PLATO'S GUIDE TO PHILOSOPHICAL PREPAREDNESS:

THE DANGERS OF PHILOSOPHY AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

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PLATO'S GUIDE TO PHILOSOPHICAL PREPAREDNESS:

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Philosophy is dangerous business. At least, this is what Plato tells us. The literature on Plato's metaphilosophy and methodology, however, has largely ignored this fact. In this dissertation, I show that an overemphasis on a narrow definition of Plato's understanding of philosophy has meant we have missed an important account of how he proposes we navigate the dangers of rational inquiry. Framed as continuing the Platonic project of successfully and safely converting people to philosophy, this dissertation takes seriously the fact that Plato is wary of philosophy being done badly, and shows that this perspective sheds light not only on methods such as *elenchus*, but also on Plato's psychology, epistemology, and metaphysics.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Marta Heckel undertook the research and writing of this dissertation under perilous conditions. Deigning to practice philosophy before the age of thirty, Marta received her BSc in Botany and Philosophy from the University of Toronto in 2011, and her MA in Philosophy from Cornell University in 2014. With this dissertation, *Plato's Guide to Philosophical Preparedness: The Dangers of Philosophy and How to Handle Them*, she completed her PhD in Philosophy from Cornell University in 2017.

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine a hypothetical reader of Plato. He cannot help but notice that throughout Plato's works, there are exhortations to philosophy – powerful protreptics that praise philosophy's virtues. Philosophy can make us better skilled at thinking (*Phaedrus* 239b), it can make us more virtuous (*Phaedo* 83e), it can help us discover the secret to happiness (*Republic* 473e), and allow us to experience the truest pleasures of this life (*Republic* 586e-7a), as well as be rewarded in life after death (*Gorgias* 526c, *Phaedrus* 249c, *Phaedo* 114c). Philosophy, in short, is "a gift from the gods to the mortal race whose value neither has been nor will be surpassed" (*Timaeus* 47b).[1]

This reader should also notice that with this praise comes warning, and that philosophy, according to Plato, is dangerous. False beliefs are harmful to one's soul, and one main danger of practicing philosophy is acquiring false beliefs.[2] More serious is the danger of corrupting one's soul to the point of preventing any further philosophizing and becoming lawless and immoral. One might think that these dangers are easily avoided, but according to Plato, this is not the case.[3] There are wrong ways of doing philosophy that are so close in appearance to the right way that a person can go wrong without realizing it; someone could have good reason to see himself as a philosopher but in reality fail to be one – with harmful consequences.[4] Our aspiring philosopher would therefore do well to be on guard in his pursuits.

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[1] Trans. DJ Zeyl.
[2] The *Protagoras* brings this out most starkly (312c-314d).
[3] For examples of how easy it is to fall into the bad results, as well as what's bad about these results, see *Republic* 454a-b, 537e-539d; *Philebus* 15d-16a, 48e-50a; *Phaedo* 90b-91a, 101e; *Sophist* 229e-231b; *Timaeus* 88a-b; *Theaetetus* 164c. I will be discussing this in more detail in the rest of this dissertation (especially with respect to the *Republic*).
[4] "Philosophy" seems to be sometimes used as a success term, sometimes not. At *Sophist* 216c and *Theaetetus* 164c-d, for instance, it seems like bad philosophers are not really philosophers (or at least, there are some people who are thought to be philosophers (by ignorant people, as we're told in the *Sophist*), but who really are not philosophers)).

This dissertation, *Plato's Guide to Philosophical Preparedness: The Dangers of Philosophy and How to Handle Them,* investigates Plato's metaphilosophy and methodology from the perspective of this hypothetical reader of Plato. This reader wants to become a philosopher, and is encouraged by all the benefits Plato says come along with that way of life. However, heeding Plato's many warnings, he is cautious to begin his foray into philosophy - he doesn't want to harm anyone in his search for wisdom, nor harm philosophy's already tenuous reputation, and he certainly doesn't want to harm his own soul. Is there any practical advice in Plato's writings to help this novice navigate philosophy's dangers so he can reap the rewards of the philosophic good life? Perhaps not at first glance.

Despite Plato's clear concern for methodology, none of his dialogues reads as a how-to guide for philosophy. Many methodological descriptions are buried in or interspersed with other philosophical issues, and even when we get direct positive methodological advice, it is hardly clear how we are meant to turn it into practice. Of course, our aspiring philosopher could throw caution to the wind and jump into trying to discover what Plato means by 'dialectic,' by collecting and dividing kinds, or even by finding some interlocutors to refute. But, because he can fall into bad philosophy and bring about all sorts of negative consequences without ever intending to, if our aspiring philosopher is cautious, he will look for more advice before doing any of these.

At *Euthydemus* 307a-b and T*heaetetus* 173c, however, we are told that there are some philosophers who are bad philosophers. Now, it is possible that these two groups of passages describe different groups of people, where the first group diverges from the ideal in such a way that make them not just bad philosophers but not philosophers at all. However, Plato nowhere gives a clear description of what a cut-off might looks like between bad philosophy and things that appear to be philosophy but aren't. So, while it is possible that there is such a cut-off, it is likewise possible that there is not, and Plato simply uses both ways of speaking. It is important that we notice both ways of speaking about coming short of the ideal.

Descriptions of the dangers of philosophy and how to deal with them seem to provide important practical advice that is, in a way, missing in the positive descriptions of methodology. I do not mean to say simply that looking at the positive misses out on features of methodology, nor do I mean to suggest that the positive descriptions of methodology in Plato are not practical, despite the obvious hurdle of interpreting what they are. Instead, I mean that focusing on discussions of philosophy-gone-wrong is more practical, or practical to a real person trying to do philosophy as Plato conceives of it. If we consider the aspiring philosopher again, looking only at the positive for practical advice can be paralyzing. When philosophy is done badly, it can be harmful, but how can a person become a philosopher, who knows how to do philosophy well, without practicing it? There is something of a Meno's paradox here, in which it seems as though one cannot become a philosopher without practicing philosophy, but one can't practice philosophy without already being a philosopher.

This is where a guide to philosophical preparedness comes in. Knowing the dangers of philosophy and how to handle them should prepare our aspiring philosopher for the path to philosophy. If he is aware of the ways in which he can fail to be philosophical despite his best intentions, then he can be on constant lookout for them, he can be better equipped to avoid them, and he can make contingency plans in case he falls into them. Framed as continuing the Platonic project of successfully and safely converting people to philosophy, my dissertation takes seriously the fact that Plato is wary of philosophy being done badly, and shows that this perspective sheds light not only on methods such as *elenchus*, but also on Plato's psychology, epistemology, and metaphysics.

This dissertation is divided into three parts. In Part One, "Forewarned is Forearmed," I begin with the premise that we need to know a bit more about the dangers of philosophy before

we can know how to handle them. In the first chapter, "The Fine Line Between Education and Corruption," I present a puzzle that illustrates these dangers. This puzzle arises when we consider two passages from the description of the educational programme of the *Republic* (*Republic* 523b-524d and 537e-539d), which I call, because of the examples in them, The Finger Passage and The Fineness Passage. The puzzle is that The Finger Passage says that contradiction is educationally edifying, and The Fineness Passage says that it is corrupting. So the same activity educates and corrupts, and we are told both to expose our young prospective philosophers to contradiction, and to ensure they are not exposed to contradiction.

I also present a solution to the puzzle I raise. I argue, through textual analysis of the two passages and comparison to passages in the *Phaedo, Philebus,* and *Parmenides,* that The Finger Passage is about contradiction arising from visible particulars, and that The Fineness Passage is about contradiction arising from intelligible Forms. With this solution, I show that the *Republic* provides real practical advice about avoiding the dangers of philosophy – advice that stems from epistemological and metaphysical commitments we can find across several dialogues. Plato has a picture of psychological development that entails that we must carefully regulate the stages of education topic-wise, and if we do, then we can have a better chance of avoiding the corruption of the later stages of education.

In Chapter 2, "Antilogic and Misology," I discuss a couple of terms that arise in Chapter 1: misology (hatred of argument) and antilogic (contradiction mongering). In doing so, I partly defend and describe in more detail the interpretations of these term I present in the first chapter, and partly move the discussion of the dangers of philosophy away from the illustration in the *Republic* and towards a more general discussion. I also discuss several other terms in service to my discussion of antilogic: eristic, love-of-winning, and sophistry. Through an analysis of all of

these terms, I show that, as the puzzle from the *Republic* suggests, for Plato, the dangers of philosophy are not as easy to avoid as we might have hoped.

Importantly, from these first two chapters, we find that argument holds a particular danger. More specifically, it seems that when a person is confronted with argument before he is skilled in argument, he is liable to become corrupted. He tries to think before he is really able to, and thinks himself into difficulty. Troublingly, what seems to be corrupting about the practice of philosophy is rational thinking, which is, of course, necessary for philosophy.

In Part Two, "Prevention is the Most Effective Form of Preparedness," I investigate whether there is any way to get around this problem. I suggest that we can find a danger-free way in which a person can become more philosophical in an unlikely place: in Plato's discussion of magic. I explore in detail the use of myth and argument as *epode* (incantation). *Epode* in Plato is a little-discussed topic, so in Chapter 4, "Myth and Argument as *Epode,"* I present a theory of *epodes,* and describe its implications for what counts as reasoning in Plato. In doing so, I discuss four main dialogues that recommend the use of myth or argument as magic: *Phaedo* (77e-78a, 114d), *Laws* (887c-d, 903a-b), *Crito* (54d), and *Republic* (608a). I suggest that myth and argument as *epode* is a danger-free way to become more philosophical because they get the soul in a proper configuration without the use of dangerous intellectual inquiry.

In Chapter 5, I extend my theory of *epodes* from Chapter 4 to the *Charmides.* This dialogue, given a common way of interpreting it (that the *epode* described is an *elenchus*), could be seen as presenting an exception to my theory of *epodes.* I defend a reading of the *Charmides* in which we do not see the *epode* in the dialogue, and show that my theory of *epodes* can be used to understand how the *epode* that is referred to but not seen is supposed to work.

In Part Three, "I'm in Trouble, Now What Do I Do?" I argue that there is a method that can be used to correct corruption. In Chapter 5, I look again at two important passages from earlier in the dissertation, the Fineness Passage and *Laws* X. I show that two characters from these passages, the adopted son from the Fineness Passage and the impious man from *Laws* X are parallel, but that the adopted son is left to his corruption while the impious man's corruption is corrected. I show that this parallel, with its important difference, reveals that we can use a combination of *elenchus* and *epode* to correct corruption. This means that *Laws* X describes a method with which we can reverse some of the damage described earlier in this dissertation. What's more, this means that we can, apparently, use the very same method that is considered dangerous in some contexts (such as described in The Fineness Passage) in order to repair the damage done by it (*elenchus*). I then explain the psychological mechanism behind this, and show that the *Charmides* dramatizes this point about correction, corruption, and education.

Indeed, the insight provided by the *Charmides* points to an important theme of this dissertation as a whole: that if, as I suggest, we consider Plato's warnings about the dangers of philosophy, we can see that context and method are crucial to understanding philosophy in Plato.

PART ONE

FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED

If we want a practical guide that can lead us to our destination while avoiding the potential pitfalls, we must know where these pitfalls lie. If we cannot see beyond the path set for us, we cannot know, with each step, whether we will be safe from harm or taking our first step into dangerous territory. It is essential for philosophical preparedness, therefore, to shed more light on this dangerous territory. Here, the adage “forewarned is forearmed” will serve us well. We will discover what exactly we are up against when we undertake the path to philosophy, what it is about philosophy that is dangerous. We will then be more prepared to handle the danger.

Chapter 1

THE FINE LINE BETWEEN EDUCATION AND CORRUPTION

1 Introduction

Philosophy, according to Plato, is dangerous business. In this chapter, I will look at two passages from Plato's *Republic* that make an investigation into this fact especially pertinent. In one passage, which I call The Fineness Passage, Socrates points out that argument, while essential to the practice of philosophy, corrupts youths to the point of lawlessness (537e-539d). The explanation of how argument causes this corruption bears remarkable resemblance to the explanation of how to educate youths in another passage, which I call The Finger Passage (523b-524d): in The Fineness Passage, a youth's puzzlement over the same thing appearing both fine and shameful leads to his corruption; in The Finger Passage, a youth's puzzlement over the same thing appearing both big and small leads to his education. Both passages discuss contradiction, but one says that contradiction is corrupting, the other, that it is educationally edifying. This sounds like a contradiction about contradiction. These passages, then, when taken together, present a puzzle for the coherency of the educational programme Socrates describes. These passages also stress that not only is philosophy dangerous, the cause of its dangers are difficult to pinpoint. As far as I know, no one has noticed the tension between these passages before.[5] By

[5] The puzzle has been missed, likely, because some popular interpretations of the passages, as well as the ways in which certain debates about them have been framed, obscure the parallel between them. For example, The Finger Passage is often discussed in debates about compresence of opposites, while The Fineness Passage is left out entirely from such debates. This is perhaps due to the fact that the language of The Fineness Passage stresses its import to dialectic and *elenchus*, and is thus included (though not often – it is a little-debated passage) in discussion of methodology. There are two main bodies of literature – each corresponding to one of the passages – that this paper brings together. Despite the fact that I have chosen to forego the language of 'compresence of opposites' precisely because it has led scholars to mistakenly focus on fewer passages than are truly relevant to the issue as Plato saw it, the first body of literature – corresponding to The Finger Passage – is that on compresence of opposites, whether opposites can be compresent in particulars and/or in Forms, and how this relates to the development of Plato's thought. For example: Irwin (1999, esp. 158, 161); Fine (1995) esp. 56; Penner (1987); Kirwan (1974);

the end of this paper, I hope to have not only provided a compelling solution to the apparent contradiction about contradiction, but also to have shown that this puzzle, which might at first have seemed restricted to a textual issue about the educational programme in the *Republic*, in fact has far-reaching implications for a range of Plato's theories across several dialogues. Along with education, corruption, and contradiction, I will discuss Plato's theory of psychology, and his theory of Forms. I hope that my discussion of this puzzle will reveal the importance of focusing on Plato's concern about the dangers of philosophy.

This paper is divided into four main sections: ***1. The Passages***, where I provide summaries of the two passages in question, ***2. The Puzzle***, where I provide a more detailed description of the puzzle, ***3. Rejected Solutions,*** where I suggest some solutions to the puzzle and explain why they are unsatisfactory, ***4. Towards a Solution***, where I present a more satisfactory solution to the puzzle.

2 The Passages[6]

Although the *Republic* is a dialogue about justice, the part of the *Republic* I will be focusing on is about the education of the philosophers-rulers of the ideal state in which justice can be found.

White (1977). The other main body of literature is that of methodology. In particular, The Fineness Passage points us in the direction of literature on misology and antilogic. See for example: Miller (2015); Jacquette (2014); Woolf (2007); Nehemas (1990); Kerferd (1981). Other topics on which this paper can be brought to bear include the objects of epistemology (for example: Cherniss, (1944); Cooper (1970, 145), one and many problems (for example: Muniz, F. and G. Rudebusch (2004); Meinwald (1996); Frede, D. (1993, xx); Cresswell (1972); Casper (1977). Realizing that the two passages of the *Republic* are parallel in the way I argue for in this paper can shed new light on these issues.

[6] Readers familiar with these passages are encouraged to skip to Section 2. In Section 1 I intend merely to remind the reader of the content of the passages, giving only basic summaries with uncontroversial interpretation. I will point to any places that have given rise to controversy as they come up, and several interpretive issues will be discussed in Sections 3 and 4.

2.1 The Finger Passage (523a-525d)

The first subject in the prospective philosopher-ruler's education is arithmetic (522c). Arithmetic, Socrates argues, is important because it summons (*parakaleō*) thought: it makes the pupil use reasoning and eventually posit the Forms. To appreciate how arithmetic does this, Socrates distinguishes things that summon thought (summoners) from those that do not, through a notoriously bizarre example, given mostly through rhetorical questions. Consider the smallest, the second, and the middle finger of your hand. First, there is a way in which your fingers will not summon thought: sight perceives each adequately as a finger, so thought is not summoned. Then, there is a way in which your fingers will summon thought: the second finger is large when compared to the smallest finger, and small compared to the middle. In this case, Socrates says, sight reports the big and small mixed up together. This is puzzling, apparently, so thought is summoned in order to solve this puzzle. How exactly this is puzzling, scholars disagree. [7] However, it clearly has something to do with sight reporting something and its opposite at the same time.[8] Here is a particularly illuminating section of the passage:

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[7] To understand a bit about this controversy, first, it is important to note that what is identified as a summoner in this passage is not "finger" but "the big" (a nominalized adjective). There is controversy in part because of the ambiguity of this term. In Greek, it is normal to leave the noun the adjective modifies understood and not stated, while in English we would usually supply the noun (except in rare cases), or fill in a generic noun, and say for example, "the big thing." "The big" and "the big thing" sound different to our ears, but are equally good translations of the Greek. The puzzle – what summons thought – is that sight tells the soul "the big" is small. The main controversy is whether "the big" refers to "the big [finger]" or "the [property] big".

[8] In Section 4, I argue that the contradiction comes from particulars. In another paper (that is in progress and did not make it into this disseration), I present a detailed interpretation of this passage, argue that this process can be viewed from two perspectives, the puzzled and the unpuzzled. The puzzled perspective will not identify "big" and "small" as any determinate metaphysical category. The translation "the big," though in English might suggest the property bigness (or even the form of the big), should be taken as truly ambiguous. When the soul is puzzled, it does not know what type of thing is big and small, just that the same thing is big and small, which the soul thinks is impossible. Of course, once thought is summoned, it realizes this is possible, so long as there is one thing with two properties. In this way the same thing can be both big and small, just big and small in different respects. This is the unpuzzled perspective.

> Then is it necessary in these situations [cases of summoners] again that the soul is puzzled about what this perception means by the hard, if indeed it says the same thing is also soft; and [it is puzzled about] the perception of the light and the perception of the heavy, what it means by the light and heavy, if it declares that the heavy is light and the light heavy? (524a6-10).

So, summoning seems to happen in cases of opposites, such as big and small, hard and soft, and light and heavy. In the finger example, sight sees the second finger and reports 'big' and 'small' at the same time (where big and small are properties, immanent Forms, or what have you — we can remain neutral on this topic for now). The soul, from this report, grasps that it is being told that there is a big thing that is perceived, but that this big thing is a small thing (or, there is a small thing, but this small thing is a big thing), or that the big is no more (*ouden mallon*) big than small.

After this involved explanation of summoners, Socrates brings the conversation back to arithmetic. It turns out that number summons thought in the same way as the big and small do. When a person looks at a numbered thing, his sight will report that he is seeing 'one' and 'many' at the same time – just as he saw 'big' and 'small' at the same time when looking at the finger. Arithmetic, then, is useful in summoning thought.

2.2 The Fineness Passage: age and dialectic (537e-539d)

After The Finger Passage, we add solid geometry, astronomy, harmonics, and dialectic to arithmetic, and complete our list of subjects that are important for educating prospective philosopher-rulers. With this list completed, Socrates tells us at what age each of these subjects

ought to be studied. Dialectic, or argument,[9] it turns out, ought to be studied at the age of thirty. My second passage, The Fineness Passage, tells us why it is important to wait until this age: argument corrupts youths, leading to lawlessness (*paranomia*). Socrates uses an image to illustrate how this happens. This image involves an adopted son[10] – one who is raised by parents other than his own – and three groups of people: 1) his biological parents, 2) his adoptive parents with whom he is raised, and 3) flatterers who have surrounded him from childhood. Socrates asks us to consider what would happen when this man realizes that the parents who raised him are not his biological parents, but he is unable to find his biological parents. Socrates proposes that this man, though he honoured the adoptive parents before, would honour the flatterers after this realization.

Socrates then applies this image to the case of argument. We are raised with certain beliefs from childhood, for instance beliefs about what is fine and what is shameful. It turns out, however, these beliefs are open to refutation. Before we see them refuted, we honour and obey them, just like the adopted son honoured and obeyed his adoptive parents. After we see them refuted, instead of honouring the beliefs we were brought up with, we would turn to a way of life that "flatters our soul," just like the young man turned to his flatterers. Here is Socrates' description of these events:

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[9] The passage begins discussing exposing youths to dialectic, and ends discussing exposing youths to argument – the switch in vocabulary happens at 538c, without note.

[10] The word used to describe this son is "supposititous" (*hupobolimaios*). I have chosen to talk about adoption rather than suppositing mostly because it will sound less odd to our ears. I should point out, though, that talking about adoption here is not perfect. Though it is a natural word to use when a child is raised by parents other than his biological ones, there are certain value judgements we are supposed to have about the adoptive parents that should make a modern reader uncomfortable: there is something inferior about the adoptive parents. It turns out, however, that "supposititious" is not perfect in this context either – it implies that the parents are duped. For example, the same word is used in Aristotle's *History of Animals* to describe the cuckoo nestling who is planted in nests to be raised by other birds. However, the image in The Fineness Passage suggests that, if anyone is duped it is the son – he is brought up thinking his adoptive parents are his biological parents, and the realization that this is not the case causes an upheaval. In the end, the benefit of using a more normal word won out.

> When a question, having come along, should ask the person who is like this [a decent person, obeying adoptive-parent-like beliefs rather than flatterers]: 'What is the fine?' And, when he answers what he heard from the lawgiver, the argument should refute him, and, being refuted many times and many ways, he should be thrown into the belief that this is no more fine than shameful, and similarly about the just, and the good, and the things he most of all held in honour; after this, how do you think he will behave towards these things held in honour and concerning obedience to command? (538d6-e3)

So, it turns out being exposed to argument is like realizing the parents who raised you are not your biological parents. In the image of the adopted son, we are not told what causes the realization that his adoptive parents are not his biological parents, but in the case of argument, repeated refutation is the culprit. Once the image is applied to current practice, Socrates concludes that we must be cautious about how we introduce our prospective philosopher rulers to argument (539a8-9). This caution seems to consist in not letting them "taste argument" when they are young (539b1-2).

3 The Problem

Now that we have both passages on the table, let me turn to the tension between them. I introduced the tension as a contradiction about contradiction, in which The Finger Passage says contradiction is educational, and The Fineness Passage says that contradiction is corrupting. I would like to take the time now to walk through the connections between these passages that should make us understand them in this way.

3.1 Initial Description

In The Finger Passage, we are given a description of what *should* be done in order to educate the prospective philosopher-rulers, in The Fineness Passage we are given a warning of what *should not* be done: we should get our youths to engage in arithmetic, but should not let them be exposed to argument. Here are the two passages in abbreviated form, using Socrates's examples, and focusing on the process that leads to either education or corruption:

1) The Finger Passage (523b-524d)

   A youth sees a finger is both big and small. The big thing appears no more big than small. He is puzzled. His thought is summoned and he is educated.

2) The Fineness Passage (537e-539d)

   A youth hears an argument about the fine and the shameful. The fine thing appears no more fine than shameful. He is puzzled. He turns to a life that flatters his soul and he is corrupted.

Now consider the following two cases:

3) A youth sees a finger is both big and small. The big thing appears no more big than small. He is puzzled. He turns to a life that flatters his soul and he is corrupted.
4) A youth hears an argument about the fine and the shameful. The fine thing appears no more fine than shameful. He is puzzled. His thought is summoned and he is educated.

I created these two scenarios by combining (1) and (2), where (3) is the prescribed study in (1) and the bad consequences of (2), and (4) is the prohibited study in (2) and the good consequences of (1). If we cannot find a reason why the prohibited activity does not lead to good consequences (as it does in (4)), and why the prescribed activity does not lead to bad consequences (as it does in (3)), then The Finger Passage and The Fineness Passage describe

very different outcomes from very similar circumstances. Why should corruption occur in The Fineness Passage, but education occur in The Finger Passage? If we cannot find an answer to this question, then Socrates has not told us anything illuminating about education, and has provided an educational programme that is impossible to follow. In order to vindicate the consistency of the *Republic*'s educational programme, we must find a way to distinguish the activities described in the two passages that explains their different results.

3.2 The Root of the Problem

As I will show in the next section, this vindication is not easy to come by. Before moving on, however, let us take a closer look at the problem. I was able to create (3) and (4) because the activities described in (1) and (2) are so similar, but the consequences of the activities are opposed. This is the most important thing about my presentation of the problem, and something scholars have failed to notice. The passages, together, tell us that both education and corruption seem to arise when someone is exposed to contradiction.

We can see this when we notice two things. First, that in both passages, when someone grasps something as *no more* (*ouden mallon;* 523c2, 524e3, 538d9) one property than another, he grasps something as having both of these properties. Let's call this something x, and the two properties F and G. If someone believes x is no more F than G, he believes that x is equally F and G, or that x is both F and G (524a3). Second, that in both passages, when the person comes to grasp in some way that x is no more F than G, F and G are opposites. In The Finger Passage, F and G are explicitly said to be opposites (*enantios*), where to be opposites is to be mutually exclusive such that it is impossible for x to be both F and G at the same time without some

further qualification.[11] The examples in The Finger Passage are: large and small, heavy and light, and one and many; the examples in The Fineness Passage are: fine and shameful, just and unjust, and good and bad. 'x is no more F than G' is puzzling, then, because it is a contradiction, and thus seems impossible when F and G are opposites. The tension between the two passages is between the results of the puzzlement brought on by contradiction. With this in mind, the passages can be schematized:

1*) Contradiction is educational

2*) Contradiction is corrupting

Given these schematizations, it is unclear why we are meant to expose youths to summoners, but prevent them from being exposed to argument. Does Socrates contradict himself about contradiction?

