*, and Kahn "Some Puzzles in the *Euthydemus*," see Thomas A. Szlesák, "Die Handlung der Dialoge *Charmides* und *Euthydemus*," in Thomas M. Robinson and Luc Brisson (eds.), *Plato: Euthydemus, Lysis, Charmides* 337–48, at 341–2, where the *Phaedrus* is the subject of principal attention.

## SOME LESSONS

First, it is important to note that the Platonic corpus *can* be seen as a unity, with a single overarching purpose. That purpose cannot be divorced either from personal ethics or from politics, for it concerns the happiness of the individual within the community. Lessons in epistemology, logic, and physics, along with criticism and polemic directed against non-fulfilling arts, can all be seen as contributing to that overall purpose.

Second, even where Plato appears aporetic and to have little that is positive to teach, this does not have to mean that he lacked a firm sense of direction. It may simply mean that he has more research to do before he arrives at his goal. Hence some foreshadowing of later doctrine may be reflected non-doctrinally in earlier works.

Third, epistemology and ethics go hand in hand in Plato, since wisdom is crucial to the Platonic goal. Personal improvement and ability to contribute to the community involve cognitive advances. These must involve both theoretical and practical skills contributing to knowledge and life respectively, though the two can and should be interlinked. These are the more general lessons that our passage can suggest.

Other lessons are specific to the *Euthydemus*. Most importantly it is a serious work, and not to be treated as light-hearted satire. It is in fact a central work of Platonic ethics, of crucial importance for the ethics of Plato's early interpreters.<sup>22</sup> The sophistic education is being contrasted with an education that is being positively recommended, and which is only seen when the destructive voice of the sophists is absent. In particular, the interludes depicting the education of Cleinias are in earnest. It follows that these interludes stand in contrast with sophistic argument, and that their content is offered as a serious, non-sophistic alternative. Consequently the episode that identifies *eutychia* with knowledge must be as interpreted as having serious intent, not as offering the counter-intuitive thesis that good luck is nothing but knowledge. Success is not a matter of luck in the case of one who knows, nor does Plato intend us to think that it is. He is trying, on the contrary, to demonstrate that "successfulness," qua property within the individual that enables the achievement of a goal, cannot be identified with anything within the human being other than knowledge.

Importantly, the *Euthydemus* does indeed distinguish between (at least) two types of knowledge, one seen as one of a list of good things contributing to the good life (for it achieves success in particular objectives), and another that is capable of putting all these good things to good use. One requires

22. See Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 35–51, particularly 40: "The *Euthydemus* argument, short and outrageous as it seems, is invaluable for showing us what is going on."

both the success-yielding type for the supply of our separate needs, and the managing type to turn our success to truly beneficial use.

Finally, the *Euthydemus*' seemingly proleptic nature, looking forward regularly to mature doctrine that is as yet unwritten, is not an aberration. The work has a strong sense of direction already, without being able to offer the clear answers that the *Republic* and other dialogues will give later. Those answers need not be absent simply because it is a different kind of work that aims to expose false arts, but can still be explained in terms of unsolved difficulties.

These lessons, of course, are not lessons in the ordinary way. It is possible to be oblivious to them, and possible to take them in a slightly different way. They are rather beneficial reminders for the attentive reader, which may still be more effective than simple statements that fail to challenge and are easily forgotten. There are more such reminders to be unearthed here, but these will suffice for the present.