4 Rejected Solutions

Any solution to the problem I have presented will have to point to a difference between the two passages that can explain why education occurs in one and corruption in the other. There are two possible differences that I would like to reject before moving on to a more promising one: I will reject that the problem can be solved by thinking the passages are about 1) different topics of contradiction, and 2) different modes of exposure to contradiction.

4.1 Contradiction in Different Topics: ethics corrupts, other topics educate

One might think that the passages under consideration are about contradiction in different topics: The Finger Passage is about non-ethical contradictions, and The Fineness Passage is

[11] This notion of the incompatibility of opposites shows up earlier in the *Republic.* In a discussion of the parts of the soul, Socrates notes that "it is clear that the same thing cannot do or suffer opposites in the same respect, in relation to the same thing, and at the same time" (436b).

about ethical contradictions. After all, the examples of opposites in The Fineness Passage, unlike in The Finger Passage, are ethical in nature: fine and shameful, just and unjust, good and bad. From this, one might conclude that when The Fineness Passage warns of premature exposure to argument, it means specifically ethical argument,[12] and that we now have a reasonable explanation of why The Fineness Passage warns of corruption in youths: throwing youths into confusion about ethical doctrine is dangerous, while throwing them into confusion about things like big and small is not.

However, given the context, it is a stretch to think that we are meant to think argument is restricted to ethical topics. First, it is important to note that 'argument' in The Fineness Passage seems to be shorthand for 'dialectic.' Although the form of the Good has a special place in education in the *Republic*, in the discussion of dialectic that precedes The Fineness Passage, dialectic requires the being of *each* (*hekastos*) thing to be discovered – not just the being of the good or of ethical things. This is stressed at least three times, at 532a-b, 533b, and 534b, and given that The Fineness Passage is concerned with when it would be appropriate to study dialectic, we ought to think of dialectic in the way it is presented just a few pages prior. There is no indication that a more restricted sense is intended.[13]

Moreover, there are passages in other dialogues that are parallel to The Fineness Passage that show unambiguously topic neutral contradictions leading to bad consequences. The first comes from the *Phaedo* (90bff) where, like the *Republic*'s Fineness Passage, we are given a

[12] This is an old interpretive debate about The Fineness Passage. Adam (1902, ad loc.), and Cornford (1932, 181), for instance, read it this way, while Hackforth (1942) argues against this reading.
[13] Hackforth (1942, 5-6) argues against a restricted reading of this passage on similar grounds.

description of a bad consequence of repeated refutation.[14] Both passages also mention antilogic, or contrary-arguments[15], as especially conducive to this bad consequence (*Phaedo* 90c, *Republic* 539b4, 539c8). In the *Phaedo*, however, unlike the *Republic*, these contrary-arguments and refutations are unambiguously topic neutral. I will spend some time here discussing this first parallel passage, not only because it speaks against the topic-specific solution to the tension between The Finger Passage and The Fineness Passage, but also because it will later help illuminate my preferred solution.

In the *Phaedo,* we are told that repeated refutation can lead to misology, where misology is analogous to misanthropy: repeated misplaced trust in argument leads to mistrust or hatred of argument, as repeated misplaced trust in people leads to mistrust or hatred of people (89d-e). A person trusts one argument, then is shown to have misplaced his trust when he is refuted with a contradictory argument. And when the same happens again and again, the person comes to believe there is nothing sound or stable, neither in things nor in arguments (90c).[16] For example, the misologist might hear an argument that the fine is fine, then an argument that the fine is shameful, and thus come to believe there is nothing sound or reliable in the fine, and that the fine is not stable. Or, to put this in a way familiar from both The Finger and Fineness Passages of the *Republic:* he believes the fine is no more fine than shameful – there is nothing sound or reliable in the fine, not even that it is not shameful.

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[14] In the *Phaedo*: 'when [… he] puts his trust in an argument as being true, then shortly afterwards believes it to be false […] and so with another argument and then another.' (90b) (Trans. G.M.A. Grube)

[15] Where contrary-arguments are those that argue for contrary positions. We can see how antilogic, then, is related refutation and contradiction. Indeed sometimes "antilogical" is translated "contradictory." It is also sometimes translated "contentious," but this misses out on the technical aspect of the word. See the next chapter for a more detailed discussion of antilogic.

[16] Oute tōn pragmatōn … oute tōn logōn. Socrates stresses that there is an ontological belief associated with misology that results from repeated refutation. See the next chapter for a more discussion description of misology.

I have used the same example as that found in The Fineness Passage of the *Republic* to draw out the parallel, but the example in the *Phaedo* is different, and not obviously ethical in nature. At the point of the misology passage, Socrates's companions and Plato's readers have been left with contrary arguments about the soul's immortality: Socrates has presented an argument for the soul's immortality, and Simmias and Cebes have presented arguments against it. But, the misology passage tells us, we must not therefore believe that the soul is no more immortal than mortal. The context of the passage, then, provides an example that is free from the ethical vocabulary of the *Republic.* More importantly, the vocabulary of the misology passage itself is emphatically general: the result of repeated refutation is the belief that there is *nothing* sound or stable, and that *everything* goes up and down (90c). These general beliefs furthermore lead to a general worry: the misologist avoids rational inquiry and thus never gains knowledge or truth (90d). The upshot of the passage, then, is not, as some have taken the upshot of The Fineness Passage of the *Republic* to be, that if refutation is about ethical doctrine, it can lead to corrupting beliefs about ethics. Rather, the upshot is that the types of beliefs that fit the pattern 'x is no more F than G' will lead to an inability to learn.[17] In this way, there is a very general concern about refutation and contradiction: far from being educational, it can hinder all further education.

This concern can be thought of as an epistemic one: refutation and contradiction lead to false beliefs that prevent one from acquiring true beliefs. In the *Republic,* there is also a concern that can be thought of as a behavioural one: the youth will become lawless (*paranomos*) (537e). I

[17] It is important here that Socrates stresses the ontological belief as well as mistrust in argument in the *Phaedo.* This is parallel to The Fineness Passage, where contradictory belief (x is no more F than G) resulting from the contradictory arguments (that x is F, and that x is G), lead to negative epistemic consequences.

will say more about this in my solution, but for now I want to point out that this is a difference of emphasis and not one of content between *Phaedo* 90bff and The Fineness Passage, and should thus not be taken as evidence of a lack of parallel between them. Although the behavioural consequences are not stressed in the *Phaedo,* it is not difficult to draw a more detailed picture. Remember that misology is compared to misanthropy. It seems like there are several behavioural options for the misanthropist: he can seclude himself from society, wanting nothing more to do with people, or he can take advantage of those around him, not caring whether he does his fellow man harm. The same is true of the misologist. It is possible that the misologist retreat from argument and want nothing more to do with it, but in the *Republic,* the youths who have undergone repeated refutation become lawless and use argument antilogically, "being pleased, just like puppies, with always dragging and tearing those nearby" (539b). This is the misology version of the second option for the misanthropist: just like the misanthropist might, rather than become a hermit, become a grifter, a misologist might, rather than avoid argument, engage in puppy-like behaviour. The misology passage of the *Phaedo,* then, is parallel to The Fineness Passage of the *Republic.* As is clear from the *Phaedo,* these passages discuss consequences of topic-neutral repeated refutation. The danger in the *Republic* is not that refutation about ethical topics can lead to lawlessness, it is that refutation, whatever the topic, can lead to a particular kind of epistemic problem – misology – which in turn can lead to a kind of behavioural problem – lawlessness.[18]

The second passage parallel to The Fineness Passage comes from the *Philebus*, where, with striking similarity, Socrates describes youths who first get a taste of argument (*logos*) and

[18] The reason for the different behavioural consequences will become evident in my own solution

go around throwing themselves and everyone else into confusion (15d-16a). Important for my purposes, in the *Philebus,* Socrates gives a list of examples of topics about which this confusion and resultant bad behaviour can occur: the man, the ox, the fine, and the good (15a). While the fine and the good are plausibly ethical in nature, the man and the ox are not; the puppy-like behaviour – to use the language of the *Republic* – is not restricted to ethical topics.

So, now we have two reasons to take The Fineness Passage as about topic neutral contradiction. First, that the context in the *Republic* suggests that the meaning of 'dialectic' is general, and there is no indication, other than the examples used in The Fineness Passage, to suppose that this meaning has changed. Second, that there are at least two parallel passages that show the same concern as The Fineness Passage arising from topic-neutral refutation and contradiction. This means that, although The Fineness Passage uses ethical examples, and although it is concerned with an ethical consequence (corruption), it says that all arguments, not only ethical arguments, can have harmful consequences in youths.

4.2 Different Modes of Exposure to Contradiction: perceiving educates, thinking corrupts

We saw that The Fineness Passage talks about exposing youths to argument, and that argument is the cause of the puzzlement that leads to lawlessness. In The Finger Passage, it is *seeing* the fingers that leads to the summoning of thought. Therefore, The Fineness Passage is about contradiction in argument and The Finger Passage is about contradiction in perception. This difference is not, like the difference between ethical and non-ethical contradiction, an artefact of the examples in the passages. Recall that we are talking about argument in the context of dialectic. Dialectic, we are told, involves trying 'through argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing' (532a). This description, found between the two passages, emphasizes that argument and sense perception can be free from one another, and that

argument without perception is what is under consideration in The Fineness Passage. It also shows that these two Forms of cognition are distinct for Plato,[19] and that they hold important places in his epistemology, which makes it probable that the two passages can in fact be distinguished: The Finger Passage is about contradiction arising from perception, The Fineness Passage is about contradiction arising from argument.

Now, one might think that this difference between the two passages can explain why contradiction educates in the first and corrupts in the second. Sense perception and argument involve two different psychological faculties— even if perception turns out to involve some thinking, we know that argument is meant to exclude perception. In The Finger Passage, a contradiction is grasped through sense perception; in The Fineness Passage it is grasped through argument. In both passages puzzlement follows,[20] but in The Finger Passage education results, and in The Fineness Passage, corruption does. Focusing on the different faculties, one might suppose that there are different results because there is something less puzzling about the contradiction in sense perception. Perhaps we tend to trust our perception less than we trust our reasoning, so we are less likely to take the contradiction presented through perception seriously.

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[19] I have avoided giving a full account of what argument and perception are because any account will be controversial, and I think a very minimal conception is sufficient to see that this solution is inadequate. In my own solution, I will show that there are some requirements for these modes of cognition based on larger interpretive reasons, but I will still leave a full account for another time.
A few words about why these are controversial: There is, first, the requisite comment that the Greek word that is being translated 'argument' (*logos*) has a wide variety of meanings. Although here, given context, 'argument' seems an appropriate translation, *logos* can also mean account, or assertion, or word, and Socrates does not say enough on the subject to really specify the exact sense here. The controversy about sense perception mainly surrounds the question of whether it sends reports to the soul using concepts. Sight that reports something about the concept finger, for example, would be a cognitively bulkier perception than sight that reports, say, patches of colours. This passage in the *Republic* is often compared to 184-6 in the *Theaetetus* in discussions of this issue. For interpretations that claim the passages are parallel see for example Cherniss (1944, 236); for interpretations that claim the passages are not parallel see for example Cooper (1970, 145); Irwin (1999, 157).

[20] In both passage the actual puzzlement occurs in the soul. In The Finger Passage it is clear that it is not sense perception that is puzzled (*aporeō*), but the soul once it has received a report from sense perception (524a). In The Fineness Passage this is not explicit, but it is safe to assume that puzzlement follows the refutation (*elenchus*) and occurs apart from sense perception.

This way, we will search for solutions to contradictions like those of The Finger Passage, but we are more likely to give up and accept contradictions like those of The Fineness Passage.

The problem with this solution is that it conflicts with important tenets of the *Republic.* Youths, in their early stages of education, are more attached to visible things. This means that, far from their being more likely to doubt the puzzle they receive from perception, they are in fact quite likely to believe what they see.[21] Besides this, this solution would rely upon a misinterpretation of the process of solving the puzzlement in The Finger Passage. The soul does not receive a contradiction from perception and think 'because it came from perception there must be some mistake'. Instead, the soul thinks perception's report is wrong simply because it presented a contradiction. The root of the puzzle I have presented is that the mere presentation of a contradiction through argument does not likewise make the soul investigate. Focusing on the mode in which the contradiction occurs does not provide us with an explanation for why this is the case. A good solution to the puzzle will explain why, when a person thinks x is no more F than G in The Finger Passage, he finds a way to explain why this is not the case, but when a person thinks x is no more F than G in The Fineness Passage, he finds no way to escape the contradiction and winds up believing it.

5 Towards a Solution

Although the previous solution has its problems, it is on the right track. As we saw in the previous section, these two passages stress the modes of exposure to contradiction: contradictions are acquired through sense perception in The Finger Passage, and argument in The Fineness Passage. For my own solution, I suggest shifting focus from these modes of cognition

[21] Like the people in the cave who accept the images on the walls of the cave as real things (515b-c)

to their respective objects. This will lead to distinguishing the two passages: The Finger Passage is about contradictions in particulars, and The Fineness Passage is about contradictions in universals. When I talk about particulars and universals in Plato, I mean particulars such as sticks and stones (and fingers), and universals as in Forms. So, when the youth thinks that x is no more F than G, in The Finger Passage x is a particular, and in The Fineness Passage x is a Form. I will first go over the textual evidence for distinguishing the passages in this way. In short, this distinction is introduced earlier in the *Republic*, and there is evidence in each passage that this earlier distinction is being recalled. It is important to note that some scholars believe the distinction in the *Republic* is not between particulars and Forms, but properties and Forms.[22] My initial reasoning, which relates other passages of the *Republic* to the two passages under consideration, is therefore unlikely to convince someone who holds this alternative interpretation. However, in the interest of getting my solution on the table, I will set aside this dispute, relying on the fact that it is a common interpretation – and indeed the most natural one[23] – to take the distinction to involve particulars. Once I have outlined the distinction in the *Republic* and shown how it applies to my two passages, I will explain how this distinction solves the puzzle I have presented and why contradictions are educational in the first passage, but corrupting in the second. My explanation comes partly from textual analysis of these passages, and partly from the unified picture of Plato's metaphysics and epistemology that will emerge as I continue in this section. While there needs to be more argument than I can give in this chapter to

[22] In fact, The Finger Passage if a focal point for dispute on this subject. For example, Irwin (1999, 158, 161) and Fine (1995, 56) say this passage is about contradiction in properties. The natural way of reading this passage is as about particulars, as for example Annas (1981, 218), Silverman (2002,83-5, appendix), and Rosen (2005, 288-9) do. I have my own interpretation of this passage, but for the purposes of this paper I will point readers to these authors.
[23] Gosling (1960), one of the first to suggest the property reading for the *Republic*, even admit that his reading "may at first seem to be straining the text a little" (116).

definitively establish that Plato intends to contrast Forms with particulars, not properties in these passages from the *Republic*, I take the fruitfulness of my interpretation to provide some support for the reading I favour. Reading the passages in the way I suggest not only solves the tension between the Finger and Fineness Passages, but also makes evident the fact that this tension is an important one for Plato, showing up across his corpus. [24]

The first step in my solution is seeing that the distinction between particulars and universals is one that is introduced earlier in the *Republic.* My chosen terminology for this distinction makes clear my interpretive stance on these passages and will make explicit the connection to other dialogues, but it is not the terminology Plato uses when originally introducing the distinction. At 474dff (and re-described at 485bff and at 507bff), Plato suggests we can divide things metaphysically into two groups.[25] On the one hand there are things that remain the same, never change, and therefore belong to the category of *being* (477b, 479a, 479e, 484b). The example we are given of something in this category is "the beautiful itself" (e.g.

[24] It is important to note that it is not my main purpose in this paper to settle this debate, and any evidence on one side or the other presented here is intended to be suggestive rather than definitive. I think it is likely that a proponent of The Property Reading of The Finger Passage, though able to solve the local puzzle I present in the *Republic,* will miss the point of bringing these two passages together: when we look at these passages together, we can see that Plato is concerned about what this metaphysical distinction means for epistemology (and philosophy) – across his corpus. Someone mainly interested in the debate between The Particular Reading and The Property Reading can think of this paper as adding valuable data that has not been considered before: The Fineness Passage is not discussed in the debate, nor is the fact that the contrast between The Fineness Passage and The Finger Passage parallels contrasts between particulars and universals in other passages. For others, I hope this paper can encourage a shift in thinking towards realizing that new life can be breathed into old (and current) debates by recognizing Plato's concern for the fine line between education and corruption, and how it connects to his metaphysics and epistemology.

[25] How precisely to understand this distinction is a matter of debate. That the two groups exist as I describe them is uncontroversial, but what meaning to ascribe to *being, becoming,* and *the many Fs* is controversial. For a brief but lucid discussion of this see for example Sedley (2007, 256-260). Briefly, the debate comes from the conjunction of metaphysical and epistemological claims, where knowledge is of *what is (being),* and opinion is of *what is and what is not (becoming).* Some say *what is* means "what exists," others say it means "what is F," and others still say it means "what is true." For example, Sedley (2007) takes the "what is F" view, while Fine (1999) takes the "what is true" view. This debate and the debate about the interpretation of The Finger Passage are intricately related, (because the debate is about what *the many F's* are). Thus, I think my interpretation also speaks to this debate, and the unified picture I present speaks in favour of reading *the many Fs* as particulars, and thus a two-world view, which takes *what is (being)* to refer to "what is F."

476b) (which can be generalized to *F itself*). We can think of this group as containing the *Forms* (*eidos,* 476a; *idea,* 479a, 507b), where *F itself* refers to any *Form* of F. *Forms* are *intelligible,* or objects of thought (*noeisthai*, 507b). On the other hand, there are things that are variously described as "between being and not being" (477a, 479d), "wandering between generation and corruption" (485b1-2), and "what comes to be and passes away" (508d), which can be put in the category of *becoming*. Examples from this category are the many beautiful things (*the many F*'s), or beautiful sounds and colours (e.g.476a-b). These things are said to be *visible* (*horasthai,* 507b), or objects of perception and can be thought of as *particulars,* where a *particular* is any one of the *many F's.*[26] Now we can assemble the terms of these two groups, so we have F *itself/being/intelligible /Forms* on one side, and *the many* F*'s/becoming/visible/ particulars* on the other.

Now that we have our terminology assembled, we can see that The Finger Passage concerns *the many* F*'s/becoming/visible/particulars* and The Fineness Passage concerns F *itself/being/intelligible/Forms.* First, Plato prepares us for thinking about this distinction when reading these passages by introducing his discussion of his educational programme with a peculiar definition of education (*paideia*). At 518b-519d, Socrates tells us education involves turning the soul away from *becoming* and towards *being,* so turning away from *the many* F*'s/becoming/visible' particulars* towards F *itself/being/intelligible/Forms*.

The Finger Passage, then, which describes the first subject of the educational programme, should describe the first subject which facilitates a student's turning from *particulars* to *Forms.* This is borne out in the passage. For example, Socrates tells us that summoning begins in

[26] Plato often focuses on vision when talking about this category, but as the examples show (beautiful sights and sounds), he means for the category to encompass all modalities of perception.

becoming and ends in *being* (525c); that the contradictions are about *the many F*'s in the case of number as a summoner of thought (525d-526a);[27] and that summoning begins with the *visible* as opposed to the *intelligible* (524c13). We can see, then, that the educational contradictions of The Finger Passage are about *the many F's/ becoming/visible/particulars*.

The Fineness Passage, on the other hand, concerns the final stage of the educational programme. We have seen from the earlier discussion of argument and dialectic that argument is likely meant in a restricted sense in this context in which thought is used apart from sense perception. This means the context suggests that this passage is about the *intelligible* rather than the *visible*. The question that marks the beginning of the corruption in The Fineness Passage also suggests this: 'what is the fine?' (*ti esti to kalon)* (538d7). This is the same type of question that is asked *after* the contradiction in The Finger Passage has been solved, once the soul has determined that the big and the small are two distinct things: we first think to ask in this situation, 'what is the big?' (524c). In that passage, we are told that this is where the designation between the *intelligible* and the *visible* comes in, and that the *intelligible* has to do with *being* and *F itself*.[28] The contradictions that are corrupting in The Fineness Passage, then, are ones on the level of the F *itself/being/intelligible/Forms*.

The true virtue of my reading, I said, is in how fruitful it is in helping us understand Plato's thought: once we accept that the difference between The Finger Passage and The

[27] There, we are given the distinction between numbers themselves and the numbers attached to visible and tangible bodies: once thought has been summoned, a person can talk about the one itself (*F* itself), but to summon thought one must look at the many numbered things (many *F*'s).

[28] *Ti esti* questions in Plato have traditionally been thought of as asking about universals – so *ti esti to kalon* would mean 'what is the fine,' where the fine is conceived as a universal or form. In Socratic dialogues, scholars have identified interlocutors' missteps in answering *ti esti* questions as talking about particulars instead of universals. Not all agree (see for example Nehamas (1975), but I am not arguing here that this type of question is about a universal everywhere in Plato. I think my interpretation is likely to be well received because of the general presumption about this kind of question, but I do not rely on it – the fact that Socrates points out that this question is where we move to the intelligible is some good textual evidence that this is how this question is being conceived of here specifically.

Fineness Passage is that the first is about contradictions on the level of particulars and the second is about contradictions on the level of universals, we can see that the tension between these two passages of the *Republic* is not a quirk of the dialogue or some mistake of Plato's, but is an intentional parallel that reveals an important Platonic thought. To see this, and to thereby see why contradictions about particulars educate youths while contradictions about universals corrupt them, I will look at two parallel passages: *Parmenides* 128e-130a,[29] and *Philebus* (14c-16a).

In the *Parmenides,* from 128e-130a, Socrates responds to the Parmenidean claim that the many is one by pointing to a distinction between particulars (like stones and sticks, etc. (129d3)) and Forms (likeness itself, the one itself (128e6-129a1, 129b7-8)). In the *Philebus,* Socrates draws a distinction between problems about the one and the many that are on the level of becoming, and those that are not (14c-16a). In both of these dialogues, there are two distinct types of problem about the one and the many.[30] When we look at the types of problems considered, we can see that in both dialogues, they are contradictions just like those of our passages in the *Republic.* The *Parmenides* and *Philebus* give almost identical examples of a contradiction of the one and many on the level of *particulars/becoming*: I am many, and I am

[29] Some scholars who question whether the visible and many *F*'s are particular things will focus on how the *Republic* presents a different view from that of, for example, the *Parmenides*. The problem is usually couched in terms of 'compresence of opposites,' where the question is, does Plato think compresence of opposites in particulars problematic in the *Republic*, while in the *Parmenides,* unproblematic? However, as I mentioned in footnote 1,The Fineness Passage has been left out of this debate. I think by putting this passage in the debate, we can realize that the difference between The Finger Passage and The Fineness Passage in the *Republic* is the same as the difference between compresence of opposites in particulars and universals in the *Parmenides*. This is one instance where my solution counts towards reading The Finger Passage as about particulars.

[30] Cresswell (1972) recognizes two types of one many problems in the *Philebus* and *Parmenides*, as well as in the *Sophist* (251b), which I agree mentions the not-serious kind of one many problem. Cresswell believes the one many problem concerning Forms is not about how Forms can have opposite properties, but how Forms can be in many instances. See Casper (1977) for a discussion of Cresswell and why Plato *is* concerned about Forms having many properties. Neither Cresswell nor Casper seem to notice that the two types of one many problems are also found in the *Republic*.

one – I am my many parts (front, side, back, limbs etc.), and I am one person (*Parmenides* 129c-d; *Philebus* 14c-d). We are not given an example in the *Republic* of a summoner in the case of number, but it is clear that this is the type of example Socrates has in mind in the *Republic* when he says that for visible things, one always appears with many (525a). I have argued for a position in which The Finger Passage of the *Republic* is about contradiction on the level of *particulars/the many F's/the visible/ becoming*, and The Fineness Passage is about contradiction on the level of *universals/F itself/the intelligible/being*. It should be easy to see now how to assimilate these two passages with those just discussed in the other two dialogues: the contradictions about particulars in the *Parmenides* and about things that have becoming in the *Philebus* are the types of contradiction considered in The Finger Passage of the *Republic*, while the contradictions about Forms in the *Parmenides* and about things that have being in the *Philebus*[31] are the types of contradictions considered in The Fineness Passage of the *Republic.*

Not only do these two other dialogues describe the same two types of contradiction found in our two passages of the *Republic*, they also both describe a difference between these two types that correspond to the distinction between education and corruption in the *Republic*. [32] In the *Parmenides*, contradictions on the level of particulars are not surprising (129b1), and in the *Philebus*, they are childish and trivial (14d7). On the other hand, in the *Parmenides*, contradictions on the level of Forms would be genuinely surprising, and in the *Philebus*, they are

[31] There is controversy in the literature over what the serious one many problems are in the *Philebus*. Part of the controversy involves a textual difficulty at 15b. See for example Muniz and Rudebusch (2004) for an overview of this problem and discussion of various solutions. I will not attempt to weigh in on this controversy here. I think it is sufficient for my purposes that there is a serious type of problem in the *Philebus* that is, unlike the not serious kind that is about things that come to be and perish, about being and Forms. Also important is that the serious problems are about a form's being one and many, which is confirmed at 15d-e, where the connection to the *Republic* is strongest.

[32] Adam (1907. *ad loc.*) and D. Frede (1993, xx) are thus wrong in their assessments that the *Philebus* shows a change of heart from the *Republic.*

serious and can cause controversy (15a).[33] With these further facts about the two types of contradiction, we can begin to see why, in the *Republic,* one type educates youths, and the other corrupts them. Contradictions in The Finger Passage are not surprising and not serious, so there is nothing inherently dangerous about them; there is something dangerous about contradictions in The Fineness Passage because these contradictions are surprising, as they should be impossible, and can lead to serious problems in argument.

That contradictions on the level of particulars are childish or not serious is not to say that they cannot be useful—as the *Republic* shows, they are useful in summoning thought. That they are not surprising should likewise not be taken to mean that they cannot be puzzling in the way that they need to be to summon thought. We should recall the intended audience of the contradictions in the summoners passage: youths. In particular, as these contradictions precede the positing of the Forms, youths that have yet to come to believe in the Forms. These are the contradictions that are the first to be studied by the prospective philosopher rulers, and it is reasonable to think that they will indeed be puzzling at first. This is not to say that the youths will not outgrow them after a certain amount of study. In fact, it is reasonable to think that the more educated youth would respond to someone who presents such a contradiction as a real problem much the way as the youthful Socrates in the *Parmenides,* or the mathematician in the *Republic* (525d-526a): 'sure, you've shown that the thing that is one is also many, but you can't do that with the one itself!'

[33] As discussed in the section 'Rejected Solutions' above, the connection between the *Philebus* and the *Republic* is particularly strong. In a passage strikingly similar to the 539a-b of the *Republic,* these serious contradictions in the *Philebus* are said to fuel youthful misbehavior.

What is interesting, of course, and at the heart of the tension between the two passages, is that when someone does try to do the same with the one itself (or the just itself, as in The Fineness Passage), the youth is confounded, and can be led into lawlessness and corruption. What is the cause of this difference? The distinction in the *Philebus* and *Parmenides* shows that the answer lies partly in the fact that this type of contradiction truly would be surprising. It is also important to here remember the parallel passage about misology in the *Phaedo*. As we saw, in this passage, repeated refutation leads to misology, which consists in the belief that nothing is sound in argument or in anything else, and that nothing is stable. This belief is the general form of the specific examples given in The Fineness Passage, where the youth, through repeated refutations, believes 'the fine is no more fine than shameful,' or x is no more F than G. An important insight from the *Phaedo* is that this happens when a person is unskilled in argument (90b). Presumably, if the person were skilled in argument, he would be able to tell that the contradiction presented is in fact impossible, but, being unskilled, he winds up believing the contradiction instead. This is likely behind the proscription against argument for youths in the *Republic* – presumably an adult will be more skilled in argument.

However, we should not simply rely on the hypothesis that a youth is less likely to be skilled in argument and an adult is more likely to have picked up some reasoning skills in his time in order to explain the difference between the two passages. This might seem like a general truth, but in the *Republic*, we are given two good reasons why a youth might fall into misology if exposed to argument while an adult will not. The first is that a youth will not be equipped to handle argument because he has not had the prerequisite education. To see this, it is important to note there is a strict progression of education in the *Republic* in which it is vital that one part happen before the other, and that no part be skipped or skimped. The allegory of the cave

illustrates why this is the case. This allegory is one of education, showing how a person can be led from being shackled to the world of becoming and the visible—the cave—towards the world of being and the intelligible—the outside (517a-b). Once outside, there are two stages that represent the education intended in The Finger Passage and The Fineness Passage. First, the person leaving the cave must look at images of the things outside (516a), this is the first activity in the intelligible realm, and thus corresponds to the summoning of thought in The Finger Passage. Then, once the person is able to do this, he can look at the things themselves. This should happen with dialectic, and is what The Fineness Passage shows. If a person is forced to look at the things themselves before he is ready, he might flee back into the cave (515d-e). This can happen when a person is pulled directly from the cave to look at the light outside, but also, I think, if the person is forced to look at the things themselves before given sufficient time to adjust to the images outside. This seems to be what happens to the youths in The Fineness Passage. They are made to think about the Forms before they are at a level in their education in which they are prepared to do so.

This close prescription of the process of education is part of the answer, but not, I think, all of it. The second reason that a youth might fall into misology if exposed to argument is that he might not be sufficiently psychologically developed. To see this, it is important to note that The Fineness Passage stresses age rather than level of education. It is true that because Socrates stresses the ages at which each level of education must occur, the two will go hand in hand in the ideal case. But the fact that he says, for example, that a *young* person will go around refuting everyone while an *older* person will not (539b-c), rather than that a person at the incorrect level of education will go around refuting everyone while a person at the correct level of education

will not, shows that the age of the person should be considered in its own right. Here we should look to Plato's developmental psychology.

When discussing the division of the soul into three parts, rational, spirited, and appetitive, Glaucon argues, with Socrates's emphatic approval, that the rational part is distinct from the spirited part as follows, 'one can see in children, that they are from their very birth chock-full of rage and high spirit, but as for reason (*logismos*), some of them, to my thinking, never participate in it, and the majority quite late' (441a-b, trans. P. Shorey). Reason (*logismos*) is what is used in the summoning process where the soul decides whether there are one or two things in the report that the big is small (524b). The reasoning part of the soul as a whole takes time to develop, and even remains undeveloped in certain individuals. Great effort is required to use *logos* alone to grasp the Forms, and if reasoning takes time to develop to a usable state, the use of the higher reasoning functions could understandably take even longer.

At this point we can see why a youth will fail to be educated by contradiction in Forms. His lack of prerequisite stages of education and his psychological underdevelopment will lead him to believe what is really a contradiction and, as the comparison to the *Phaedo* earlier showed, thereby be prevented from any further education. The final piece of my solution explains how, in the *Republic*, not simply lack of education, but corruption occurs; how the youths of The Fineness Passage become lawless. Here again we can think back to the *Phaedo.* As I mentioned in my discussion of the parallel between the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, the epistemological problem leads to a behavioral one; the youth disbelieves what he believed before, and then becomes lawless. My comparison to the *Phaedo* also revealed that the behavioral consequence of the *Republic* is not the only one that can follow misology. Just like in misanthropy, in misology it is possible to retreat from or to abuse the object of mistrust and

hatred. To answer why, in the *Republic*, the abusive side is stressed, we must look at what Plato has to say about the arrangement of the soul.

This answer involves the non-rational parts of the soul. Once the youth has failed to be educated by the contradiction because of his lack of education and his underdeveloped reasoning part of his soul, he moves to ways of life that flatter his soul (538d2, 539a1). These ways of life will depend on how the parts of his soul are arranged. We are told, in the discussion of virtues in Book IV, that the best arrangement of the soul is for the rational part to be in control, with the spirited part of the soul as its ally, keeping the appetitive part in check (441a). In the discussion of bad types of people and constitutions in Books VIII and IX, we are told that there are progressively worse arrangements of the soul, the worst of which is the tyrannical soul, which is controlled by its lawless desires (see esp. 571bff). In The Fineness Passage, then, the obvious worry is that exposure to repeated refutation before being prepared for it destabilizes the reasoning part of the soul, and that without reason in charge, the lower parts of the soul will take over.[34] The way that the rest of the soul is arranged will determine what way of life is flattering to it, so will determine what parts come to be in charge. That lawlessness in particular is mentioned does not necessarily mean that the direct result of early exposure to argument is a tyrannical soul, but books VIII and IX show that this is a slippery slope, and lawlessness lies at the bottom.

[34] A more detailed picture would require extensive discussion of the tripartite soul in the *Republic*, which I will not do here. I leave the exact picture open.

6 Conclusion

Though The Finger Passage says contradiction educates, and The Fineness Passage says it corrupts, this tension is not insoluble. We can now see that The Finger Passage is about contradiction on the level of particulars, and The Fineness Passage is about contradiction on the level of universals, and that Plato depicts, in the *Republic* as well as the *Philebus* and the *Parmenides,* contradictions in particulars as not as serious as contradictions about universals. Part of what makes this the case is that what seem to be contradictions in particulars are apparent only, while what seem to be contradictions in universals really are contradictions; if F and G are opposites, when x is a particular, 'x is no more F than G' is sometimes true, but when x is a universal, it is false. One final comparison to the *Phaedo* will make this point especially clear. The misologists, who have undergone refutation, believe nothing is sound (*ouden hugies;* 90c) in argument or anything else. This same phrase is used in The Finger Passage of the *Republic*: sight reported a contradiction, that the big is no more big than small, and this contradiction was said to be what was 'not sound' (*ouden hugies*) about sight's report (523a-b). As we saw, this 'no more' locution is repeated in The Fineness Passage (538d), where the bad epistemic consequence of the contradiction is that the youth believes the fine is no more fine than shameful. The result, as we can see now that my solution is on the table, is that just as in the *Phaedo*, argument has convinced the youth that something lacks soundness. The youth mistakenly believes there is nothing sound in the fine, the shameful, the one, the many, or in short, nothing sound in the Forms. Someone who believes there is nothing sound in particulars, as the contradictions of The Finger Passage lead youths to believe, is not mistaken; someone who believes there is nothing sound in the Forms, as the contradictions of The Fineness Passage lead youths to believe, is gravely mistaken.

I have shown that there are two main reasons why youths in The Finger Passage come to correct conclusions and are educated, while youths in The Fineness Passage do not. First, in The Fineness Passage they have not gone through all the education required to successfully think about the Forms, and second, the rational parts of their souls are not sufficiently developed for this either. When they believe argument has shown there's nothing sound in the Forms, they believe something false that prevents any further gain of knowledge or truth. This destabilizes the rule of the rational part of the soul, and the person will turn to a way of life that flatters whatever inferior arrangement emerges. In this way premature exposure to contradictions in Forms can lead to lawlessness. To carry this solution to its end, it should follow that the study of apparent contradictions on the level of Forms are not always corrupting. Once a person has reached the appropriate age and level of philosophical training, the study of apparent contradictions about Forms can be just as informative as contradictions about particulars. Refutation might turn us even more towards being.[35]

With all this in mind, we can return to my original question: does Plato contradict himself about contradiction? The answer is: yes and no. There is certainly an appearance of contradiction in which contradiction is educational and corrupting. However, there is also a way to explain why this is the case. We can think of this as we thought of summoners. In the summoners passage, the soul realizes that a contradiction in a particular thing is unproblematic because of the nature of particulars. Here, we realize that the contradiction about contradiction is

[35] If we think about the Allegory of the Cave and Divided Line, refutation might be the equivalent of a summoner but one level closer towards being. While summoners summon thought (*dianoia*), refutation might summon understanding (*noesis*). Byrd (2007) suggests expanding the summoners passage to the higher segment of the divided line in this way. She does not mention The Fineness Passage, but takes the summoners passage, posits a higher kind of summoner, and recommends reading Plato generally as if he is placing summoners of this higher kind in his dialogues.

unproblematic for a similar reason. There is a way to explain away the contradiction, and it involves understanding the nature of particulars and Forms and how they fit into education and development. The puzzle that arose out of The Finger Passage and The Fineness Passage, the contradiction about contradiction, turns out to be an example of the very topic under discussion.

Chapter 2

ANTILOGIC AND MISOLOGY

1 Introduction

I used two terms in the previous chapter that deserve a bit more attention: antilogic and misology. These terms were not central to producing the puzzle between The Finger Passage and The Fineness Passage, but were important in my solution, as they brought out parallels to other passages, especially the *Phaedo* passage, and helped illuminate the process in The Fineness Passage that leads to corruption. I will spend some time here explaining these (and related) terms, and defending some claims about them that I made in the previous chapter. In doing so, I hope to emphasize that the dangers of philosophy are not limited to the puzzle about contradiction in the *Republic.* Now, I have already suggested as much in my solution to the puzzle – I say that the issue that is at the heart of the puzzle is an issue that arises in various places across Plato's work. Here, in explaining these terms outside of the context of the puzzle, I will reinforce this suggestion.

There are two main conclusions I will draw from my explanations of these terms. First, because we can see that Plato uses these terms to describe people falling into potentially dangerous territory unawares and unintentionally, knowing what these terms mean can help us realize that the dangers of philosophy are hard to avoid. Second, these terms can help us realize that some of the dangers of philosophy are inherent in the practice of philosophy.

2 Antilogic

In the previous chapter I treated antilogic (ἀντιλογική) as meaning "contrary-arguments" or presenting arguments with contrary conclusions. Understood this way, antilogic is obviously related to my concern with contradiction arising from argument, and thus in the *Republic* and the

Philebus, where antilogic is mentioned. I easily assimilated this into my discussion of contradictions leading to corruption (*Phaedo* 90c, *Republic* 539b4, 539c8). However, the meaning of antilogic is not as uncontroversial as I originally made it out to be, and some have said that antilogic is not a method at all, never mind one that involves presenting contrary arguments.[36] I will spend some time here discussing this interpretation. In order to do this, I will also discuss three other terms: eristic (ἐριστικός), love-of-winning (φιλονικία), and sophistry (σοφιστική). These four terms are closely related, and the disagreement about what antilogic is has arisen because of disagreement about the meaning of these other terms, as well as disagreement about how they are related. I will not settle all the disagreements here, but I will present my own theory of antilogic with some discussion of these disagreements. Let me, then, go through each term in turn.

2.1 Sophistry

"Sophistry" has been the term that has interested scholars the most – the other terms have been important only in relation to discovering what sophistry is.[37] Because it has interested scholars the most, I will use it as my starting point for this discussion. However, it is the only term of the four for which I am not going to try here to present a positive view. I will not do this partly because the attempt to tell exactly what counts as sophistry for Plato has led scholars to miss out on the fact that Plato is worried about all sorts of ways in which a person can fall into

[36] I do not here mean anything weighty by the term "method." I am not, therefore, following Robinson, who, in *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (section 'Method'), suggests that a method will always include a means and an end. I simply mean to indicate that some people, like me, think that antilogic looks a particular way, and some people think it does not (for instance, Nehemas (1990)). The sense I am using can be found in, for example Kerferd (1989) (where he alternately calls antilogic a "method" and a "technique").

[37] Or perhaps, more accurately, what Plato thinks sophistry is. I take analyzing Plato's conception of sophistry and analyzing what the sophists actually did as distinct activities, though we might, given a scarcity of evidence, take what Plato says about the sophists as important data to include in a discussion of what the sophists actually did.

the dangers of philosophy;[38] partly because I am not confident that there is an exact account to be had; and partly because if there is, it will be tied up with the terms I will discuss shortly. [39]

It was once a popular view that Plato disliked the sophists because of specific ethical doctrines they espoused.[40] This view has since gone out of favour, and it has become common to say that Plato objected to the sophists because of their aim.[41] This has become common because to many it seems that any attempt to define sophistry makes it seem rather like *elenchus* or refutation, which is Socrates' method of choice. The question then arises, how does Socrates differ from the sophists?[42] Claiming that the sophists and Socrates have different aims answers this question. Socrates is not a sophist because the sophists aim to win argument, Socrates aims to find the truth. For example, Terry Irwin,[43] Hugh Benson,[44] and Alexander Nehemas[45] share the conclusion that aim is how we can distinguish the sophists from Socrates.

I bring up sophistry not to define it, but to shed light on the other terms. As I said, the four terms, eristic, love-of-winning, antilogic, and sophistry, are interrelated, but exactly how they are interrelated is debated. We can see the fact that many have tried to define sophistry in

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[38] Scholars have been misled into thinking that there is this thing, Sophistry, which is distinct from this other thing, Philosophy; other people (the Sophists) do Sophistry while Plato (and Socrates) does Philosophy; and Sophistry is bad where Philosophy is good. I think my research shows that the distinction between bad and good in philosophy is not as clear as this picture would suggest.

[39] For instance, it is currently well accepted that the sophist is defined by his eristic nature. This has not always been the case. But it is questioned whether antilogic is characteristic of the sophist. Some have said that Plato disliked the sophists because of specific ethical doctrines they espoused, others have argued that this could not possibly be the root of his dislike, because they do not have a unified position. The alternative explanation that has gained ground is that sophists are contentious or eristic arguers. See Irwin (1995) for summary of history of debate.

[40] Made popular by Hegel's influential account of the Sophists

[41] See Irwin (1995) for summary of the history of the debate about the sophists.

[42] The question that should arise is *whether* sophistry differs from what Socrates does, but in literature on this topic there is often an implicit assumption that it does (see, for example, Nehemas (1990)).

[43] Irwin (1995) 585

[44] Benson (1989) 596-9

[45] Nehemas (1990) says the difference between the two "is a difference more in purpose than in method" (11). He thinks that the main difference is that Socrates does not purport to be a teacher, the Sophist does. Within this, he also claims that Socrates aims at the truth (7, 10).

terms of aim rather than method will be important for my claim about antilogic, depending on whether we think antilogic is especially associated with sophistry. For instance, if we think that the sophists cannot be distinguished from Socrates (or Plato) by method, and antilogic is associated with the sophists only, then it cannot be a method.

Here are several prominent views, which show the interrelatedness of these terms. Kerferd (1981) discusses antilogic directly, though in the context of discussing sophistry, and claims that antilogic is a specific method that has at its essence "the opposition of one logos to another either by contrariety or contradiction" (63), and that it has a connotation in Plato in-between that of eristic (and sophistry) and dialectic (and philosophy), where eristic is definitely bad, and dialectic is definitely good.[46] Irwin (1995) presents a similar view, though without as direct a discussion on antilogic. From his discussion on eristic, it seems he believes antilogic is a method that amounts to arguing both sides of an argument, and he claims it is not especially associated with the sophists. From this, it seems he thinks it does not necessarily have a negative connotation (583-5). This view follows very closely Vlastos (1975), in which Vlastos claims that the fact that Zeno practices the art of antilogic does not mean he is a sophist (152-4). Robinson (1953), on the other hand, suggests both that antilogic is not a distinct method, and that it and eristic are terms Plato uses to refer to whatever method he thinks is bad at the time (89). Nehemas (1990) likewise does not think antilogic is a particular method. He engages directly with Kerferd, arguing that Kerferd is wrong in describing antilogic as a technique of argument (8-9).

[46] I will agree with this in spirit, but I will spell out what Kerferd means by this, and explain why we should modify his claims somewhat.

2.2 Eristic and Love of Winning

The next two terms, eristic and love-of-winning,[47] I will treat together. Scholars have been led to believe that antilogic is not a specific method partly because of beliefs about whether the sophists are antilogical, and partly because of a failure to distinguish antilogic from these two terms. I will directly address this second part when I discuss antilogic. Before I can do that, we need to get clear on what eristic and love-of-winning are.

By themselves, these terms are the least controversial of the four.[48] Both of these terms and their cognates can be translated with words such as 'contentiousness' or 'competitiveness.' Both terms are used to describe people and behaviour, and "eristic" is also used to describe arguments. I have decided to use the translations (or transliteration in the case of eristic) I do partly because of their more literal meanings, but also because translating them both 'contentious' misses out on an important motivational story: someone who is eristic is someone who is motivated by a love of winning, and so will be contentious or competitive, and argue contentiously or competitively. If a person is eristic, it means that he is contentious, competitive, and the arguments he engages in are called eristical arguments; if a person has love-of-winning, it means he is motivated to do things in order to win. Love-of-winning explains why an eristic person will be contentious and argue with people: he wants to win these arguments.

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[47] There is a translation issue here, as there are some places where "*philonikia"* shows up in some manuscripts as "*philoneikia,"* and therefore there is some confusion over which term was intended in the original (for example see *Republic* 548c6). These words, as well as having very similar spellings, have similar meanings, where *philonikia* means as I have translated here, "love-of-winning," and *philoneikia* means "love-of-contention" (*philo* (love) + *nikh* (victory), or *philo* (love) + *neikos* (strife)). Luckily, this similarity in meaning means that either term could describe the motivational picture behind being eristical in a way that is consistent with what I say here. Love-of-contention, like love-of-winning, would count as a motivational force that would lead a person to fail to aim at the truth.

[48] Generally, scholars do not mention the term "love-of-winning," but nevertheless define eristic in terms of a love of winning.

Stressing this motivational picture can shed light on how having a love of winning and being eristic are serious detriments to doing philosophy. In short, it is because they make a person fail to aim at the truth. To see why this is, let us consider what Socrates says about natures in *Republic V* and *VI*. In book VI we are told that a person with a philosophic nature will love wisdom and therefore hate falsehood (485c-d), and in book V we are told that a lover of wisdom loves all of wisdom, a lover of honour all of honour, etc. (474c-475c). From these two passages we have a principle of exclusion – when someone loves something, he will hate its opposite – and a principle of inclusion – when someone loves something, he loves all of that thing. So, if a person loves winning, by exclusion, he will hate losing; by inclusion, he will love all winning. This will mean that he loves winning, no matter what the means, including, no doubt, winning through falsehoods.[49] Because a philosopher hates all falsehood, this lover of winning cannot be a philosopher. This idea is confirmed in the *Phaedo* at 91a, where Socrates tells us that people who have love-of-winning will care that others believe what they say, but not necessarily about what their position is, and they will not care about the truth of what they say.

All this is Platonic framework for an intuitive idea, and maybe even something we have come across in experience: there are some people who really like to argue, seemingly in order to win arguments. These people will ignore or argue against alternative positions merely because

[49] Including false premises or fallacious reasoning. Whether an eristic person uses fallacious reasoning is controversial. Nehemas (1990), for instance, argues that there is something unfair about saying that an eristic person uses fallacious reasoning – or at least *consciously* uses fallacious reasoning (7). He says this in response to Kerferd's (1981) claim (and I follow Kerferd here) that an eristic person will not care about the truth, but about success in argument (62-63). Because the eristic person above all cares about winning, he simply does not care about what types of arguments he uses. The claim that an eristic person aims at winning at the expense of the truth does not mean that he necessarily consciously uses fallacious arguments. He, of course, *might* consciously use fallacious arguments – he is willing to do whatever it takes to win. But just as likely, he will use fallacious arguments *unconsciously*, because he is focused on winning and not keeping track of whether his argument is fallacious or not. The important thing is that the eristic person's goal is to win the argument, and he will use whatever means available to him to achieve this goal.

they do not want to admit defeat. Although this might look like philosophy, says Plato, this behaviour's disregard for the truth disqualifies it from that title. So, 1) eristic and love of winning are two sides of the same coin, where an eristic person is motivated by love-of-winning, and 2) arguing while motivated by a love-of-winning can lead to bad consequences because this motivation will make a person fail to aim at the key aim of philosophy, truth.[50]

2.3 Antilogic

Finally, let us turn to antilogic. If I had to choose a translation for *antilogia*, I would choose "opposing arguments." This translation brings out that, where eristic might be described as an attitude, and love-of-winning a motivational force, antilogic is a method. However, *antilogia* can be translated "controversy," or "disputation," and some translators choose not to distinguish this term from the previous two, eristic and love-of-winning. Paul Shorey, for example, translates *antilogias* and *antilogian* as "contentiousness" and "contentiously" at *Republic* 454b and 539b, and *philonikōn* and *philonikon* as "spirit of contention" and "contentious" at *Republic* 545a and 499e.

The main reason scholars have failed to realize the difference between antilogic on the one hand and eristic and love-of-winning on the other, is that they are often used, in Plato, to refer to the same things. Kerferd (1981) has this insight:

> Plato frequently uses the two terms [eristic and antilogic] to *refer* to the same procedure, and he likewise on occasion uses the derived adjectives *eristikos* and *antilogikos* to refer

[50] Or, as Tad Brennan has pointed out to me, there is a best-case scenario where a person with the love-of-winning will aim at the truth derivatively. A person with love-of-winning could find himself in a situation in which his win is dependent on saying true things (perhaps he finds himself in the company of people who care about the truth). He might, in this situation, be motivated to win and motivated to win through saying true things and through good reasoning. This is still going to be less than ideal from Plato's perspective.

> to the same people.[…] But whether he uses the one term or the two terms to refer to the same thing or the same person, they *never* for Plato have the same meaning (62).

As Kerferd says, the two terms have different meanings: eristic has to do with caring about winning, and antilogic, I will put forward, has something to do with arguing both sides of an argument – or at least not caring which side of an argument you argue for.[51] However, when Plato mentions 'eristic arguments' or 'eristic people,' he often means to refer to the same group of things or people as when he mentions 'antilogical arguments' or 'antilogicians.'[52] When we analyze the terms separately, we can see that there is good reason they are used to refer to the same things, and this is not because they have the same meaning. In short, for Plato, they all involve bad arguments.

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[51] As we saw, Kerferd himself thinks that antilogic is "the opposition of one logos to another either by contrariety or contradiction" (63). This means that *elenchus* is "clearly an application of antilogic" (66). While I agree that there is a tight connection between *elenchus* and antilogic, I think this gets things backwards. For Kerferd, antilogic is "simply a technique, neither good nor bad," but can be used either for good or for bad (65). It seems to me that this is a better description of *elenchus*, and that when we see Plato's use of "antilogic" and its cognates, we see that they almost always clearly have a pejorative sense, and always plausibly have such a sense. The word is being used pejoratively in the Fineness Passage, for instance, when a youth first gets a taste of argument, he "will use it as a form of sport, always using it for antilogic." (539b). The most plausibly neutral use is from the *Sophist.* In the *Sophist,* we are given a division of different kinds of antilogic (225b-226a). However, in this dialogue, it turns out that antilogic, if it were a real skill, would involve being able to argue for anything, and therefore would require knowing everything. This dialogue expresses skepticism about whether such a thing is possible, and suggests that antilogic is no real art at all (*Sophist* 232e-233c). The *Phaedrus* is also sometimes taken to present a neutral use of "antilogic." The *Phaedrus* tells us that the "Eleatic Palamedes," Zeno, is an antilogician, and Irwin (1990), for instance, says that the Eleatics, unlike the Sophists, take argument seriously, arguing "to prove the truth of the conclusion, not to win some argument" (285). However, the *Phaedrus* additionally characterizes antilogic as being able to convincingly deceive your audience, which seems obviously pejorative (*Phaedrus* 261e-262d). Using argument to deceive your audience does not seem like a way to try to prove the truth of the conclusion. Moreover, when Zeno appears as a character in Plato's dialogue the *Parmenides,* he admits to writing his book from a love-of winning (128d). So, saying that antilogic is neutral because the Eleatics performed it but were not motivated by a love of winning seems hasty – at least if we are trying to get at what Plato thought about all this.

[52] A prime example of this is *Meno* 80e, where Socrates says to Meno: "Do you see what an eristic argument you are bringing up, that it isn't possible for a man to search either for what he knows or for what he does not know?" I do not think that Socrates means that Meno is being eristic here – it does not seem like he is trying to win an argument. We should take this to mean "the type of arguments an eristic person would make." Understood this way, we can again see that an eristic person and a person who uses antilogic will often produce the same types of arguments. Meno's is one such argument.

We have already seen how eristic and love-of-winning lead to bad arguments: when a person cares only about winning, he will not care about how he wins. In order to see how antilogic leads to bad argument, I should say in more detail what I take antilogic, or opposing arguments, to be. A set of opposing arguments will be of the form: argument that *p,* and argument that *not-p.* Zeno, for instance, is said to have practiced antilogic by arguing that things are alike and unlike, one and many, and at rest and in motion (*Phaedrus* 261d). Importantly, Plato assumes there is at most one correct side in each set of opposing arguments. We saw this in the previous chapter, where Plato rejects the possibility of a true contradiction (where something is opposite in the same respect, at the same time, etc.). So, of *p* and *not-p,* only one is true – let's say *p.* When we realize this, we can see that *not-p* will not have a sound argument in support of it. Because it is false that *not-p,* any argument for *not-p* will rely on false premises or false reasoning to support it.[53] Thus, when someone presents a set of opposing arguments, at least one side will always have to be argued for in some underhanded way.

One underhanded way of arguing Plato sometimes criticizes is by relying on verbal distinctions that do not map onto real ones (for instance at *Theaetetus* 164c, where antilogicians are said to do this, and at *Republic* 454a-b, where this way of arguing is associated with both antilogic and eristic). Arguments that rely on verbal distinctions are not getting at real distinctions, and are thus not getting at the truth. We can see how someone who is eristic/has a love-of-winning and someone who uses antilogic might both fall into this type of underhanded argument. An eristic person wants to win an argument, and if he can make an argument based on verbal distinction and put one over on his opponent (whether he realizes this is what he is doing

[53] For example, if everything *is* at rest, there is no good argument that shows that everything is in motion.

or not), then he will. In the case of the antilogician, at some point he will argue for a position for which there is no good argument, and one way to make an argument for this position that at least appears plausible will be to use verbal distinctions.

Now we are in a position to see that although eristic and antilogic will often produce the same result, they are not the same thing. For instance, an antilogician is not necessarily eristic. The eristic person wants to convince his opponent that he is right, which means he only cares that his arguments appear sound. He cares about winning, not about the truth. The antilogician's case is a bit less clear. He might, like the eristic person, just not care about the truth, but he might, alternatively, think (mistakenly, according to Plato) that he is getting at some important truth by presenting arguments with opposing conclusions. He might, for instance, truly believe that appearances are all there is to the truth, he might be a skeptic or a relativist, and think he is teaching an important lesson through his arguments (e.g., he can argue *p* and *not-p*, therefore there is no truth about the matter).[54] This is an open possibility, for instance, in the *Phaedo* at 90c, where those who use antilogic are prone to believing "that there is nothing sound or sure in anything, whether argument or anything else, but all things go up and down, like the tide in the Euripus, and nothing is stable for any length of time."[55] Plato sees this as just as much of an impediment to getting at the truth as an eristic attitude motivated by a love of winning.

3 Misology

The passage from the *Phaedo* I quote above should be familiar from the previous chapter of this dissertation. I discussed this passage there in order to draw a parallel between the *Phaedo*

[54] Cf. Aristotle's *Metaphysics* IV.4-5.
[55] Trans. H.N. Fowler.

and the Fineness Passage, and you may recall that it has to do with misology. This last point about antilogic, that an antilogician might believe himself to be presenting some deep truth in his opposing arguments, then, brings us to the next term I would like to discuss, misology. This term is less controversial than antilogic. However, one implication about misology from the previous chapter that I would like to discuss here is that there are ontological beliefs associated with misology. As I put it in the previous chapter, the misologist in the *Phaedo* comes to believe, for instance, that the fine is no more fine than shameful – there is nothing sound or reliable in the fine, not even that it is not shameful. Socrates is worried that the activity that leads to misology (the activity antilogicians practice), produces skeptics and relativists.[56]

Let me first point out why these ontological beliefs are important for my purposes in the previous chapter. There, I argued that the misology passage in the *Phaedo* is parallel to the Fineness Passage in the *Republic*, and that the worry that repeated refutation leads to beliefs about the unreliability of things is part of this parallel. The parallel was important because it emphasized both the fact that there are epistemic and behavioural consequences of repeated refutation, and the fact that the repeated refutation that can lead to these consequences need not be about ethical issues. In the Fineness Passage, a belief of the form "x is no more F than G," comes from refutation, and it is this belief that leads to corruption. In the *Phaedo,* the misologist believes that "there is nothing sound or stable in things or in argument" (90c). This shows that the misologist ends up believing something like "x is no more F than G" just like the youth in

[56] Miller (2015) discusses aspects of the misologists of the *Phaedo* such as these. He suggests that the antilogicians, who he takes to be "the most advanced and articulate misologists" (158), are Heraclitean flux-theorists (159), and that misologists generally, as described in the *Phaedo,* are proto-skeptics (esp. 170-171). The main problem Socrates has with the misologists, Miller says, is that they do not recognize the importance of having trust (*pistis*) in argument. Incidentally, Miller's reading of the *Phaedo* is in keeping with what I say about *epodes* in the later chapters of this dissertation (though Miller himself does not mention *epodes*).

The Fineness Passage. That the *Phaedo* mentions the ontological belief, then, serves my purposes in the previous chapter.

Because this might seem surprising, I want to stress that these ontological beliefs are associated with misology. It is natural to think that given its name, misology consists merely of a mistrust or hatred of argument and has no associated ontological beliefs; one might think that a misologist comes to believe arguments are unreliable, not that he comes to believe everything is unreliable.[57] Nevertheless, Socrates' concern with these ontological beliefs in the *Phaedo* is undeniable. Socrates tells us that the misologist comes to believe there is nothing sound or stable, neither in arguments *nor in things* (90c).[58] He does not leave his discussion of misology at the level of mistrust in argument, but points out that there is a very real possibility that repeated refutation leads to beliefs about the unreliability of everything.

However, one might ask at this point: is it not the case that the ontological beliefs I have described require complete trust in argument, rather than mistrust? Doesn't a person have to believe the argument that concludes, "x is F," and believe the argument that concludes, "x is G," in order to believe, "x is no more F than G"? An answer to this question gives us insight into how Plato uses the term "misology." Importantly, it seems like the hatred or mistrust of arguments is not, despite what might at first seem plausible, a description of the misologist's subjective attitude to arguments. The misologist might not describe himself as mistrusting or hating argument. However, Plato would.

For instance, the skeptic or the relativist might say, "I love argument, it shows us this great truth, that there's nothing sound in anything," while Plato would say, "you hate argument,

[57] I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer from the BJHP for this objection.
[58] Emphasis added (*Oute tōn pragmatōn … oute tōn logōn*).

because only someone who hates argument would abuse it in this way."[59] We might think of Plato as having a teleological view of arguments. Sound arguments will conclude with his notion of truth. In order to label the man with the ontological beliefs I have described a misologist, Plato must describe him as hating or mistrusting argument from what he would see as an objective standpoint (i.e. from a standpoint that recognizes his metaphysics and how argument is used to gain knowledge about this metaphysics). [60] The relativist and the skeptic are abusing argument because they are not reaching the proper ends as Plato sees them.

That misology involves not a subjective mistrust or hatred of arguments, but an objective one from Plato's standpoint is consistent across dialogues. [61] "Misology" is an infrequently used term, so I will only be discussing two other passages: *Republic* 411d-e and *Laches* 188c-e. The *Republic* is the easiest case. In the *Republic,* misology is mentioned within a discussion of the need to balance gym and music. If a person devotes his life to gym, he becomes hard and savage, if a person devotes his life to music, he becomes soft and cowardly. Misology is a worry for the person who devotes his life to gym. This person, Socrates says, "becomes a misologist and stranger to the Muses. He no longer makes any use of persuasion by speech but achieves all his

[59] You might want to respond similarly to the misanthropist who becomes a grifter and announces "I love people, they've made me a wealthy man." Of course, in the case of this type of misanthropist, unlike in the case of the type of misologist under consideration, we would likely take an announcement like this to be somewhat insincere. Plato's attitude to the misologist who truly thinks he trusts or loves arguments might be something like an attitude a person could take to a psychic who really believes he has psychic powers. The psychic might believe he is helping people with his gift, but the skeptic will say, "you're nothing but a misanthropist, because only someone who hates people would take advantage of them in this way."

[60] Recognizing that the *Phaedo* warns of ontological beliefs that are associated with misology helps us see that misology does not necessarily involve avoidance of argument. As I said in the previous chapter, the analogy with misanthropy can account for this (we can think of two types of misanthropist: the hermit and the grifter). Nevertheless, the point I make is not at first obvious, and scholars have failed to notice it. (Jacquette (2014), for instance, takes misology to necessarily involve an avoidance of argument.)

[61] My use of "objective" here might be seen to be straining its usual meaning - there is a way of understanding Plato's perspective as another subjective one. However, I use both "subjective" and "objective" here in a way that describes what I take to be the way Plato would think of these attitudes of mistrust or hatred.

ends like a beast by violence and savagery, and in his brute ignorance and ineptitude lives a life of disharmony and gracelessness" (411d-e).[62]

Of the passages that mention misology, this one fits the subjective hatred/mistrust view of misology the best. We can easily imagine that, if asked, this brutish man would admit his hatred or mistrust in argument, and claim that because there is no value in arguments, violence and savagery are the only real ways to achieve anything. Nevertheless, if we are looking for a consistent use of "misology" across the dialogues, it is easy to understand this subjective misology as an objective one from Plato's perspective. A man cannot subjectively hate or mistrust argument and really love and trust argument, though he can subjectively love and trust argument and really hate and mistrust it.

The case of the *Laches* is less straightforward. In this dialogue, Nicias and Laches discuss being questioned by Socrates. Laches says that he is happy to be questioned by Socrates, given that Socrates seems to be a good man (188e). Laches says he is both a lover and hater of argument (a philologist and a misologist): he loves argument when it is presented by a good person, and hates it when it is presented by a bad one (188c-d). He expects that Socrates' words will match his character, so he is happy to enter discussion with him.

This description of being a misologist might seem unusual, given the way the *Phaedo* introduces misology. Recall, the *Phaedo* introduces misology by comparing it to misanthropy. Socrates says that mistrust or hatred of argument comes about in a way similar to how mistrust or hatred of people comes about: you repeatedly misplace your trust in an argument or person, and come to mistrust or hate all arguments or people. Laches trusts arguments based on how

[62] Trans. P. Shorey

much he trusts the person who makes them. In this way, misanthropy is not analogous to misology, but collapses into it. He is a misologist only insofar as he is a misanthropist.

This makes it seem like Laches does a poor job of identifying how he is a misologist. It seems to him, subjectively, he is a misologist (at least in some cases):[63] he feels a hatred towards arguments when they come from people he has judged to be bad. However, this does not seem like a good reason to grant him the label "misologist." Laches' appreciation or disregard for argument is *ad hominem*. It seems, then, that even when he feels hatred for an argument, it is not because of any regard he pays *to the argument*. His judgements about people pollute his judgements about other things. The label "misologist" suggests a special disregard for argument. Laches is a misologist as much as he might be a mis-anything-else he might derivatively judge about a person. [64]

However, there is very good reason to call Laches a misologist from Plato's perspective. Laches is a misologist because he does not put any stock in the arguments themselves. Even when he hears plausible arguments, if they come from someone he mistrusts, he mistrusts them. He even says that it pains him more the better the bad person speaks (188e). We can imagine, even, that he might hate the very same argument he loves, if he hears it come from a man he

[63] Or, at least it seems like it seems to him. Laches puts his own status as a misologist and philologist in terms of seeming, rather than being. He says he takes pleasure in the *logoi* of good men, and pain in the *logoi* of bad men, and that these make him seem (*dokei*) to be a philologist and a misologist. He does not ever say that a person who thinks he is a misologist is wrong, so it might be that he endorses this label.

[64] We can imagine that he might let his opinion of a person pollute all judgements of that person. He might, for instance, hate a man's clothing or haircut because he hates the man. I take it we would not be inclined to call him a "hater of fashion" for this reason.

hates and a man he loves. Even when he feels pleasure in hearing an argument, then, despite his inclination to call himself a philologist, he is truly a misologist.[65]

4 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter on terminology, let me return to sophistry for a moment. I said that more recent discussions of sophistry have said that Socrates differs from the sophists in his aim. While this may be true (I do not want to decide this question here), this focus on aim can give us the wrong impression that it is easy to avoid the dangers of philosophy – all we have to do is make sure we aim at the truth and avoid the wrong motivation and we will be successful philosophers. This is not the case.

We can see this worry described across Plato's works now that we have some terms on the table. For instance, in the *Republic* Socrates points out that we can unwillingly fall into antilogic, and in fact he and his interlocutors do just that at 453e-4c. Likewise, in the *Phaedo* Socrates fears at one point that, though he did not set out to be, he is being love-of-winning-ful rather than philosophical (love-of-wisdom-ful). Antilogic and love-of-winning, we have seen, are not things you want to slip into by mistake when trying to do philosophy. These passages show that even if we have good intentions, we can wind up where we were trying to avoid. Now, you might think that this is not too serious a problem – after all, in these examples Socrates manages to recognize he has done something wrong before too much damage is done. Putting aside the possibility that

[65] Beversluis (2000) is thus overly optimistic when he says, "[j]udged solely by their speeches, Nicias and Laches admirably embody this ideal [the ideal interlocutor]" (117). Beversluis takes the ideal interlocutor to be one "who is willing to be tested, and, if need be, refuted" (117). While Laches' speech shows him to be an eager participant in Socratic conversation, when we consider his analysis of misanthropy, we should be reminded that eager participation does not make a person an ideal interlocutor. Laches' confusion of misanthropy and misology suggests that Laches is unable to judge arguments on their own. He substitutes his judgement of people for judgements of arguments he should be making. And we have seen that a person who is unskilled in argument is far from an ideal interlocutor.

there are many more times when his transgression goes unnoticed, the situation for a beginning philosopher is much more dire. When we are unskilled in argument, we fail to recognize when we have gone wrong.

This is a feature of argument that is often warned against in Plato, and one that is at the heart of this dissertation. When a person is unprepared for philosophy, they are liable to fail, and fail in dangerous ways. In the Fineness Passage, for instance, in the previous chapter, we saw that youths who are exposed to argument and refutation before they are properly educated for its use argue antilogically and discredit themselves and philosophy. In the *Phaedo (*90b-c), those who are not skilled in argument and are refuted multiple times come to mistrust and hate argument but think they have discovered wisdom in this – this happens especially to those who practice antilogic. In the *Philebus* youths who first get a taste for argument misuse it and go around throwing themselves and everyone around them into confusion (15d-16a). And in the *Sophist,* youths and late-learners, after a refutation, misunderstand and misuse refutation against others because they think they have discovered something wise (251b-c). When a person does not yet have philosophical skills, he is liable to fall into dangers of philosophy. He will misunderstand argument, be unaware that he misunderstands it, and thus be inclined to misuse it. He will take this misuse to be philosophy, and think himself terribly clever and wise, when in reality he is not.

Now, can our aspiring philosopher consider himself forewarned about the dangers of philosophy? Well, he knows that approaching philosophy with the wrong attitude, with a love-of-winning or contentiousness, is bad. He knows that philosophy will ask him to deal with arguments, especially arguments about the Forms, and that arguments can be used pretty convincingly, through refutation to present contradictions. And he knows that these contradictions can lead to misology and to corruption.

With all this, how well is our aspiring philosopher forearmed? Well, if he is aware of the ways in which he can fail to be philosophical despite intending not to, then he can be on constant guard against them. He can try to ensure, for instance, that he never enters a discussion with the aim to win it rather than to discover the truth; he can avoid antilogicians; and he can be wary when he is presented with contradiction through refutation. From the previous chapter, he also knows that he should avoid argument altogether until he is old enough, so that he will have gone through the proper psychological development and educational steps.

However, ever the bearer of bad news, I have to point out that this will not be enough. There are two reasons for this, one more important to understanding Plato's metaphilosophy than the other. The less important reason is a practical one. We must not forget that the *Republic* describes the educational programme of philosopher rulers *in an ideal state.* As Socrates points out, the corruption in the Fineness Passage describe a problem with how argument is currently practiced. The fact is, youths are prematurely exposed to argument all the time. Even if our aspiring philosopher avoids argument the best of his ability, short of becoming a hermit, he is unlikely to be completely successful in his avoidance. So, the clear bit of practical advice from this the previous chapter will be difficult (if not impossible) for our young man to follow.

This brings us to the more serious of the two problems. You might think, "well, so he can't actually wait until he's thirty to start engaging with argument – he can still approach argument carefully with a mind to its dangers." While it is true that he is better off with this careful approach than without it, it is not true that a careful approach will safeguard him against corruption. To see why this is the case, we need to consider again what it means for a person to be unskilled in argument. Let us take the case where corruption comes from repeated refutation (and antilogic). If a person is unskilled in argument, he will not be able to tell which side of a

pair of contradictory arguments is correct. Our aspiring philosopher, knowing that this is dangerous territory, holds on to the conviction that there at least *is* a correct side. But if he is inundated with refutations and contradictions with no means to solve them, it is easy to imagine his conviction that there is a solution in each case diminishing. After all, what is to keep his conviction that there is a solution when he is constantly confronted with apparent evidence that there is not?[66] Even aiming at the truth turns out to be harder than it at first might seem. You learn the truth through dialectic, which involves argument. But to be successful in argument you need to aim at the truth, which you don't yet know, because you are not yet dialectical.

The way that lack of skill in argument works, then, means that not only will our aspiring philosopher be in trouble when he inevitably comes up against arguments before his time in this imperfect world, he will also be unsure whether he has reached his time in any world. As Plato describes, people who lack skill in argument often think they are really clever when they have "discovered" something not very clever at all (*Sophist* 251b-c, *Phaedo* 90c); there is apparently little evidence from the subjective feeling of it whether you have successfully discovered the truth or not.[67] This means that, even in an ideal state, there is a certain amount of trust involved when a person reaches thirty, that he will be able to tell that he is ready to start dealing with argument. So, while having descriptions of the dangers of philosophy goes some way in getting our aspiring philosopher in a safer position, we can hopefully prepare him a bit more.

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[66] I take it keeping this conviction is something that the older person is better at doing (in virtue of being older). See the comment about the older man in the Fineness Passage (*Republic* 539c). I will explore why one person might be more likely to hold onto this conviction than another in more detail in the rest of this dissertation, when I discuss Plato's psychology.

[67] At least from the side of the unskilled – presumably once you have really experienced the truth you realize that when you thought you had before it felt quite different, but there is an experience when you are unskilled that you are likely to mistake as the feeling of finding the truth.

PART TWO

PREVENTION IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE FORM OF PREPAREDNESS

Preparedness is all about having a plan; a plan to mitigate damage, a plan to fix damage that has already been done, and – especially for dangers that are of our own making – a plan to avoid the damage in the first place. The best way to avoid the damage done by bad philosophy is to avoid bad philosophy. The problem is, it turns out that the distinction between good and bad philosophy will be obscure to a novice philosopher. When a person is unskilled in argument, it will be difficult for him to safeguard against philosophy's dangers. We must see if we can find some sort of way to prepare for philosophy that sidesteps this difficulty. We must see if there is a way to prevent the dangers of philosophy from ever arising.

Chapter 3

MYTH AND ARGUMENT AS *EPODE*

1 Introduction

Our aspiring philosopher has a problem. From Part One, he has more information about the dangers of philosophy, but it turns out that an especial danger comes from philosophy's bread and butter: argument. Although part of the advice from the *Republic* is that a young aspiring philosopher should avoid argument until he is older, as I pointed out, this will be difficult for our aspiring philosopher to do, and even if he does manage it, it will not guarantee his safety. For, as I also pointed out at the end of the previous chapter, argument is problematic largely because of the consequences of a lack of skill in argument, plus the difficulty in realizing when you have such a lack of skill. In order to become a philosopher, our young man will eventually have to brave the danger of argument with little concrete evidence that he is ready to do so.

I would like to introduce a way of talking about these corrupting activities: the dangers we have been talking about lie in rational inquiry. Let us think again about argument's leading to corruption. Taking the example from Chapter 1, and putting it into this new way of talking, we can say: corruption happens when a young man is presented with a contradiction through argument; he is puzzled by this contradiction, so begins to rationally inquire in order to solve his puzzlement; however, he does not have the proper skills for this inquiry to be fruitful, so he is unsuccessful. He winds up believing things he ought not to, disbelieving things he ought not to, and becoming corrupted.

I would like to talk about the lack of skill in argument in terms of rational inquiry because it makes clearer what kind of activity could side-step these dangers. We are in a position where we want to find an activity that can make a person more rational, more skilled in argument (i.e.,

better able to rationally inquire), without endangering them by premature use of rational inquiry. It would be ideal if we could find a way for our aspiring philosopher to become ready for rational inquiry without needing to practice inquiring rationally.[68] I will argue in this chapter that we can find such an activity. What's more, we can find it in an unlikely place: in Plato's discussion of magic.

This is an unlikely place to find it largely because of the stress Plato puts on the importance of rational inquiry. Plato, it is said, was a rationalist who paved the way for Western philosophy, eschewing old superstitions and promoting logical reasoning. He believed knowledge and truth are all-important, and that philosophy is the way to get at these. Magic, then, is not something typically associated with Plato. However, a close reader will note his use of magic terms across many dialogues and in a variety of contexts.[69] Some contexts show what we might expect: he is critical of magic or of magic-like things, for instance condemning rhetoricians and sophists as magicians who bewitch crowds. On the other hand, in some contexts, Plato puzzlingly seems to endorse magic, for instance recommending the use of *epodes* (charms) in education and psychological development. In this chapter I will look at these contexts and fill the hole that Plato scholarship, especially in the analytic tradition, has left by ignoring Plato's use of magic

[68] In the *Republic,* we also see that mathematics seems to be a way to safely prepare someone for philosophy. After all, that is the point of the Finger Passage's contradictions leading to education rather than corruption – to show how arithmetic is educational. How does arithmetic (and the geometry, etc.) prepare a person for philosophy? Well, Socrates describes how it makes a person turn more towards being. But it seems that mathematics also must somehow prepare a person's reasoning ability. After a person posits "one", for instance, he must do various calculations. This is, I think, a benefit and a detriment of mathematics. It is a benefit to have to inquire rationally in a prescribed way that limits the danger of corruption. But is a detriment that this still involves rational inquiry and is thus still corrupting (the youths and late-learners of the *Sophist* (251b-c) seem to become corrupted by the simple kind of contradiction described in the Finger Passage). Because we are asking youths to engage in a limited type of rational inquiry, what is to prevent them from extending this rational inquiry into its dangerous realm? For instance, once the youth has posited "the one," and had to reason in arithmetic, what is to stop him from asking "what is the one?"

[69] For example *epode, goeteuo, keleo*

terms. More than this, however, I will show that through ignoring this aspect of Plato's philosophy, we have developed an impoverished view of Plato's conception of how we can use reasoning to become more philosophical. I will show that through studying Plato's recommended use of *epodes*, we can see that there are ways to become more philosophical that do not involve rational inquiry.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. I will first say a bit more about argument and rational inquiry in Plato, providing a Basic View of how we are meant to use argument to become more rational, and also how rational inquiry plays an important part in Plato's philosophy. I will then turn to an investigation of *epodes* in Plato. Although it might seem an unlikely thing to lead to a discovery about Plato's use of arguments and reasoning, I will show that a careful account of the term *epode* should do just that. There is no satisfactory account of *epodes* in the scant literature that discusses them, so I will spend some time presenting my own account. I will show that *epodes* come in rational forms (arguments) and non-rational forms (myths), and that the parallel between these forms reveals that there are things that have rational content (arguments) that affect the rational part of the soul, but that do not work by asking us to engage in rational inquiry. I will suggest that this means we should expand our sense of what counts as rational use of argument in Plato, and that we have found a safe way for our aspiring philosopher to become more philosophical.

2 A Basic View of Argument and Reasoning

Now, let me describe what I will call the Basic View of Argument and Reasoning. This is meant to represent what is an implicit (and natural) understanding that Plato scholars have of

Plato's description of how arguments should be used to become more philosophical: we should use argument to engage in rational inquiry.[70] In other words, we become more philosophical when we are prompted to think, and we think by using arguments.[71] It is important to this view that when a person goes through an argument, or bit of reasoning, he really sees how the parts of the argument fit together and how it leads to the conclusion, activating the rational connections of the argument.

In this chapter, I am going to show that Plato thinks that sometimes argument should be used in a way that is not accounted for by this Basic View. In particular, I will show that Plato thinks that we should use arguments in a way that goes against these two main features of the Basic View, i.e. that the rational soul should use arguments in a way that does not involve inquiry and critical thinking, and that does not place particular import on the conclusions of the argument. Rather than activating the rational connections in argument, *epodes* work through rehearsing the rational connections.[72] But first, why does this Basic View exist?

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[70] The terms I use here English terms that will facilitate a discussion of how *epodes* can help us become more philosophical, and how some of them do it (the ones that are arguments) in a way that has not been recognized by Plato scholarship. They are not meant to correspond to specific Greek terms.

[71] In discussing this view, we should distinguish argument that we use in rational inquiry from argument that prompts us to rationally inquire. Importantly, only good argument should be *used* for rational inquiry, but good or bad argument can *prompt* us to rational inquiry (where the latter can be said to prompt the former). From my discussion of refutation and contradiction in Part One of this dissertation, we know that bad argument can play a role in prompting us to rationally inquire. So, for instance, if I am presented with a contradiction, it is possible that one (or both) sides of the argument is fallacious or uses false premises. The puzzlement that this contradiction inspires in me prompts me to rationally inquire into it. If I am skilled in argument, I can come up with my own argument to solve this contradiction – this is how I use argument to rationally inquire.

[72] Thank you to Michelle Kosch for suggesting this way of talking about the view.

2.1 The Basic View: Why We Have It

I should make it clear that I am going to argue that the Basic View does not completely account for how argument and reasoning works in Plato, not that it does not at all account for how argument and reasoning work in Plato. In fact, I think that the Basic View plays an important role in Plato's philosophy. We can see the Basic View at work, for instance, in the major methodologies that are represented in Plato's dialogues: *elenchus*, hypothesis, collection and division, and dialectic.[73] *Elenchus*, or refutation, involves revealing a contradiction in views through following arguments to their necessary conclusions. We are said to benefit from *elenchus* because it can rid us of false beliefs (e.g. *Gorgias* 470c, *Sophist* 230a-e), and it would not be able to serve this function if reason did not work as represented in the Basic View. Likewise, a dialectician needs to use reason to be able to give an account of a thing and to withstand objections and arguments against this account (e.g. *Republic* 534b-c). To do hypothesis one must be able to determine what things follow from a hypothesis and be able to question the hypothesis, and one must use reasoning and dialectic to divide kinds (*Sophist* 253d-254b). In all of these methods, we use reasoning and argument to think critically about a subject, premise, axiom, concept, etc. For these methods to work, we must be able to follow reasoned arguments and change our beliefs or come to new beliefs according to the conclusions we reach.

More than these methodologies, there are some often repeated phrases for which Plato's Socrates is famous, which also contribute to the Basic View: 'we must follow where the argument takes us' (for example *Crito* 48d-e, *Republic* 394d,), 'dialectic has to do with real

[73] Not necessarily distinct methods. Robinson (1953, 61-92) for instance famously suggests Plato uses "dialectic" to refer to any method he recommends rather than a distinct method. More recently, Benson, H. (2015) suggests dialectic is the method of hypothesis used correctly. However, I only mean that we can see the Basic View at work when Plato discusses methodology, where he refers to methodology with these terms.

inconsistency or consistency, not the mere appearance of these'; 'philosophic discussion involves evaluating what a person believes rather than what they say to win an argument or to avoid saying inconsistent things' (*Euthyphro* 14c, *Theaetetus* 154c-e, *Laches* 196b, *Meno* 83d, *Gorgias* 472a-c, 495a, *Protagoras* 331c-d, *Republic* 346a). Statements like these paint a picture of an inquiring, rational philosopher, who uses reason to evaluate his and others' beliefs, following arguments using logic. Reason allows us to distinguish bad arguments from good ones, and therefore to reach true conclusions. Considering these phrases of Socrates', as well as the major methodologies described in Plato's dialogues, it is easy to see how the Basic View of Argument and Reasoning became standard, and why it plays an important part in Plato's philosophy.

2.2 The Basic View: Non-Rational Education

Before I move on to the topic of *epodes*, I would like to present another part of Plato's philosophy: non-rational education. In particular, I would like to present the picture of non-rational education as Plato describes it in early education. In the *Republic* and the *Laws*, early education is described mostly in terms of censorship, and focuses on the development of the non-rational parts of the soul.[74] There are three well-known elements of this non-rational education: myth, music, and gym. Children must partake in gym not only for the development of their bodies, but for their character; they must be exposed to the proper kinds of music lest they become corrupted, and even myths, which one might suppose should be approached with a critical eye, Plato says should be limited to stories that show behaviour that can be directly copied by children. The early education of the *Republic* anticipates unthinking, uncritical

[74] This is an almost universal interpretation of early education in the *Republic.* See, for example, Jenkins (2015) for how education involving things like myth gym and music are non-rational (esp. 849-50). We can also see the Basic View of Argument and Reasoning at play. Jenkins goes on to argue that non-rational education is not used because youths are arational, but this is a debate that is tangential to the issues I am interested in for this paper.

children, and proposes ways to influence these children's behaviour without requiring them to rationally inquire.[75]

I present this picture of non-rational education here because it will serve as a contrast to the type of activity described in the Basic View and help illustrate the type of activity I will argue is revealed by studying *epodes* in Plato. When we consider non-rational education and the Basic View side-by-side, we can see that there are two distinct ways in which Plato says we can be educated:[76] in a rigid, non-rational, training-like way, where we are raised being exposed only to views that are good to have and trained to behave correctly, and in a liberal rational way, where we must question assumptions and beliefs and use argument to rationally inquire and make new discoveries. This, like the Basic View itself, is relatively uncontroversial.[77] These two types of education are thought to be divided along the soul: the non-rational education governed by the non-rational parts of the soul; the rational governed by the rational part of the soul.[78] I will argue

[75] Klein (1989) recognizes the difference between reason-centric philosophical education and rigid early education (239-240).

[76] Plato sometimes distinguishes these in terminology. Strictly speaking, in the *Republic* "education" (*paideia*) refers only to the process of teaching involving the rational soul (518c); shaping someone's character in a non-rational way is part of "raising" (*trepho*) this person. However, he is inconsistent with using this distinction.

[77] Julia Annas, for example, discusses problems she sees with the existence of these two very different Forms of education in her *An Introduction to Plato's* Republic (1981, esp. 87).

[78] This is an addition with which only some Plato scholars will agree, depending on the dialogues this basic view is meant to cover. Some scholars say that soul-parts are a development of Plato's middle and later dialogues, so should not be included in any Basic View of argument and reasoning in Plato. In fact, some would argue that the early, Socratic dialogues, do not even present Plato's views, but are Plato's recountings of Socrates' views, so a standard concept of anything in Plato cannot be given. I will not enter into the debate on the development of Plato's thought. I suggest that without the mention of the rational part of the soul, what I have described here are key elements in the basic view of argument and reasoning that could be considered standard for early and later dialogues even by the developmentalists' reckoning. I have decided to include the rational part of the soul in my reproduction of the basic view because I will be taking a psychology-heavy perspective on reason, and my theory of *epodes* will be rooted in Plato's psychology that can be found in dialogues such as the *Republic, Phaedrus,* and *Timaeus.* I will draw mainly on dialogues considered to be middle and later dialogues, namely the *Phaedo, Republic, Timaeus,* and *Laws.* However, one main text I will spend time discussing is from the *Crito,* which is considered to be an early dialogue. I will be treating this as unproblematic, and as though we can think of reason in this psychology-heavy way in this admittedly psychology-free dialogue as much as we can in, say, the *Republic.* I believe the parallels between the passages I discuss are strong enough that this should be convincing. I will, however, ultimately leave it

that this division is not as clear-cut as it first seems, and show there is a rigid training-like use of argument that is performed with the rational soul.

3 Epodes*: Magic Charms*

I will show this by investigating a word that Plato uses to describe these non-rational Forms of education and the type of rational education I'm interested in: *epode.*[79] Etymologically, and quite literally, the word indicates something sung over or against, and means an incantation, spell, or charm – so, magic. Magic has rarely been a focus of research by Plato scholars, especially in the analytic tradition.[80] This may be because the Basic View looms large in our picture of Plato as a philosopher, and we think magic must be objectionable to such a philosopher. Whatever the reason for this lack of serious treatment, the lack should be surprising, because Plato uses magic terms, especially "*epode*," across many dialogues and in a variety of contexts.

In this section I will look at these contexts and provide a comprehensive theory of *epodes* that is otherwise lacking in the literature. I will do this by showing that there are some general assumptions in the literature about Plato's use of magic terms that are inadequate, and filling in these inadequacies. Through explanation of my theory of *epodes*, I will show that the accepted

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up to the reader to decide on this issue. My view does not depend on this reading of the *Crito*, and could be limited to the middle and later dialogues, even though I personally do not believe it to be limited in this way.

[79] I have narrowed my discussion of magic to this single word because it brings out interesting cases of Plato recommending things he calls magical. I should point out that I do not think it is an accident that this is the word that is predominantly used in recommendations of magic (over other magical terms, say *kelesis*, which is otherwise often treated as synonymous). The etymology of this word suggests that it has to do with using words more than other magic terms do, and thus (see for discussion for example Lain-Entralgo (1958, esp. 50).

[80] There are four noteworthy works that discuss Plato and magic: Gellrich (1994), Belfiore (1980), de Romilly (1975), and Lain-Entralgo (1958). These four discuss magic directly rather than in passing.

picture of how reason and reasoning work in his philosophy – the Basic View – should be expanded.

Before I get into my theory of *epodes,* let me provide a basic picture of what an *epode* is. For an Ancient Greek, an *epode* is more or less what we would expect given the translation "incantation." For example, Plato talks of bewitching snakes and spiders with *epodes*, of midwives using *epodes* to induce labour, of *epodes* that have to do with priests and divination, of *epodes* that cure diseases, or harm others. [81] These examples are typical of magic at the time,[82] and generally have to do with medicine, religion, control, and/or protection. I will call these literal *epodes.* In this paper, I am not interested in these literal *epodes,* except as things to which we can compare the *epodes* I *am* interested in.

Let me introduce, then, a second group of passages that mention *epodes*: *Phaedrus* 267c-d, *Euthydemus* 289e-290a, and *Gorgias* 484a. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates describes a rhetorician's speech as an *epode,* and similarly, in the *Euthydemus* Socrates groups speech-making under the art of *epodes*, along with the bewitching (*kelesis*) of wild beasts, because of a speech's ability to bewitch crowds and juries. In the *Gorgias,* Callicles describes the law's ability to mold behaviour, saying that we enslave the young with *epodes* and witchcraft (*goeteuo*).

In this second group of passages, things that are not typically magical – rhetoric, speech-making, and laws – are described as magical. In this, we can see a metaphorical sense of *epode.* The literal *epodes* are the type already discussed. They are, as I put it before, typical examples of magic. In using a magic term to refer to these things that are typically non-magical, Plato is

[81] See Euthydemus 289e, Theaetetus 149c-d, Charmides 155e, Republic 364b, 426b, Symposium 202e-203a, and Laws 933d-e.
[82] For discussions of magic in Greek culture, see Faraone (1999); and Faraone and Obbink (1997, esp 108-110); Collins (2008); Gregory (2013).

suggesting they bear some resemblance to their magical counterparts.[83] However, these passages are all critical of these metaphorical *epodes*. For example, the *Phaedrus* argues that rhetoricians are bad because they make speeches on topics about which they do not know the truth. Given Plato's commitment to rational philosophy, that he criticizes things he calls *epodes* is not too surprising. In fact, it is all too easy to assume that he is heaping on the criticism by calling these things magic. Therefore, let me introduce a third set of passages.

In *Charmides* 157a-b, *Phaedo* 77e-78a and 114d, *Republic* 608a, and *Laws* 887c-d and 903a-b, *epodes* take the form of myths and arguments. Here is the connection between the rational and the non-rational that will ultimately lead to my suggestion that we broaden our conception of how we ought to use argument, according to Plato. In these passages, Plato recommends the use of these *epodes*. Therefore, these are the passages that need explanation and reconciling with Plato's rationalist philosophy. What is Plato getting at by referring to myth and argument as *epode*? What similarity is this metaphor supposed to draw our attention to? As I have said, there are very few things written about magic in Plato, and fewer still that focus on recommended magic specifically.[84] However, likely because magical terms are such common occurrences and at times difficult to ignore completely, it is not uncommon for authors to make passing comments about what Plato must mean by using them. I have gathered what little explicit discussion there is on the subject along with the assumptions from related literature, and sorted

[83] Most scholars assume (and occasionally argue) that these and similar passages use magic terms metaphorically. Even the few scholars that discuss magic in Plato take there to be a metaphorical sense of magic terms. An exception is Gellrich (1994, esp. 284), who argues against the metaphorical sense she sees in Lain-Entralgo (1958) and de Romilly (1974). Gellrich takes issue with interpretations that rely on a metaphorical/non-metaphorical distinction because she sees scholars as denying that there is a deep similarity between the two. I try to preserve a similarity in my own interpretation.

[84] For example de Romilly (1974) and Gellrich (1994), two of the few treatments of magic in Plato, both focus on analyzing Socrates' method because Socrates is called a magician.

them into two main explanations. Authors usually say that Plato means, by referring to these things as *epodes,* that they are:

1) especially persuasive[85]
2) emotional[86]

Note that these two explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, I might think that *epodes* are especially persuasive because they are emotional, and endorse both (1) and (2). I might, alternatively, think that they are especially persuasive because they are logical,[87] and endorse (1) and not (2). However, generally scholars focus on one or the other as an explanation of what makes these things magic-like.

Although I want to ultimately reject these explanations, there are some good *prima facie* reasons for believing they can account for Plato's use of the word '*epode.'* (1), *epodes* are especially persuasive, seems plausible when we look at the second group of passages above, about speech-making, rhetoric, and laws. In the *Phaedrus,* for example, you might think that the rhetoricians' speeches are like *epodes* for juries and crowds because they are so persuasive that

[85] For example see Most, G. (1999, 18), Collobert (2012, 107), Brisson (1998, 75-85), Dorion (2012, 434), de Rommilly (1975), Lain-Entralgo (1958). Though Brisson does say, in passing, "[m]yth aims to modify human behavior not through education strictly speaking but through imitation, which makes it akin to magic and incantation" (10), he does not seem to follow this up anywhere, and does not mention epodes, magic, or incantations in his chapter on imitation, but only in his chapter on persuasion.

[86]For example, Gellrich (1994), Belfiore (1980, 131, 134-5), Moline (1981). de Romilly (1975), might plausibly also be included in this group. She focuses on Socrates, recognizing a rational and irrational aspect of his magic. She says the irrational is the divine inspiration Socrates receives (his daemon), and the rational is the unyielding logic he uses (36-7). The irrational, divine, is often associated with irrational emotions, and although this aspect is not stressed in de Romilly's work, it is important to note that she does not focus on the persuasive aspect alone to describe why Socrates' work is like magic. Lain-Entralgo might also plausibly fit into this group as well, but his account is a bit unclear. He claims *epodes* are 'rationalized' in Plato, where 'rationalized' means something like 'having to do with beliefs.' However, he leaves the rational part of the soul out of his account altogether, and claims *epodes* function on the lower parts of the soul (122). While the exact picture is unclear, it seems like his view fits into both groups, with stress on the first.

[87] This is de Romilly (1974)'s explanation of Socrates' magic.

the listeners cannot help but be convinced. This would provide some similarity to the non-metaphorical cases of *epode*, where diseases and snakes and such, though not controllable by the average person, are forced to bend to the will of the magician. (2), *epodes* are emotional, seems plausible when we look at the passages where myths are said to be *epodes*, for example *Laws* 887c-d and 903a-b. The plausibility of this option relies in part on a theory of myths in which myths are emotional. It also relies on assumptions[88] about emotions in Plato where emotions are irrational, and symbolic or imitative. These assumptions make it clearer how (2) might explain how the metaphorical *epode* is like the non-metaphorical *epode*. Magic often has a symbolic or imitative aspect,[89] and if I focus on myth as *epode*, I will note that these metaphorical *epodes* have this same feature.

However, there are a couple of quick reasons to think that these assumptions are incorrect, or at least incomplete. Neither explanation accounts for all types of *epodes.*

1) *Epodes* sometimes need to be repeated

In the *Phaedo*, for instance, we need to repeat the *epode* every day. If *epodes* were especially persuasive, presumably they would be able to convince the person right away. So why would an *epode* need to be repeated?[90]

2) *Epodes* are sometimes arguments

[88] I will not argue for these assumptions, but only point out that they are fairly common ones, and can explain why scholars have thought this is what Plato is referring to when using magic terms when referring to myth.
[89] See for example Gellrich (1994, 296).
[90] In fact, I think that something like this first explanation is correct. But 'persuasive' is perhaps the wrong word. Perhaps 'have an effect on something that cannot control that effect.' I will discuss this later.

For example, the *epode* that Socrates recommends in the *Republic* is an argument (608a). If some *epodes* are arguments, why think they are emotional? These reasons for disputing assumptions might seem a bit quick. However, they can be this quick because they counter assumptions more than theories.[91] Part of what I am trying to do in this paper is fill in a hole the literature. Framing the question as I do shows the inadequacy of how *epodes* have been treated in the past.

4 New Theory of Epodes

Having suggested that existing explanations of why Plato calls arguments and myths *epodes* are unsatisfying, let me turn to my own alternative. It has two parts. The first part connects metaphorical and non-metaphorical *epodes*, accounting for what aspect of real magic Plato is picking out when he refers to these metaphorical *epodes* as *epodes*. The second part explains how this works in the case of the metaphorical *epodes* specifically.

1) Myth and argument are *epodes* because they have non-voluntary effects in addition to the conveyance of meaning.

[91] I should here mention the four noteworthy exceptions I mentioned above (Gellrich (1994), Belfiore (1980), de Romilly (1975), and Lain-Entralgo (1958)). Although these discuss magic and Plato in ways that go beyond assumptions, they can still be grouped into the two explanations I have listed above, and the reasons I have given for thinking they are inadequate apply, though they do miss out on the subtleties of these theories. Here are a few further reasons to think that the theories presented in this papers are inadequate. de Rommilly (1975) says that Socrates' magic is his 'unyielding logic' (36-7), which places her in category (1). This falls prey to my criticism of that category. In addition, this description of Socrates' magic cannot account for the cases where myths are called *epodes* because myths are uncontroversially not characterized by unyielding logic. Belfiore (1980) claims that *epodes* are emotional in nature (134), though she does have a separate category of magic to account for argument, saying *elenchus* is magical in nature (130-4). She admits that sometimes argument has this emotional affect, but does not seem to recognize any tension in this, and does not spell out how this is supposed to work. Moreover, if *elenchus* and *epode* are two distinct types of magic Socrates performs, what makes the difference between argument (in the case of *elenchus*) and argument (in the case of *epode*) function differently? At the very least, there is work to be done to flesh out this view. Lain-Entralgo (1958) stresses the persuasive aspect of *epode*, but says that the workings of the persuasive word-*epode* are not reducible to strict reasoning (121). Exactly how this works Lain-Entralgo does not say. This is the direction I will go in my own account. My account differs from Lain-Entralgo's in that Lain-Entralgo sees *epode* only functioning on the lower parts of the soul (122). Finally, Gellrich (1994) says that magic and *epode* are linked to eros and to the body, and even when *epode* is dialectic, it participates by its "very nature in the nonrational soul" (301). I will leave my theory as an alternative to Gellrich's.

Myths and arguments are, importantly, made up of words. This is also true of non-metaphorical e*podes,* likely because of the etymology of the term.[92] We can see this stressed in the *Charmides,* where Socrates distinguishes two parts of a cure for headaches: a leaf to treat the body, and an *epode,* made of fine words,[93] to treat the soul (155c-157a). This is part of what connects these metaphorical *epodes* to the non-metaphorical *epodes*, like those that can bewitch snakes or diseases: they are all made of words.

Being made of words, however, is not enough to explain the similarity between the metaphorical and non-metaphorical *epodes* – after all, many things that are not *epodes* are made of words. So what distinguishes an *epode* from, say, a regular indicative statement? Well, one main use of words is to convey meaning.[94] When I hear an indicative statement, I can understand what is indicated by it, and I can choose to affirm or deny it. With an imperative statement, the meaning is conveyed and I can choose to obey or not. In the case of *epodes,* the effect is not a voluntary one based on the meaning, like affirming, denying, and obeying are. What happens in the magical case is that the magician controls the snake, disease, etc. by words. The meaning of the words used are important,[95] but the effect they have are not under the control of the thing being affected by the *epode.* However, I already said that being especially persuasive is not an adequate explanation of how myth and arguments are *epodes*, so I do not mean to say that myth and argument work as *epodes* because they convey meaning and the

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[92] See Lain-Entralgo (1958, 32-108, esp. 51)

[93] in fact, the word used is logos, so, given the wide range of translations possible for that word, could mean 'argument.' However, I believe "word" is the better translation. See next chapter for detailed interpretation of the *Charmides.*

[94] There are, of course, other things that can contribute to meaning, for example context. It is important to me only that words are an important aspect of meaning.

[95]The words of *epodes* usually have something to do with the desired effect. So you would not try to *epode* a snake by saying 'Do whatever you want," but might by saying "obey me."

person cannot help but believe or comply with this meaning. While it is true that the target of the *epode* cannot help but be affected by it, what is important to realize is that the proper subject of the *epode* in these metaphorical cases are not the person as a whole, but their soul-parts. The soul-parts are affected by myth and argument as *epode* in a non-voluntary way.

Thus, here is the second part of my theory of *epodes,* which further explains how myth and argument in particular work:

2) Myth and argument are *epodes* because they affect the configuration of the soul

Behind this aspect of metaphorical *epode* there lies several important claims about Plato's psychology that I will spend some time here explaining. To begin, there are some preliminary claims that are basic to Plato's psychology, but nevertheless deserve a quick overview.

4.1 New Theory of Epodes*: Background*

Plato conceives of the soul as having parts or elements. The most famous version of this theory comes from the *Republic,* where Socrates introduces the tripartite soul, divided into reasoning, spirited, and appetitive parts. There are debates about whether Plato endorses a tripartite soul in all dialogues, whether it is an innovation of the *Republic,* or merely first made explicit there, and whether it is something abandoned in later dialogues.[96] However, most agree that even if the tripartite soul is not a continuous feature of Plato's psychology, some type of division of soul is: we can at least divide the soul into rational and non-rational parts, whether these are the only two parts of the soul, or whether the non-rational can further be divided into spirited and appetitive parts. I will use this way of speaking to stress that my view does not

[96] I'm not committed to there being a tripartite soul in all of Plato's dialogues. For example, I'm not arguing that Plato still has a tripartite soul in mind in the Laws, though I believe that it is open that he does

depend on the debate about the tripartite soul.[97] There are two aspects through which we can understand how reason works, an epistemological one and a psychological one. In the epistemology aspect, we aim for knowledge, which will specifically be knowledge of the Forms, or eternal realities and truths. In the psychology aspect, we use the rational part of our soul, which is responsible for getting at these realities and truths, and reason and calculation are the activities of the rational part of the soul.

These soul-parts can be in different arrangements or relations to one another, creating different configurations of the soul. Moreover, there are more and less ideal states of the soul, depending on these configurations. The *Republic* describes five basic categories of soul-configurations (corresponding to five major state-configurations), going from best to worst: aristocratic, timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical.[98] This is, again, a well-known aspect of Plato's psychology. It would be hard to miss in the *Republic,* for instance, where virtues are described in these terms several times throughout the dialogue. This dialogue also provides us with five basic and where there is even an entire book (VIII) that describes the corrupting of the soul into more and more inferior configurations.

In an analogy that stretches across the entire dialogue, the soul is likened to a city, where the reasoning part is like the city's guardians – who turn out to be philosopher rulers – the spirited part is like these guardians' militaristic auxiliaries, and the appetitive part is like the city's farmers and craftsmen (esp. 428aff). There are four virtues that are described in terms of

[97] Though I will, when discussing the *Republic* in particular, still mention the spirited and appetitive parts so that I remain faithful to the descriptions there.

[98] I call these categories because I take it that these types of souls are on a continuum of good to bad configurations. So, for example, it is possible for two individuals to be considered to have oligarchic souls, but one is closer to being democratic, while the other is closer to being timocratic. Any change, within a broad category or between broad categories, I want to consider an affect on the configuration of the soul.

soul-parts. Wisdom, we are told, lies in the ruling part alone, as courage lies in the auxiliary class. Temperance and justice both involve relations of parts: temperance is where each part agrees that the ruling class should in fact rule, and justice is each part performing its proper role. These virtues are interrelated and difficult to conceptually separate. The important take-home message from the discussion of virtue is that a properly arranged, virtuous city, will have competent rulers in charge, with strong auxiliaries as their allies, both controlling the workers, and with everyone agreeing that this is the way it should be. Similarly, a virtuous soul will have a wise reasoning part in charge, with a courageous spirit as its ally, both controlling the appetites (esp. 441e). Ideal soul-configuration involves a hierarchy of parts, where the rational part is in charge of the non-rational parts.

This notion of hierarchy of parts in soul-configuration is not limited to the *Republic.* It can also be found in the *Phaedrus*, where the soul is likened to a chariot, with a rider (reason), in charge of a good horse (spirit) and a bad horse (appetite) (246aff); and the *Timaeus*, where, in Timaeus' discussion of the body's organs and their associated soul-parts (69b-71e, 90a-d), the reasoning part of the soul is placed in the head, the spirited in the heart, and the appetitive in the stomach, and, in a description reminiscent of the *Republic*, the non-rational parts are subservient to the rational, reason is in charge, with spirit helping to control the appetites. When a person is ruled by his non-rational soul, he cannot be just, but when his rational soul rules, he is just (42a-b)[99]

[99] The elements of the non rational soul are mentioned at 42a-b, where this statement about justice comes from. These elements are only identified as elements of the non rational soul later, at 69d. These elements include: pleasure, pain, fear, anger, sensations. Also important to note is that this definition of justice is the one given in the Republic.

In the *Timaeus,* not only do we see a repetition of the hierarchy notion of soul-configuration, but we are also told that there must be harmony within parts.[100] There we see a quite different description of the soul than the city analogy from the *Republic:* circles.[101] The reasoning part of the soul in particular is given a long description in terms of circles, orbiting around in an orderly fashion when properly functioning, but disorderly when not (esp. 43a-44d). Moreover, each of the three parts of the soul has its own proper motion (89e), just like in the *Republic* each part has its own function. These motions are able to affect one another. For example, when we are born, and throughout childhood, the influx of sensations (part of the non-rational soul (69d)) can put the rational soul in disarray (43b-44c). The circles of the rational soul don't revolve in an orderly fashion, but are twisted, upside-down and backwards (43d-e). With age and education, a person can become rational and avoid ignorance (44b-c). [102]

So, the soul can be in different configurations, where the ideal configuration involves the rational part being in charge of the non-rational parts, and each part performing its proper function.

4.2 New Theory of Epodes*: Principle of Exercise*

Now that we know what ideal and a non-ideal configurations look like, let us look at how one can change these configurations. I will continue to use the images of the soul from the *Republic* and the *Timaeus.* In both dialogues, we are said to start off with sub-optimal

[100] This is parallel to wisdom and courage in the *Republic,* which are located within parts instead of in the relation between them.
[101] Unlike the Republic's city imagery, the circles imagery seems to be meant as a description rather than an analogy for the structure of a soul. It is a bit more difficult to get an exact picture of what the circles soul is meant to look like, but it will still be helpful to keep this image as well as the city image in mind when thinking about configurations of the soul.
[102] Like Book VII of the Republic, where we are given a curriculum and the ages at which each subject must be studied.

configurations at birth. Throughout our lives, we can make things worse or better. The principle behind how change occurs is put succinctly in the *Timaeus:* when a part of the soul is exercised, it becomes strong, when it is not, is becomes weak (89e). Let us call this the Principle of Exercise. This principle means, given that we want a configuration where the rational part is in charge and the non-rational subservient, there are two things we must do: we must 1) not exercise the non-rational too much, and 2) exercise the rational part of the soul. This principle is one whose import has not been recognized in Plato scholarship. This is despite the fact that examples of it are well-known. Moreover, it is this principle, in conjunction with my theory of *epodes,* that reveals that scholars have conceived of rationality in a limited way.

I will look at the first part of the Principle of Exercise first. The example provided in the *Timaeus* is that if we spend our time being contentious (contentiousness is associated with the spirited part of the soul) and indulging our appetites (an activity associated with the appetitive part), we reinforce the non-rational parts of the soul (90b). An example that should be familiar from the *Republic* comes from the discussion of poetry. In Books 3 and 10 Socrates discusses poetry and whether it should be allowed in the ideal state. What is dangerous about poetry, it turns out, is that it exercises the non-rational parts of the soul. For example, when we hear a poem of someone lamenting the loss of his son, we feel pleasure in sympathetically lamenting (605c). However, this lamenting is contrary to reason, and a reasonable person would not put on a display at the loss of his son (387c-388e; 605d). When we sympathetically lament, this exercises the non-rational part of the soul, putting the non-rational part in charge (605b) and the rational part subservient to it (606a). We become the types of people who will lament not only while listening to poetry or watching tragedy, but also in our own lives (606b). By practicing lamenting, we change the configuration of our souls for the worse, and make our rational parts

subservient to our non-rational. We must not exercise the non-rational parts of our soul too much if we want to have ideal soul-configuration.

Note that I have been saying that we should not exercise the non-rational part *too much*, rather than *at all*. You might think that it would be easiest to get the right configuration by exercising the rational part only, keeping the non-rational parts as weak as possible. However, this is not the case. Let me explain the reasoning behind this. The spirited part should indeed be subservient to the reasoning part, but it also must be useful in helping contain the appetitive part. Similarly, the appetitive part should indeed be subservient to both the spirited and the rational, but it is also in control of certain drives that are essential for life (hunger, for instance).[103] These non-rational parts of the soul, then, must be strong enough to perform their functions. In determining to what extent we should exercise these parts of the soul, we must consider an important distinction: each soul-part has inclinations that are in accordance with reason, and ones contrary to reason. The soul parts must be able to perform their functions that are in accordance with reason. For example, lamentation is under the governance of the appetitive part of the soul and is against reason, so should not be exercised. Hunger for simple foods is also under the governance of the appetitive part of the soul, but is in accordance with reason, so can be exercised.[104] Plato sometimes talks about the inclinations and behaviors that are contrary to reason as emerging when that part of the soul is too strong. So, a person will lament their losses when their appetitive part is too strong. Likewise, courage and contentiousness are under the governance of the spirited part of the soul, but being contentious is against reason, and happens

[103] Starving our appetites, though, is usually not sustainable. Asceticism, rather like yo-yo dieting, leads to the appetites coming back with a vengeance: Socrates suggests neither starving nor indulging the appetites (571d-e).
[104] I take it this is another way we can distinguish necessary and unnecessary desires (558dff)

when someone is too spirited, and courage is in accordance with reason, and happens when someone is just spirited enough (439a-430c). It would be against reason to try to rid ourselves of hunger and courage, even though non-rational parts of the soul are responsible for these. So we should not think that we can bring about the right configuration by simply starving the lower parts so that the rational part can flourish. There is a careful balance between the parts within the hierarchy that must be achieved.

This caveat is best exemplified by the well-known example of gym. Gym and music are activities that are frequently mentioned as ones that together create a good soul-configuration, in both the *Timaeus* and the *Republic* (*Republic* 410c-411e, 441c-2a, 591c-d; *Timaeus* 47c-e, 87c-9a).[105] Gym exercises not only the body, but also the spirited part of the soul, and music exercises the rational part of the soul. Together, they can make a person the perfect combination of courageous, through gym, and gentle, through music. However, either activity in excess can lead to a non-ideal configuration: too much gym without music to balance it out can make a person hard and contentious; too much music without gym can make a person weak and soft.

The second part of the Principle of Exercise is left: we must exercise the part of the soul that should be in charge. Then, predictably, given what we know about what an ideal soul-configuration looks like, we must exercise the rational part of the soul. In the *Timaeus*, we are told that if we are eager for learning and true thoughts, then the rational part becomes strong, its revolutions become straightened, and it can be in charge (90b-d). Similarly, in the *Republic*, we are told that we can rouse the rational part of the soul by going over fine arguments and

[105] The Republic stresses that gym is not only for the body, as is usually supposed, but for the soul as well (410c). The Timaeus stresses the importance of gym for the body. However, the Timaeus also stresses the connection between the state of the body and the state of the soul (e.g. 87c-9a), so this shift in stress does not necessarily indicate a shift in doctrine.

speculations (571d). The Principle of Exercise, then, gives us an idea of how we are meant to ensure an ideal soul-configuration. We must 1) not exercise the non-rational part of the soul too much (and always in accordance with reason), and 2) exercise the rational part of the soul. From the examples of this Principle, we can see that to exercise a soul-part is to do an activity that uses that soul-part.

5 Analysis of Passages in Terms of the New Theory

Let us turn our attention back to *epodes*. Recall that the two types of recommended *epode* are myth and argument, and that, in my theory of *epodes,* what is particular about these recommended kinds is that they change the configuration of the soul for the better. When we consider the Principle of Exercise, it is easy to flesh out how exactly this might work: using myth as *epode* will satisfy the first part of the Principle of Exercise, and using argument as *epode* will satisfy the second. Let us look again at the passages under consideration (from the *Phaedo*, *Laws*, *Crito*, and *Republic*). I will take them in pairs, the first pair of passages are about myth,[106] the second, about argument. There are three elements that can be found in all of these passages: 1) the problem that needs to be fixed, 2) the solution to the problem, and 3) the effect of the solution. These are elements that should seem obvious from a surface reading of the text. Something not obvious from a surface reading, but which I hope will be clear given the previous discussion of my theory, and which I will explain in detail below, is that these elements can be

[106] I have left out a group of passages in the *Laws* II that describe myths, songs, and dances as things that need to be used as *epodes*. I have left them out because the discussion is left at the general level, and I wanted to focus on passages where we are given specific examples of *epodes* that we can examine. These *epodes* of *Laws* II are primarily targeted to children, and are meant to ensure children grow up to be good citizens. They will work in the way I describe myths working as *epode* (that they ought to be used to shape soul-configuration through affecting the non-rational parts of the soul.) See for discussion, for example Morrow (1953, esp. 238-240), Welton (1996), and Helmig (2003, esp. 77). For discussion of early education in the *Laws* (but without mention of *epodes)*, see for example Stalley (1983).

described in terms of my theory of *epodes*: 1) improper soul-configuration, 2) *epode*, 3) a) exercise appropriate soul-parts, b) gain proper soul-configuration.

For example, in the *Phaedo*, Socrates' interlocutors are afraid of death, and the myth Socrates presents is intended to be an *epode* that will generate courage.[107] In this way, myth and gym, though quite different in appearance – listening to stories is different from lifting weights or wrestling – works the same way, strengthening the non-rational soul in a way that is in accordance with reason. And all the myths I am interested in, ones which are recommended as *epodes* exercise the non-rational soul *in accordance with reason* (e.g. *Phaedo* 77e-78a, 114d, and *Laws* 887c-d, 903a-b). We can therefore differentiate myth and tragedy, despite their similar appearance. While both present stories, and could conceivably fit under the term *muthoi* (myth) – tragedy, exercises the non-rational soul in a way contrary to reason, whereas myth, in its recommended form, exercises the non-rational soul in accordance with reason.

5.1 First Pair: Myth

a. *Phaedo*[108]

i. 77e-78a: "Cebes laughed and said: Assuming that we were afraid [that the soul does not persist after death], Socrates, try to change our minds, or rather do not assume that we were afraid, but perhaps there is a child (*pais*) in us who has these fears; try to persuade him not to fear death like a bogey. You should, said Socrates, sing a charm over him every day until you have charmed away his fears."

[107] This explanation is similar to the alternative explanation I rejected above (#2, *epodes* are emotional). However, the fact that these *epodes* affect the non-rational soul is not due to their being *epodes*, but to their being myths. Therefore #2 is still inadequate in describing why Plato chooses to call these things *epodes*.

[108] Trans. G.M.A. Grube

ii. 114d: "[…] a man should repeat this to himself as if it were an incantation [charm], which is why I have been prolonging my tale (*muthos*)."

b. *Laws*[109]

i. X 887c-d: "one inevitably gets irritable and annoyed with these people who have put us to the trouble, and continue to put us to the trouble, of composing these explanations. If only they believed the stories (*muthos*) which they had as babes (*pais*) and sucklings from their nurses and mothers! These almost literally 'charming' stories were told partly for amusement, partly in full earnest"

ii. X 903a-b: "our thesis (*logos*) has forced him to admit he was wrong. But I still think we need to find a form of words (*muthos*) to *charm* him into agreement."

My interpretation, which I will present in detail below, is represented in the following table:

Table 1 Features of Passages Showing Myth as *Epode*

		Theory of *epodes*	**Evidence**	
			Phaedo	***Laws***
Problem		Improper configuration of the soul	Fear of death	Impiety
Goal	**short-term**	Exercise appropriate parts of soul	Courage about life after death	believe gods care about us
	long-term	Proper configuration of the soul	virtue	
Solution		Myth	Myth about the afterlife	

[109] Trans. Trevor J. Saunders

Let me go through each of the three main elements in turn, showing how the specifics of the dialogue provide evidence for interpreting these passaged according to my theory of *epode*.

1) Problem: improper configuration of the soul

In both dialogues, there is a specific problem that the introduction of myth is meant to address. In the *Phaedo,* the problem is the fear of death, in the *Laws,* it is the belief that the gods do not care about us. Both of these problems show an inferior configuration of the soul. We are told that the impious man is concerned with pleasure (888a), and his impious beliefs allow him to justify doing injustice (885d-e).[110] This indicates that the soul is configured with the appetitive part in charge, and that the impious man performs actions contrary to reason. In the *Phaedo*, Simmias and Cebes are afraid that our souls fly away and we cease to exist after the death of our bodies (77b). Their fear suggests that their spirited souls are too weak (remember: courage comes from the proper configuration of the spirited part of the soul), so cannot properly aid the reasoning part. The problems, then, that are meant to be addressed by the myths of these dialogues can be analyzed in terms of inferior configurations of the soul.

2) Goal: changing the configuration of the soul

The general goal of the myth is to change the configuration of the soul of the listeners. This general goal can be analyzed into a short-term goal and long-term goal: the short-term,

[110] There are three impious beliefs the impious man might hold: he might believe 1) the gods do not exist, 2) they do exist, but they don't care about us, or 3) they do exist, but are easily bribed (885b). We are told that the impious man is one who has a greed for pleasure (888a), and it is these beliefs that allow him to pursue these pleasures; with these beliefs, a man can pursue pleasures without fear of retribution from the gods. For example, if the gods exist but are easy to bribe, the impious man can simply make up for any injustice he might perform in his pursuit of pleasure after the fact (885d-e).

immediate goal is to exercise the appropriate parts of the soul; the long-term goal is to achieve the proper configuration of the soul. According to my theory of *epodes,* because these passages are about myth, the exercise is of non-rational parts of the soul. Part of this is because myths are imagistic, and therefore appealing to the appetitive part of the soul. However, this alone does not account for how the myths in these passages help solve improper soul-configuration. If this was the only way myths exercised non-rational parts of the soul, then they would strengthen the appetitive part, promoting improper soul-configuration instead of correcting it. Instead, the myth must be able to exercise non-rational parts of the soul in accordance with reason. In the *Phaedo,* the evidence of this is the myth's ability to encourage courage about life after death, and in the *Laws,* it is its ability to produce beliefs that the gods care about us. In the *Phaedo,* the language used is already non-rational – fear and courage, which, as we saw in the preliminary discussion of my theory of *epodes*, are under the purview of the spirited part of the soul. Courage is in accordance with reason, and therefore the myth's ability to produce courage exercises the soul in the appropriate way.

Evidence from the *Laws* is a bit less clear-cut, but nevertheless illustrates that the goal of the myth is to exercise the non-rational part of the soul. We saw that the improper configuration in the *Laws* is a non-rational emphasis on pleasure, or the appetitive part of the soul. However, the myth does not target the appetitive part of the soul alone in order to fix this. The impious man will do injustice because he believes he can get away with it. He thinks the gods do not care about humans, so he does not fear retribution. The myth suggests that this is not the case, but rather that the gods punish those who perform injustice once they die. There are two plausible (not mutually exclusive) stories about how this works. Hearing about the god's disapproval of his actions and about his potential punishment, the impious man might feel ashamed of his unjust

actions, or he might fear future retribution for them. Shame and fear are under the purview of the spirited part of the soul, so the myth in the *Laws* also exercises this part so that it can be a better ally to reason.[111] In both dialogues, then, myth exercises the spirited part of the soul, making a person more courageous in the *Phaedo*, and more pious in the *Laws.*

In addition to these short-term goals, both passages stress rather ambitious but ambiguous long-term goals. In the *Laws,* the Athenian says that without believing the main story of the myth, "no one will ever catch so much as a glimmer of the truth or be able to offer a reasoned account (*logos*) of happiness or misery in life." (905b-c).[112] In the *Phaedo,* Socrates says about the myth, "but that this or something like it is true concerning our souls and their abodes, since the soul is shown to be immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe; for the venture is well worth while" (114d).[113] I have shortened these long-term goals to "virtue" on the table. That the gods care about us and that our soul persists after death are key components of recognizing that we have to be courageous, just, temperate, etc. This virtuous way of living is the long-term goal of both dialogues.[114] This might seem a bit surprising if we think of these passages narrowly, as providing myths tailored to specific problems.

[111] For this notion of the spirited part of the soul see the *Phaedrus.*
[112] Trans. Trevor J. Saunders
[113] Trans. G.M.A. Grube
[114] Virtue, or a virtuous way of living, depending on the capacities of the individual, or how ambitiously we think of the goals of these myths (where a virtuous way of living is a less ambitious goal than virtue). The myth alone, presumably, cannot allow a person to gain virtue. The result of the myths is a more virtuous way of living, specifically with respect to courage or piety in these two dialogues. The long-term result is other related virtuous ways of living, for example with respect to justice. Eventually, the even-longer-term goal (that may require more myths, or other types of exercise) is to produce true virtue.

3) Solution: Myth

In both dialogues, the solution to the problem is myth. Moreover, both myths are eschatological myths, a common type of myth in Plato that describes life after death. [115] They present roughly the same story: the soul persists after death, and good souls are in some way rewarded, but bad souls corrected or punished. There are, of course, some details that differ; for example, the *Phaedo* provides an elaborate geography that is missing in the *Laws.* However, the details are unimportant trappings. Indeed, in the *Phaedo,* Socrates suggests the details may even be false, saying, "[n]ow it would not be fitting for a man of sense to maintain that all this is just as I have described it, but that this or something like it is true concerning our souls and their abodes, since the soul is shown to be immortal, I think he may properly and worthily venture to believe" (114d).[116] The basic story, which is shared by the *Phaedo* and the *Laws,* is important, but the details, which differ, is not. The solution to these problems, then, is myth, particularly myths with the same content.

Let me point to three significant features that are brought to light by this analysis: 1) the specific problems are different, 2) the myths are same, and 3) the long-term goals are the same and broad. These three features are significant because without my theory of *epodes* as mechanical soul exercise, they might, together, paint an odd picture. That the same method produces the same broad result might in itself seem fine, but when we consider that the myths are specifically geared towards different problems (fearing death and not fearing the gods), seems odd – an eschatological myth where people get their just desserts would seem a strange cure-all, if not for my theory. With my theory of *epodes,* which says that myths as *epodes* exercise the

[115] Also found in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic,* for example
[116] Trans. G.M.A. Grube

soul in a way that will instill a proper soul-configuration, according to the Principle of Exercise, we can make sense of similarity of these myths. This basic myth is one that exercises proper soul-configuration. Fear of death and lack of fear of the gods are problems in themselves, but their significance is that they are evidence of a deeper problem: improper soul-configuration. The same myth can solve what seem like different problems because the different problems are in fact two symptoms of the same problem. This is only brought to light through my theory of *epodes.*[117]

[117] But there is an alternative reading of the *Phaedo*: the *epode* in the *Phaedo* mentioned at 78a is not the same one mentioned at 114d, and the one at 78a is the argument that directly follows it, not the myth as I have said it is. What's more, the first *epode* is meant to allay fear of death, but the second *epode* is about living virtuously (instead of the myth having a short-term goal of allaying fear of death, and a long-term one about living virtuously). (I would like to thank Charles Brittain for bringing this reading of the *Phaedo* to my attention). The following is an explanation of why I think it is wrong to read the *Phaedo* this way.

Here are the important stages of the passage: **1)** Simmias says that it has not yet been shown (ἀποδεδεῖχθαι) that the soul persists after death, and Cebes agrees (77a-b), **2)** Socrates explains how they've really already proved the existence of the soul after death (77c-d), **3)** Socrates concedes that Simmias and Cebes would like to discuss the topic further (ὅμως δέ μοι δοκεῖς σύ τε καὶ Σιμμίας ἡδέως ἂν καὶ τοῦτον διαπραγματεύσασθαι τὸν λόγον ἔτι μᾶλλον) (77d), **4)** Socrates suggests the reason they're not convinced is because they have a childish fear that the soul scatters after death (77d-e), **5)** Cebes tells Socrates to assume they do have that fear, and asks socrates to try to convince them not to, then alters his statement slightly to ask Socrates to assume there is a child within them who has that fear (77e), **6)** Socrates says they must sing charms to the child until his fear is gone, **7)** Cebes asks where they will find someone to sing charms once Socrates is dead (78a), **8)** Socrates reassures Cebes that Greece is a big place, and they can look around, and look amongst themselves to find someone (and they should, because it's really important) (78a), **9)** Cebes says they will, and asks to return to the discussion (ὅθεν δὲ ἀπελίπομεν ἐπανέλθωμεν) (78a-b), **10)** Socrates gives an argument for the persistence of the soul after death, Simmias and Cebes raise objections, and Socrates responds to these objections (78b-107a), **11)** Simmias and Cebes say the argument is convincing, but Simmias still has some misgivings (107a-b), **12)** Socrates provides the myth (107b-114c), **13)** Socrates reveals the myth is the *epode* (114c-d)

The first crucial stage here, I take it, is (9), where Cebes says, "but let us return to where we left off." This sounds like something someone would say after an aside. According to my reading, this makes perfect sense, because the discussion of *epode* is an aside that is only returned to when the myth begins. Under the objection, the aside must be something else. Most plausibly, the aside under this alternative reading is Cebes' question about where to find someone who can give an *epode* once Socrates is dead. This would then be a rather short aside, but nevertheless consistent with Cebes wanting to return to the point at hand. In order to determine which reading is more plausible, we should look at what comes just before and after these alternative asides. Because they end in the same place, what comes after is the same for each: Socrates starts to argue about the persistence of the soul after death. Right after Socrates agrees to return to where they left off, he says, "[s]o, we must ask ourselves something like this: what kind of thing is likely to experience scattering?" (78b). The word used here for "scattering" is "διασκεδάννυμι." Now, when we look at what comes before the aside under each reading, we can see that this language speaks in favour of my reading. "διασκεδάννυμι." is used a page earlier, before the mention of *epodes,* in stage (4), where

5.2 Second Pair: Arguments

a. *Crito* 54d: "be assured that these are the words I seem to hear [from the laws], as the Corybants seem to hear the music of their flutes, and the echo of these words (*logos*) resounds in me, and makes it impossible for me to hear anything else. As far as my present beliefs go, if you speak in opposition to them, you will speak in vain."[118]

b. *Republic* 608a: "if such a defense isn't made, we'll behave like people who have fallen in love with someone but who force themselves to stay away from him, because they realize that their passion isn't beneficial. In the same way, because the love of this sort of poetry

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Socrates explains that Simmias and Cebes are not convinced of the persistence of the soul after death because they are afraid of the soul will scatter. This speaks in favour of my reading because Cebes asks to return to where they left off, and, as noted by the similarity of language, Socrates returns to where they left off before any mention of *epodes.* Thus, the aside is the entire mention of *epodes* rather than the mention of where to find someone to sing the *epode* after Socrates dies ((5)-(9) rather than (7)-(9)).

The next crucial point in deciding between these interpretations comes several pages after the first: in stage (11). Between (9) and (11), Socrates completes his argument for why the soul persists after death, Simmias and Cebes give an objection each, and Socrates responds to each in turn. The responses end at 107a, at which point Cebes says he is now convinced that the soul persists after death. In stage (11), at 107a-b, Simmias suggests that though he should be convinced, he is not entirely sure he is. He says, "I myself have no remaining grounds for doubt after what has been said; nevertheless, in view of the importance of our subject and my low opinion of human weakness, I am bound still to have some private misgivings about what we have said" (trans. G.M.A. Grube). This counts in favour of my interpretation because if the argument from (9) to (11) were the *epode*, the best explanation would be that the first *epode* did not serve its function. Part of this alternative interpretation is that the *epodes* have different goals. The first is meant to allay fear of death, and the second is meant to encourage virtuous living. So, under this alternative, the first *epode* was not terribly successful, but Socrates decides to ignore Simmias' misgivings and move on to a new topic. Under my interpretation, Socrates addresses Simmias' misgivings with an *epode.*

(11) counts in favour of my interpretation also because it is reminiscent of (1), in which Simmias and Cebes express worries before the aside about *epodes.* Before the mention of *epodes,* Simmias and Cebes thought that they needed an argument to show that the soul persists after death. Socrates suggests that, given that they had already received such an argument, they likely really need an *epode*. Conceding that his interlocutors would like to discuss the topic more, Socrates returns from the aside about *epodes* in order to give them another argument. After the argument, Simmias and Cebes are finally convinced they've been given proof. At this point, Simmias expresses the worry that was previously identified in the aside: that there is some weakness in him (earlier described as fear) that prevents him from being totally convinced. The myth comes after this, and is when Socrates finally returns to the earlier aside, and provides the mentioned *epode.* This is confirmed at 114d, where Socrates says the myth should be sung as an *epode* – the first use of any cognate of "*epode"* since the aside. 114d is the final crucial point for my interpretation. Under my interpretation, there is a reason *epodes* are not mentioned between stages (9) and (13), and what comes between (9) and (13) is never called an *epode*: because the argument there is not an *epode.*

[118] Trans. G.M.A. Grube

> has been implanted in us by the upbringing we have received under our fine constitutions, we are well disposed to any proof that it is the best and truest thing. But if it isn't able to produce such a defense, then, whenever we listen to it, we'll repeat the argument [logos] we have just now put forward like an incantation [charm] so as to preserve ourselves from slipping back into that childish passion for poetry that the majority of people have." [119]

As with the passages about myth, we can distinguish three main elements of these passages, as represented in the following table:

Table 2 Features of Passages Showing Argument as *Epode*

		Theory of *Epodes*	**Evidence**	
			Crito	***Republic***
Problem		Improper configuration of the soul	Leaving prison	Being swayed by poetry
Goal	**short-term**	Exercise appropriate parts of soul	Believe staying in prison is just	Believe poetry is corrupting
	long-term	Proper configuration of the soul	Virtue	
Solution		Argument	Argument to stay in prison	Argument to not listen to poetry

[119] Trans. G.M.A. Grube and rev. C.D.C. Reeve

Let me again go through the three main elements in turn.

1) Problem: improper configuration of the soul[120]

Like the passages about myth, the passages about argument are concerned with the improper configuration of the soul. Also like the passages about myth, the evidence for this problem in these passages takes on specific forms, or symptoms. In the *Crito,* the specific problem is put in terms of leaving prison. Before the quoted text, Socrates goes through arguments (the ones that are like the flutes of the Corybants) on behalf of the Laws of Athens (50aff). The laws argue that Socrates ought to remain in prison and submit to his death sentence. Crito, on the other hand, tries to convince Socrates to escape prison. The Laws' arguments rely on considerations of what is just and unjust – a clear indication that the configuration of the soul is at issue. Crito argues using opinions of the many, and is concerned with reputation, something under the purview of the spirited part of the soul.[121] Not only would leaving prison be unjust, leaving prison based on Crito's arguments would mean being swayed to do injustice based on an appeal to the spirited part of the soul; leaving prison based on Crito's arguments would mean succumbing to an

[120] Halliwell (2011) argues that the *epode* is the argument described earlier in the book. His main purpose is not to define how this *epode* works, however, but to say that it is not a cure to poetry (261). He points out that Book X begins with a claim that imitative poetry will corrupt the mind of those who do not have knowledge as a *pharmakon* (drug) against it (595b). Though it is a "superficially tempting inference" to take the *epode*, which is supposed to help prevent the interlocutors from slipping back into their passion for poetry, to be this *pharmakon,* Halliwell says this is not the correct inference to make (245). He argues that part of the reason this inference is incorrect is that the language of *epode* "is hard if not impossible to reconcile with the conditions of philosophical knowledge, since, as we shall later find, the concept of an incantation (*epôidê*) in Plato denotes a decidedly non-epistemic agency" (246). For Hallilwell, it is important that the *epode* is not the *pharmakon* because he take this to leave room that the *epode* expresses an ambivalent attitude to poetry, and that there may not be any way to reconcile philosophy and poetry (265). Thus, he thinks the *epode,* unlike what I claim here, is not a "'cure' from a sickness" but something that will lead to an "ethically informed way of 'listening' to poetry, but a way which will incorporate the quasi-erotic bewitchment he has felt in his experiences of Homer" (265). Thus, Halliwell presents an alternative to my own view, where the problem the *epode* is meant to solve is how to reconcile poetry with philosophy. However, I am not relying on the identification of the *epode* with the *pharmakon* to make my claim.

[121] See for example the *Republic*'s discussion of the timocratic man (549bff).

improper configuration of the soul. A similar story about improper soul-configuration can be found in the *Republic.* There, poetry is accused of providing pleasure but no benefit - it flatters the appetitive or the spirited part of the soul. Being swayed by poetry would mean allowing a non-rational part of the soul reign, and thus an improper soul configuration.

2) Goal: changing the configuration of the soul

Also like the passages about myth, the goal in these passages is to instil a proper soul configuration. In these passages, this story is relatively straightforward. In the *Crito,* the arguments from the Laws that Socrates repeats ensure that he acts justly. We already saw that justice involves each part of the soul doing its proper function, so the arguments are meant to promote a proper soul configuration. Similarly, in the *Republic,* we know that we are trying to ensure that the non-rational soul does not control the rational soul, so we know the argument will promote proper soul-configuration. This point is made explicitly when Socrates says that if we are concerned about the government within us, we will repeat the arguments against poetry like an *epode* (608a-b). The "government" is a reference to the city analogy of the soul, so Socrates is telling us directly that if we care to keep our soul in its proper order, we will use the argument like an *epode.*

Although I described the problem that is addressed by the *epode* in these passages as "improper configuration of the soul," it might be more accurate to expand it to "improper, potentially improper, or tenuously proper configuration of the soul." In the *Crito* and the *Republic*, at any rate, the listeners do not seem to *currently* have improper configurations. In the *Crito,* Socrates is in prison and never seems to intend to escape. Since it is escaping prison that would be unjust, and therefore indicative of an improper soul-configuration, it seems like there is little evidence that Socrates has a current improper configuration that needs to be helped with an

epode. In the *Republic*, Socrates' interlocutors have just heard an argument condemning poetry, and do not seem to be in any immediate threat of giving in to poetry's temptation. Since it is giving into this temptation that would be favouring appetites over reason, and therefore indicative of an improper soul-configuration, in this case too, there is little indication of current improper configuration.

Why, then, do we need *epodes* in these cases? Well, as I said, I think we can expand the purpose of *epode* to include dealing with potentially improper or tenuously proper configurations of the soul. In both the *Crito* and the *Republic*, there is a temptation, which, if given into, would mean promoting an improper configuration. In the *Crito,* the temptation is the appeal to spirit from Crito, and in the *Republic,* it is the appeal to appetite from poetry. Socrates must repeat the arguments from the Laws so that he does not succumb to temptation, and Socrates' interlocutors must repeat the argument Socrates has just given for the same reason. It seems as though the arguments in both of these dialogues are recommended as *epode* in the face of potential, instead of current corruption. Whether there is a difference (and if there is one, what it is) between a potentially improper or a tenuous proper configuration I cannot say. However, the fact that an *epode* can be used for options such as these as well as for a current improper configuration emphasizes an important point. This point is that one *epode* is sometimes not enough on its own to affect a radical change.[122] This fits with the Principle of Exercise, because, like in exercise of the body, exercise of the soul is gradual and done in increments. One cannot gain a six-pack from one round of sit-ups; so too can one not become a virtuous person from one myth or

[122] See my final chapter for a case where an *epode* might be able to affect radical change: after *elenchus*. This is due to a destabilization of the soul before the implementation of the *epode.*

argument.[123] This is thus one place where it becomes important that *epodes* are sometimes said to need to be repeated.

In fact, it is possible to analyze the passages about myth in a similar way. When we are meant to use the myth as *epode* in the *Laws,* for instance, the impious man, though not yet pious, has already given up his previous impious belief.[124] This means that we lack concrete evidence of his current improper soul-configuration. It is likely that he does not yet have ideal configuration, given that he does not yet agree with the fully pious belief. However, it is possible to conceive of this passage, like the passages about argument, as one that shows *epode* being used to fend off potential future improper soul-configuration, or bolster a tenuously gained configuration. Finally, the same is possible in the *Phaedo*. At first glance, it the *Phaedo* seems to be a clear-cut case of current improper soul-configuration, where Simmias and Cebes are said to currently fear death. However, Cebes asks Socrates to not assume that they are afraid of death, but that they have children inside them that are afraid of death. This might indicate not a current improper configuration, but a tenuous proper configuration. Simmias and Cebes are not truly afraid of death themselves, but that fear is somehow still compelling. Thus they need an *epode* to stave off truly succumbing to the fear.

3) Solution: Argument

In both the *Crito* and the *Republic,* argument is said to be the solution to the problem and to enable us to reach our desired goal. Just like in the passages about myth, the arguments are

[123] Or, to take the metaphorical language of the *Republic*, one cannot gain an aristocratic soul from having a timocratic one (unless one happens to be on the verge between the two basic categories).

[124] Remember: "our thesis (*logos*) has forced him to admit he was wrong. But I still think we need to find a form of words (*muthos*) to *charm* him into agreement."

tailored to the specific problems that represent one common underlying problem. Unlike the passages about myth, where it appeared that the same myth was the solution in both cases, the passages about argument present different arguments: in the *Crito,* the argument is about why it is just to remain in prison; in the *Republic*, the argument is about why poetry is dangerous.

In both of these passages, there is a problem that the *epode*-like arguments are supposed to fix, and in both, the problem is temptation that comes from the non-rational parts of the soul, of things that are contrary to reason: in the *Republic* poetry about, for example lamenting, in the *Crito,* arguments about leaving prison. In both of these cases the arguments that are repeated like magic are arguments against these alternative non-rational temptations that are contrary to reason, and present positions that are rational and in accordance with reason. For example, being just is in accordance with reason, and the arguments in the *Crito* are for doing the just thing.

6 Objection: Different from Activating Reasoning?

At this point, I would like to turn to an objection. The objection is: I said I would argue that argument as *epode* would show that the view that Plato envision us using argument to activate reasoning is incomplete, and that we need to expand our theory of how Plato envisions us using reasoning. However, it appears that the passages I point to can be described in terms of activating reasoning. It looks like the advice in these passages only amounts to this: listen to a counter argument against a position that is tempting. Part of the story about activating reasoning, remember, is that we use reasoning to reach conclusions to gain true beliefs or get rid of false beliefs. One might describe the passages from the *Crito* and the *Republic*: whenever you hear Crito's appeal to the spirited part of the soul, or whenever you hear a poem that appeal to your appetitive part, you change your beliefs. For example, I might change my belief from "leaving prison is unjust" to "leaving prison is just," or "lamenting is bad" to "lamenting is good." We

must do something to rectify this unfortunate change in belief, so we go through our arguments, reach their conclusions, and realize that our new beliefs are false, so go back to our previous true beliefs.

Part of what makes this objection seem plausible is that there are specific arguments that are meant to counteract specific temptations in these passages. Contrast this to the passages about myth, where we saw that one advantage of my theory of *epodes* is that it accounted for why the same myth addressed different specific problems. Because we can think of the specific problems as symptoms of a greater problem, an improper soul-configuration, and because an *epode* is meant to exercise the soul to bring about proper soul-configuration, my theory makes sense of an otherwise puzzling similarity between the passages. Here, in the passages about argument, there is no such puzzling similarity. There is no new theory required to make sense of the way argument is being used in these passages, the view about activating reasoning can do just fine on its own. Before responding to this objection directly, let me spell out the implications of my theory more clearly.

As I said, because *epodes* exercise soul-parts according to the Principle of Exercise, it makes sense that one myth can help with two different problems – *epodes* are, in a sense, generalists. If my theory is correct, and myth and argument as *epode* can be unified under one theory, it should be the case that all (good) arguments strengthen the rational part of the soul. So, for example, going over the logical structure of *modus tollens* and going over arguments about why poetry is corrupting both strengthen the rational part of our soul (just like doing gym and listening to the right myths both strengthen the spirited part of the soul). This leads to the perhaps surprising conclusion that if we are, say, worried about the temptation of poetry, we can help avoid this temptation by going over the logical structure of *modus tollens.* It would be good

evidence for my theory, then, if in the *Crito* and the *Republic,* Plato had told us to rehearse any argument in the face of temptation. For example, if Socrates had said to his interlocutors in the *Republic, "*whenever you hear a poem, repeat 'if p then q, p, therefore q' like an *epode*," then my theory would be able to account for this, while the Basic View would not.

But Socrates does not say this. Instead he tells his interlocutors to repeat the argument against poetry. Although this does not count in favour of my theory over the view that activating reasoning is the sole purpose of argument, it does not count against it. Fitting an *epode*-like argument to a specific temptation in certain situations might be more efficient than using general *epode*-like *arguments*. So, we might be particularly susceptible to the temptation of poetry. It might be more efficient to address this particular susceptibility with a particular argument – an argument about poetry. If we think about the *epode* in its literal magic cases: an *epode* that targets a specific disease might be more effective against that disease than having an *epode* against diseases generally. Both *epodes* might help with the disease, but the one that specifically targets it will be more efficient (which is important if the disease is a particularly worrisome one). So the fact that the *Crito* and *Republic* recommend specific arguments against specific problems does not count against my theory. However, if my theory is correct, the strengthening of the rational part of the soul can be accomplished with any fine argument. This might seem counterintuitive. If it does, you might think that there's good reason to think that the Basic View is at play after all in these passages.

I want to argue that even if it seems counterintuitive to us, there is evidence in Plato that he thinks arguments can be effective in this generalist way. In *Republic* IX, Socrates warns us against lawless desires, which are the worst of the desires that are contrary to reason. Some examples of lawless desires are the desire for incest or for cannibalism (571c-d). These lawless

desires, we are told, arise most of all in our sleep. It is in sleep that our rational part sleeps, and so our lower parts are least in check. Socrates tells us that when a man "has quieted these two parts [the appetitive and the spirited] and aroused the third, in which reason resides, and so takes his rest, you know that it is then that he best grasps the truth and that the visions that appear in his dreams are least lawless"(572a-b).[125][126] The way to arouse the rational part of the soul is to "feast it on fine arguments and speculations" (571d).

In this passage, like the other passage from the *Republic* and the passage from the *Crito*, we are presented with a possible temptation that must be counteracted with the repetition of an argument. However, in this passage, unlike the other two, the arguments that will keep our soul in proper configuration are not specifically crafted to the temptation. It would be wrong to suppose that Socrates means, when he tells us to feast our soul on fine arguments before sleeping, that we should repeat arguments every night about why incest and cannibalism are wrong. To begin, incest and cannibalism are just two examples of the lawless desires we are concerned about, but there are undoubtedly numerous others that might pop up. We cannot predict which lawless desire(s) might arise any given night, and crafting arguments for every conceivable lawless desire – let alone repeating each one before bedtime – is not feasible.[127] Instead, we should take Socrates to mean that we should repeat any fine arguments. Here, then, we have a passage that looks like the advice in the passages about *epode*-like arguments, but that cannot be explained by the view that arguments should be used to activate reasoning. But how does this work?

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[125] Trans.
[126] Note: here again we have the two parts of the Principle of Exercise
[127] It also seems like thinking about cannibalism and incest before bed each night would in fact make it more likely that we dream about incest and cannibalism. If Socrates were recommending specific arguments, it would more than likely produce the opposite of the desired effect.

The best way to conceive of how an *epode* can work in the generalist way I describe is through a mechanical general strengthening. We can think of the soul like a terrain with various paths. There are grooves on the paths, and some take you where you want to go, others do not. The more you travel across a path, the deeper the grooves get. The deeper the grooves get, the easier that path is to follow, and the more difficult it is to deviate from it. To take the orbits model of the soul from the *Timaeus:* when your soul is disordered, there might be a bit that goes backwards. This makes it less able to do its job as the ruling orbit, and that, for instance, the appetites have freer rein. When you hear a myth about lamenting, your appetites enjoy this, and this reinforces the backwards orbit, making it more under the control of the appetites. On the other hand, when you hear a good argument, it will help bend this backwards bit to its rightful place. It is our job to make sure that our orbits are in order, or that the correct paths get reinforced. We can do this by not traveling the bad paths, for instance by not practicing lamenting, and by traveling the good paths, for instance by practicing good reasoning through arguments and good emotion through myths – in short, by following the two parts of the Principle of Exercise.

Now we have a response to the objection. Despite the fact that the *Crito* and *Republic* can be analyzed in terms of the view that arguments should be used to activate reasoning, it need not be. These passages are perfectly compatible with my theory of *epodes.* It might at first seem like the view about activating reasoning is the better way to analyze these passages, but once we see the *Republic* IX passage about lawless desires, we see that what I describe in my theory is something Plato clearly states elsewhere. Moreover, because of the parallels with the passages about *epode*-like myth, it starts to look like my theory is the better way to analyze these passages. Because my theory of *epodes* provides a story where any (good) argument will help

strengthen the rational part of the soul, and therefore promote proper soul-configuration, the *Republic* IX passage is not a one-off aberration, and Socrates' likening two disparate things – myths and arguments – to magic is no mere coincidence.

7 Objection: This seems strange

This mechanical picture of general strengthening might seem a bit odd. I will attempt to make it seem less odd – or, at least to make it clear that things we already accept in Plato are just as odd. Now, we are, as readers of Plato, as I have already pointed out, used to the idea that music and gym affect the soul. However, I think that because Plato repeats these examples so frequently, this fact has become commonplace, and the exact way in which gym and music affect the soul is not usually questioned.[128] In the *Laws,* there is a passage that brings out that this commonly accepted fact is more strange than usually recognized. This passage (791a) is about shaping young children's souls. The Athenian tells us that children should be kept in motion as much as possible. This is something recognized at least in part by nurses, who will, when a child cannot sleep, rock them and hum to them (790e). What the nurses do not realize, is that this state of not sleeping is a type of fear, which is the result of some inadequacy in the soul (791a), and what I think most Plato scholars fail to realize is that this inadequacy of the soul can be fixed in a purely mechanical way: "when one treats such conditions by vigorous movement, this external motion, by cancelling out the internal agitation that gives rise to the fear and frenzy, induces the

[128] Although, see Kamtekar (2010) for an analysis of how physical education works in the *Laws*. Kamtekar draws from the *Laws* and the *Timaeus,* and argues that physical education is valuable in part for the literal movement it requires. She also brings together gym and the passage of the *Laws* I do here (see esp. 145).

feeling of calm and peace in the soul" (791a).[129] Here we can see gym and music at play. The child is fearful, gym and music fixes the improper configuration of the soul that resulted in fear, and instills courage. Gym and music are working in a purely mechanical way. Even if my explanation of how *epodes* work in Plato seems strange, at least it is no more odd than things we already readily accept, like that music and gym change the soul.

8 Conclusion: Rationality

Let us turn one final time to the Basic View of Argument and Reasoning. Under this view, something prompts me to think, and I use an argument to rationally inquire and come to some conclusion. As I said at the outset of this paper, there is evidence in Plato that this is indeed how arguments ought to be used to become more philosophical, and I agree that arguments can and do work this way. I am, however, suggesting that this is not the only way that arguments function. When we pay attention to his use of magic terms, we can see that Plato suggests arguments can function in quite a different way. This way, this general strengthening, is one which scholars have failed to recognize. Instead of following an argument by engaging in critical inquiry, reaching its conclusion and thus changing our beliefs, we can use arguments as *epodes* in a rigid training-like way. This use of argument might seem strange, but despite our general failure to notice it, Plato is this strange. This notion of general strengthening appears throughout Plato's works, as does reference to magic and *epodes*. We ought not ignore it because it seems strange, but embrace it because it joins what otherwise might seem a disjointed philosophy into a unified whole.

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[129] Importantly, this passage also discusses magical aspects (though not *epodes* specifically), and likens children unable to sleep to people suffering Corybantism, or frenzies, saying the movement and music bewitches the child (*epodes* with flute, katauleō), like remedying the frenzies.

It is this strangeness that allows for a safe way of becoming more rational. Our aspiring philosopher was confronted with the difficulty of argument. Or, more accurately, the type of thinking usually prompted by argument. It turns out that argument (and myth) can be used in ways that do not prompt rational inquiry. Our aspiring philosopher can repeat these to himself and get his soul in proper configuration. The better configuration his soul is in, the better prepared he will be to tackle the dangerous rational inquiry involved in philosophy.

Chapter 4

EPODE IN THE *CHARMIDES*

1 Introduction

Someone who is well-informed about *epodes* in Plato might say at this point: conspicuously absent from your account of *epodes* is the *Charmides*. Not only will you fail to give a complete account of *epodes* without a discussion of this dialogue, this dialogue could be seen as a counterexample to your claim that *epodes* can help a person become more rational without dangerous rational inquiry. In the *Charmides*, the *epode* described is the *elenchus*, and as you point out at the beginning of the previous chapter, *elenchus* is an example of an activity that requires the type of rational inquiry you've been saying is so dangerous.[130]

Indeed, not discussing the *Charmides* in an account of *epodes* in Plato should seem like a conspicuous absence. "*Epode*" is mentioned more times in the *Charmides* than in any other dialogue, and a reader of this dialogue could hardly fail to notice Socrates' story involving a Thracian doctor, a leaf, and an *epode*, which he uses as an excuse to question the young Charmides about temperance. This objector is right that it would be awkward for my theory of *epodes* if such a significant instance of *epode* could not fit my theory. However, this objector is under a common misapprehension about the *Charmides:* that the *elenchus* is the *epode.*

In this chapter, I will show that the *Charmides* is somewhat anomalous in the recommended *epodes* in Plato, but not in a way that makes it inconsistent with the theory of *epodes* I presented in the previous chapter. I will argue that, despite most scholars' opinion otherwise, and despite the fact that this is unusual for a discussion of *epode* in Plato, we in fact

[130] I will discuss *elenchus* in more detail in the next chapter

do not see the *epode* in this dialogue. In order to lay this objection to rest, I will fill the conspicuous absence in my theory of *epodes* and devote some time to analyzing the use of *epode* in the *Charmides*. In doing so, I will not only complete my analysis of *epode* in Plato, I will also point out a surprising feature of the *Charmides* (that we do not see the *epode* in the *Charmides*), and thus defend my interpretation of recommended *epodes* in Plato.[131]

2 The Charmides and the Theory of Epodes

Let me first describe briefly how and why the *epode* is introduced in the *Charmides.* Charmides is handsome and popular, and the dialogue begins with Critias, Charmides' cousin and guardian, furnishing Socrates with the beginnings of an excuse to talk to the young beauty. Critias tells Charmides that Socrates has a cure for the headaches he has been experiencing. When Charmides seems interested, Socrates elaborates, claiming to have received the cure from a Thracian doctor. This Thracian believed that body and soul must be treated together, so his cure has two parts: a leaf for the body, and an *epode* for the soul (155e,157a-c). Socrates says he was warned by the doctor: "Do not let anyone persuade you to treat his head with this remedy who does not first submit his soul to you for treatment with the charm" (157b).[132] Socrates heeds this warning and decides to see whether Charmides needs the charm before administering the leaf. To do this, because the health of the soul can be gauged by the presence of temperance (157a), he must question Charmides about temperance to see if he is temperate. If Charmides is

[131] In fact, I think that arguments, when they prompt rational inquiry, do work something like *epodes,* in that they must affect the configuration of the soul. However, I still want to distinguish argument as *epode* and argument as prompting rational inquiry. We should think of "*epode"* more as a way of conceiving of a thing than a category of things. So, I can say, "I repeated that argument as an *epode*," meaning that I repeated it to affect the configuration of my soul, but if you asked "give me a list of *epodes*," it would not necessarily make sense to list that argument. Or, it would make as much sense to list that argument as any other.

[132] Trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague

temperate, then he does not need the charm; if he is not, then he does (158b-c). The rest of the dialogue is taken up by Socrates questioning first Charmides, then Critias, about temperance.

As I said, I did not discuss the *Charmides* in detail in the previous chapter mainly because it differs from the other dialogues that recommend using an *epode.* In those dialogues, *epodes* are easily divisible into ones that take the form of myths and ones that take the form of arguments. This was important because I ultimately argued that one theory of *epode* can unify passages that might at first glance appear to be describing different things, where myth and argument work as mechanical general strengthening tools that target different parts of the soul. So, in the *Laws* and the *Phaedo,* the Athenian and Socrates mention the need for an *epode* (fear of death, and lack of respect for the gods), then present a myth (about the afterlife). In the *Republic* and the *Crito,* Socrates presents an argument (that it is just to stay in prison, and that poetry is corrupting), then describes how it should be used as an *epode.* In the *Charmides,* however, the evidence is not as complete. Socrates gives us a situation in which an *epode would* be needed: if Charmides turned out to lack temperance. However, he does not tell us how to identify such a situation, nor does he tell us what the *epode* looks like that will cure this intemperance. I have reproduced this information below in a chart that combines the two charts from the previous chapter, and adds the *Charmides* in a final column. Although it is difficult to fill in certain cells of this final column by analyzing the *Charmides* by itself, now that we have my theory of *epodes* on the table, we should be able to make some educated guesses. I will spend some time now going through each of the four elements found in the other passages, making these educated guesses where I can, and describing how the *Charmides* differs from the other passages about *epode.*

Table 3 Features of Passages showing *Epodes* Including the *Charmides*

		Theory of *epodes*	**Evidence**				
			Phaedo	***Laws***	***Crito***	***Republic***	***Charmides***
Problem		Improper configuration of the soul	Fear of death	Impious beliefs	Leaving Prison	Being swayed by Poetry	Intemperance (1)
Goal	**Short-term**	Exercise appropriate parts of soul	Courage about life after death	believe gods care about us	Believe staying in prison is just	Believe poetry is corrupting	? (2)
	Long-term	Proper configuration of the soul	Virtue				Virtue (3)
Solution		*Epode:* Myth or Argument	Myth about the afterlife	Myth about the afterlife	Argument to stay in prison	Argument to not listen to poetry	? (4)

2.1 Problem: Improper Configuration of the Soul

My theory of *epodes* says that an *epode* will exercise the soul, and that a recommended *epode* will exercise the soul in the proper way, and thus will help fix improper soul-configuration. In the previous chapter, I spent some time explaining how, in the *Phaedo, Laws, Republic,* and *Crito,* there are specific problems the *epodes* in these dialogues are meant to solve, which show that this is the case. For example, in the *Phaedo,* the interlocutors are afraid of death. Their fear is evidence that the spirited parts of their souls are not strong enough, and thus that they have improper soul-configurations. The *epode* is meant to help these interlocutors become less afraid, so meant to help fix their soul-configurations. In the dialogues that I analyzed in the previous chapter, then, we saw that the evidence that the *epode* is meant to help with improper soul-configuration is that the *epode* is meant to prevent or cure vice.

While the *epode* is meant to help vices such as fear, injustice, and impiety in these other dialogues, in the *Charmides* the *epode* is meant to help with intemperance (158b-c). In this way, the parallel between the *Charmides* and the other dialogues that recommend *epode* is strong. In all dialogues that recommend *epodes,* the *epode* is supposed to help some vice, which can be understood as an improper soul-configuration. In the *Charmides,* we are even told explicitly that the presence of temperance is an indicator of the health of the soul (157a).[133] This explicit psychologizing of vice makes interpreting it as improper soul configuration easy: if we take the health of a soul to correspond to the proper arrangement of its parts, then we can think of intemperance as being an improper configuration of the soul. This first element, then, is easy to

[133] That virtue is health of the soul and vice disease can be found, for instance in the *Republic* (44d-e) and *Gorgias* (479b-c).

fill in. The evidence for there being an improper soul configuration that the *epode* is meant to help is that the *epode* is said to help with intemperance.

However, I would like to note a way in which the *Charmides* differs from the other dialogues: there is no specific example of the vice in the *Charmides*. In the other dialogues that recommend *epodes,* we are given not only a vice that an *epode* can help solve or stave off, but also a specific instance of that vice. So, for example, the problem in the *Phaedo* is not simply that the interlocutors are fearful, but that they fear death. However, in the *Charmides,* we are told only that the *epode* can instill temperance. This is significant because it means that we are not given help with how to recognize a situation where the *epode* is needed. In fact, given the nature of the dialogue, we are left puzzling out by ourselves what temperance and intemperance might look like. Like other Socratic dialogues, the *Charmides* progresses with a series of refutations and ends in *aporia.* This means that after several attempts, the dialogue ends with no satisfactory answer to the question "what is temperance?" And thus with no clear picture of what temperance looks like. [134] This, I think, combined with the fact (that I will argue for shortly) that we do not see the *epode* in this dialogue, suggests that the purpose of introducing the *epode* here is different than in the other dialogues. In the next chapter, I will explore this in more detail. For now, let me

[134] Though we can make some guesses at what it might look like. We might, at least, have some examples of what it does not look like. For instance, at the end of the dialogue, Charmides is plausibly being intemperate when he threatens Socrates with force to get what he wants (176c). Just how much we need to know what a thing is to be able to tell whether we have that thing is unclear. At 159a, Socrates suggests that if a person has temperance, then he will have an opinion about it, and at 176a-b, Charmides links his not knowing whether he has temperance with not being able to discover what temperance is. Socrates likewise links not knowing what temperance is with not knowing whether someone has it, when he concludes the discussion of temperance not by making any plausible guesses, but by asking Charmides to discover on his own whether he has temperance (as I will discuss later in this chapter).

simply suggest that in the others, we might be given more information because they show how one might use an *epode,* while in this dialogue, something else is at play.[135]

2.2 Goal: Changing the Configuration of the Soul

The goal is now easy to fill out. We know that the *epode* is meant to induce health (temperance) in an unhealthy soul (one that lacks temperance) (157a). We can say, therefore, that the goal is to exercise the appropriate parts of the soul, and thereby change the configuration of the soul into a virtuous one.

However, as I just said, the *Charmides* does not give a specific example of intemperance. This means that, unlike the other dialogues that recommend *epodes,* the *Charmides* gives a less complete picture of the improper configuration of the soul. To fill out how this element of my theory of *epodes* might look in detail, allow me to bring in the *Republic*'s description of temperance. Temperance, remember, is described in the *Republic* as a particular virtuous way soul-parts can interact. Temperance amounts to all the soul parts agreeing about who should rule and be ruled. For example, in a properly configured soul, temperance amounts to all the parts agreeing that reason should rule the lower parts (431e-432a). Thus, we have a possible description of the goal of the *epode* in the *Charmides*. Perhaps the *epode* is meant to exercise the soul such that each soul-part recognizes its role.

2.3 Solution: Epode

The final element of the theory of *epode* is the hardest to fill out for the *Charmides.* Recall, the dialogue attempts to answer, but is unsuccessful in answering, the question "what is

[135] I will argue in the next chapter that what is at play might be Plato's warning about improper elenchizing, and about how failing to use an *epode* can be dangerous.

temperance?" The final attempt to answer this question led Socrates and his interlocutors to the conclusion that temperance is not beneficial – a conclusion that Socrates disavows.[136] Socrates returns to his elaborate story, and to the *epode*, just after his disavowal of this conclusion:

> And I am […] distressed about the charm which I learnt from the Thracian, that I should have spent so much pains on a lesson which has had such a worthless effect. Now I really do not think that this can be the case, but rather that I am a poor hand at inquiring; for temperance I hold to be a great good, and you to be highly blessed, if you actually have it. See now whether you have it, and are in no need of the charm; for if it is yours, I should rather advise you to regard me as a babbler who is unable to argue out any subject of inquiry whatsoever, and yourself as advancing in happiness as you advance in temperance. (175e-176a)[137]

We can see, then, why Socrates returns to the question with which he began his investigation: does Charmides have temperance? He is convinced that temperance is still something worth having, and that Charmides would be better off having it. Here, in returning to his initial question, he reaffirms the importance of discovering its answer – despite not having answered it himself. This initial question was important because if Charmides turned out to be temperate, then he would not need the *epode* (158b-c). This means that we still do not know whether Charmides needs the *epode*. Moreover, by reasserting the beneficial nature of temperance in the face of an opposing argument, Socrates is truly returning us to our starting point, emphasizing

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[136] Incidentally, I take it this is an instance where Socrates does what he says in *Phaedo:* "I assume in each case some principle which I consider strongest, and whatever seems to me to agree with this, whether relating to cause or to anything else, I regard as true, and whatever disagrees with it, as untrue." (100a; trans. H.N. Fowler). In other words, this is an instance where Socrates, because he realizes (or "realizes") that he is not skilled in argument, should not fall into disbelieving what he believed before. (See my chapter on hypothesis)

[137] Trans. W.R.M. Lamb

the lack of progress made. Just like at the opening of the dialogue, we now, at the close, believe temperance is good, believe that the *epode* will instil temperance, and do not know whether Charmides needs the *epode*. The dialogue therefore ends before we are given a chance to see what the *epode* might look like.

As I said before, that we never see the *epode* in the *Charmides* is a significant way in which this dialogue differs from the other dialogues that recommend *epodes*. The passages from the other dialogues follow particular structures. In the dialogues in which an argument is recommended as an *epode,* we are shown an argument, then it is revealed it can be used as an *epode.* In the dialogues in which a myth is recommended as an *epode,* we are told we need an *epode* and then the *epode* is revealed to be a myth. In the *Charmides,* it revealed from the beginning that the *epode* can help with intemperance, and thus follows the structure of passages about myth, but the *epode* is never revealed, thus deviating from both the passages about myth and about argument.

However, most scholars want to insist that we do see the *epode* in this dialogue. Most scholars, for instance, consider the *elenchus* to be the *epode*.[138] For example, Tuckey (1951; 18, 103), Coolidge (1993; 28),[139] Tuozzo (2011; 124-132),[140] and McCoy (2005; 137) all suggest we think of the *epode* this way (I will call this the *Elenchus-Epode* View). I will take some time here

[138] Two exception are McPherran (2004) and Levine (2016). Schmid (1998) might also be considered an exception, as he says the dialogue is ambiguous as to whether the *epode* is the *elenchus* (though gives no argument or explanation for this claim) (15). Levine suggests that *elenchus* would not be enough to instill temperance in a person, so is unlikely to be the *epode* ("Doctor Socrates" n. 39). However, his discussion of this topic is limited to one endnote. McPherran is the only author, as far as I can tell, who has argued in detail for the position that the *elenchus* is not the *epode.* He argues as I will, that the opening of the dialogue suggests that the *elenchus* is a preliminary to the *epode,* and the close of the dialogue suggests we do not move beyond this preliminary activity.
[139] Coolidge technically denies that the investigation that happens in the *Charmides* is *elenchus* (28, n. 7). However, I am grouping him with my opponents because he still believes that the *epode* is what we see Socrates do in the middle of the dialogue.
[140] Though he thinks that *elenchus* does not consist only of refutation, but also of a positive doctrine.

to investigate how these authors have accounted for the opening and closing of the dialogue with their interpretation that the middle of the dialogue is the *epode.*[141]

Tuozzo (2011) gives the most comprehensive defence of the *Elenchus-Epode* View. The main part of his defence relies on his claim that we can see an improvement in Charmides' temperance from the opening to the closing of the dialogue. If the *elenchus* is the *epode*, the reasoning goes, Charmides should benefit from hearing it. For this interpretation, Tuozzo focuses not on the passage I quote above, but on Charmides' response, which comes right after:

> Why, upon my word, Socrates, I do not know at all whether I have it or have it not. For how can I know, when even you two are unable to discover what this thing is?—so you say, but of this you do not at all convince me—and I quite believe, Socrates, that I do need the charm, and for my part I have no objection to being charmed by you every day of my life, until you say I have <enough temperance>. (176a-b)[142]

Tuozzo stresses that Charmides is asked both at the opening and the closing of the dialogue whether he has temperance. He takes Charmides' immediate response in each case as evidence for the presence or absence of temperance. At the opening of the dialogue, Charmides says that he does not know how to respond – it seems like an intemperate response to say "yes," but, because Critias just told Socrates that he does have it, to say "no" would be to contradict his guardian. In the closing of the dialogue, in the passage quoted above, Charmides responds

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[141] I think that once the opening and close of the dialogue are placed side by side, it is clear that the *elenchus* is not the *epode.* However, despite McPherran (2004) having already said this in print, authors still insist that the *elenchus* is the *epode.* I will therefore spend some time not only arguing for my interpretation, but also arguing against the most complete versions of the alternative interpretation.

[142] Trans. W.R.M. Lamb. Many translators, including Lamb, take the "ἕως ἂν φῇς σὺ ἱκανῶς ἔχειν" at 176b3-4 to mean "until you say I have had enough of the treatment." However, it is more likely that it means "until you say I have enough temperance," given that Charmides begins his response to Socrates by saying, "οὐκ οἶδα οὔτ᾽ εἰ ἔχω οὔτ᾽ εἰ μὴ ἔχω," meaning, "I don't know whether I have temperance or not" (176a7).

differently. Tuozzo says, "[w]e may well take his comments as a gauge of the effect that listening to the discussion between Socrates and Critias has had on him. The effect must be reckoned, I think, a positive one" (296). The positive effects of Charmides' response are two-fold: first, Tuozzo believes that Charmides understands that you need to know the nature of temperance to be able to tell whether you have it; second, Tuozzo believes the response shows that Charmides now realizes that Socrates' *epode* is the type of investigation that occurred in the middle of the dialogue:

> With his talk of giving himself over to Socrates' incantations, Charmides indicates his willingness to continue participating in and observing the dialectical investigations with which Socrates fills his life. Charmides recognizes, I suggest, that he has been somehow benefited by the previous investigation, and that the benefit to be gained from such investigations requires repeated and sustained engagement in them (298).

Thus, according to Tuozzo, Charmides has been improved by the *elenchus-epode.* Not only has he gained knowledge about what it might mean to investigate whether someone is temperate, he has also gained an appreciation for philosophical investigation.

In this way, Tuozzo presents a story in which the *epode* is the *elenchus.* We can see that the *epode* was performed because Charmides shows the positive effect the *epode* was supposed to have: the difference between the answers Charmides gives when asked whether he has temperance at the beginning of the dialogue and at the end, Tuozzo says, reveals that he has become more temperate. However, the dialogue does not end with Socrates proclaiming Charmides cured. Instead, as we saw, it ends with Socrates asking Charmides whether he has temperance, and Charmides insisting that he needs the *epode.* We might ask Tuozzo why, if

Charmides heard the *epode* that was supposed to provide temperance, is he not temperate and therefore in no more need of the *epode.*

Tuozzo tries to answer such a question by suggesting that the *epode* can work in degrees. He suggests that while the difference between Charmides' two answers shows he has improved in temperance, it does not show he is completely temperate. Tuozzo points out that Charmides is willing to hear the *epode* every day, introducing a notion of repetition not found earlier in the dialogue (297). Tuozzo, as I quote above, thinks that the way a person benefits from the kind of activities Socrates encourages is through "repeated and sustained engagement in them" (298). So, it seems that, for Tuozzo, the benefit of the *epode* comes in degrees, and that therefore Charmides can have heard the *epode,* but still need to hear it again.[143]

This picture goes some way in defending Tuozzo's view. However, it requires us to interpret both Charmides and Socrates a bit awkwardly. Under Tuozzo's picture, when Socrates asks, "see whether you have it [temperance] and are in no more need of the *epode*" [144] he means something like, "see if you have [temperance] and are in no need of *more* of the *epode*" or "are *no longer* in need of the *epode*." Similarly, when Charmides answers, saying he believes himself "in need of the *epode*" (176b)[145] we should understand "*still* in need of the *epode*" or "in need of *more of* the *epode*." While not impossible to read these passages in the way Tuozzo needs, it would certainly be better for his picture if anyone explicitly talked of *still* needing or needing *more* of the *epode,* at the close of the dialogue. Indeed, it would be especially better given that

[143] There is one other thing that can support the idea that the *epode* works in degrees: the word "sufficiently" (*hikanōs*). As Charmides says, he will submit to the charm until he sufficiently has temperance (176b). Socrates introduces the issue of having temperance with the same word. He asks Charmides "whether he already sufficiently partakes in temperance" (158c).

[144] ὅρα εἰ ἔχεις τε καὶ μηδὲν δέῃ τῆς ἐπῳδῆς

[145] οἶμαι δεῖσθαι τῆς ἐπῳδῆς

Socrates initially poses the question in these terms, asking Charmides "whether he *already* [ēdē] sufficiently partakes in temperance" (158c, emphasis added).[146]

Not all versions of the *Elenchus-Epode* View rely on this awkward degree-reading of Socrates' and Charmides' final statements, however. In fact, most scholars seem to read these statements in their more natural ways, as suggesting that Charmides needs the *epode,* full-stop. Looking at the same passage in which Tuozzo finds evidence that Charmides has benefited, Tuckey and McCoy, for instance, find evidence that Charmides has not: Tuckey takes Charmides' statement that he does not know what temperance is to show that he lacks true temperance (90), and McCoy takes Charmides' insistence that he needs the *epode* every day and that he has no hope of finding the definition of temperance himself if Critias and Socrates were unable to, as evidence for "blind obedience" to moral authority rather than a commitment to rational inquiry the *elenchus* should have instilled (151-2).

Moreover, there are other reasons to think that Charmides has not benefited from the *epode* by the end of the dialogue. One reason, as scholars have often pointed out, is that we and Plato's intended audience know that Charmides goes on to become an intemperate man. In fact, he goes on to become a tyrant. As is not uncommon in Plato's dialogues, the interlocutors in the *Charmides* are well-known historical figures. Charmides was a member of the Thirty Tyrants, a group that briefly and violently controlled Athens, and of which the other interlocutor of the dialogue, Critias, was a leading member. The rather ominous ending of the dialogue perhaps foreshadows this historical fact. Just after the exchange we have been considering, Charmides agrees to do whatever Critias tells him, including getting Socrates to give him the *epode* by force

[146] φὴς ἱκανῶς ἤδη σωφροσύνης μετέχειν

(176b-d). As McCoy points out, this is further evidence of Charmides' blind obedience to authority, "even if this leads to violence" (157), and "[t]hese undertones of violence foreshadow Critias and Charmides' joining with the Thirty Tyrants" (137). Given our knowledge of how these interlocutors turn out, and given that there are elements in the dialogue that remind us of this knowledge, it is reasonable to think that Charmides has not benefited from his discussion with Socrates.

However, if it is more natural to read the end of the dialogue as saying that Charmides does not have temperance, then there is another awkwardness for the *Elenchus-Epode* View. In my view, it makes sense that Charmides has not gained temperance: he has not heard the *epode* that is meant to instil temperance. But if the *epode* is the *elenchus*, then Charmides should be benefited by the *epode*. Recall, it was this reasoning that seemed to lead Tuozzo to look for evidence that Charmides was benefited, even if just a little. Once we give up the idea that Charmides was benefited, then proponents of the *Elenchus-Epode* View are left with one option: saying that the *elenchus-epode* was simply not successful.

And we indeed do see scholars take this stance. In order to justify it as not merely ad hoc, they explain that there is significance to this failure of the *elenchus-epode.* Most authors who take this line suggest that one of the dialogue's messages is that there exist obstacles to the *elenchus,* some of which might be impossible to overcome. Seeing Charmides fail to be benefited from the *elenchus* gives us clues about what these obstacles might be. Tuckey, for instance, suggests this failure has something to do with the meaning of self-knowledge and knowledge of the good (5, 103), and McCoy suggests that there are certain character traits (for example, thinking about knowledge as something we either have or do not have, with nothing in between) that a person can have that will make the *elenchus-epode* fail (154-156).

Now, there very well might be reasons a person will fail to benefit from an *elenchus*. As I suggest in the first chapter of this dissertation, and I will say in more detail in the next chapter, I believe Plato thinks a person is liable to become corrupted by *elenchus* when he is unskilled in argument. However, offering an explanation of this kind in the *Charmides* is not as helpful to the *Elenchus-Epode* View as its proponents might think. As we saw with Tuozzo, one possible bit of positive evidence that can be presented for the *Elenchus-Epode* View is that Charmides is benefited by the end of the dialogue. However, these other proponents of the *Elenchus-Epode* View have given up this positive evidence in favour of a more natural reading of the end of the dialogue. It seems to me that those who give this up have no alternative positive evidence with which to replace it. For instance, while pointing to obstacles that might prevent an *elenchus* from having a beneficial effect can make the theory that the *elenchus* is the *epode* consistent with the view that Charmides is not benefited, it cannot be this positive evidence – it is far from obvious that the dialogue shows such obstacles, and the possibility that it does rests almost entirely on the assumption that the *elenchus* fails. So why do the proponents of the *Elenchus-Epode* View think the *elenchus* is the *epode*?

My guess is that proponents of this view think in the following way. Socrates promises something that can provide virtue. The only thing we see in this dialogue after that promise is the *elenchus.* We know that the *elenchus* is Socrates' method of choice to help people, so this must be the *epode.* McCoy, for example, seems to be using reasoning along these lines, as she says, before going on to talk about the *elenchus* as the *epode*, "[i]f we take the "incantation" to represent the Socratic *elenchus* that follows in the dialogue—as no actual magical incantation is ever chanted—then Socrates' goal would seem to be for the *elenchus* to have a fundamental effect on the inner state of Charmides' soul" (137). She seems to expect that we actually see the

epode, and given the fact that nothing that looks like a more traditional *epode* shows up, the *elenchus* must be it. Tuckey gives even less explanation of his reasoning, simply saying that the *epode* is "clearly" the *elenchus* (18, 103).

These authors seem to be ignoring the beginning of the dialogue, where the *epode* is first introduced. We are not, I believe, given the expectation that we will see the *epode* in this dialogue. Remember, the *epode* is said to be part of a two-part cure for headaches. The leaf will cure the body, the *epode,* the soul. But Socrates claims to have been told by the doctor who taught him the cure that he must not give the leaf, must not cure the body, without first treating the soul (157c). Let us look closer at how the dialogue progresses from here. At this point, Critias tells Socrates that Charmides not only has temperance, but is the most temperate person alive (157d). Socrates, after saying that it is not surprising that Charmides has temperance (and all the other traits that Critias ascribed to him), given his noble lineage, says to Charmides:

> the case stands thus: if you already possess temperance, as Critias here declares, and you are sufficiently temperate, then you never had any need of the charms of Zalmoxis or of Abaris the Hyperborean, and might well be given at once the remedy for the head; but if you prove to be still lacking that virtue, we must apply the charm before the remedy. (158b-c)[147]

This introduces the possibility of giving Charmides the leaf without the charm – as long as he has temperance already. Socrates, however, is unwilling to merely take Critias' word for it, or assume Charmides is temperate based on his lineage. So Socrates asks: "tell me yourself whether you agree with our friend, and can say that you are already sufficiently provided with

[147] Trans. W.R.M Lamb

temperance, or are deficient in it?" (158c)[148] Charmides replies, as I have already noted above, that he cannot possibly answer: if he says "no" then he is contradicting his guardian and others who say he has it, if he says "yes" then he is inappropriately praising himself. This answer seems to suit Socrates' needs, as he responds:

> we must join in inquiring whether you possess the thing I am asking after, or not, in order that neither you may be forced to say what you do not wish, nor I on my part may recklessly try my hand at medicine. (158d-e)[149]

At this point Socrates asks Charmides for a definition of temperance, the *elenchus* begins, and the dialogue proceeds as we might expect a Socratic dialogue to.

Far from setting up the *elenchus* as the *epode,* this passage sets up the *elenchus* as a *preliminary* to the *epode.* It tells us that it is only after Socrates has determined whether Charmides has temperance that he will know whether Charmides needs the *epode.* And he will determine whether Charmides has temperance through the *elenchus*. The bulk of the dialogue, then, is set up not to cure Charmides' soul, but to see if it needs curing. It is this that it seems most proponents of the *Elenchus-Epode* View fail to notice, or at least fail to take seriously. Tuozzo, for instance, notices that the philosophical discussion of the dialogue is set up as a preliminary to the *epode,* but he does not therefore conclude that we do not see the *epode.* Rather, he insists that the *elenchus* is the *epode.* He argues that, though some commentators have taken the opening of the dialogue to mean that the *elenchus* is preliminary to some other philosophical activity, he does not think it should be taken this way.[150] He says,

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[148] Trans. W.R.M. Lamb
[149] Trans. W.R.M. Lamb
[150] He cites Szlezak as someone who thinks the *elenchus* is preliminary. This means that he does not cite anyone who thinks that the *elenchus* is preliminary to the *epode*. Szlezak believes, like most, that the *elenchus* is the *epode.*

> I doubt that the charms [*epodes*] have this significance. From the beginning of Socrates' conversation with Charmides, Socrates has deployed the notion of these incantations as needed in order to bring about a philosophical discussion with Charmides. Had Critias not intervened at 157c7, that discussion could well have taken place as an instance of the application of the Zalmoxian charms (130).

In other words, because Socrates uses the *epode* as an excuse for the philosophical discussion, the philosophical discussion must be the *epode.* Tuozzo is ignoring the fact that the excuse to discuss temperance still stands if it is a necessary preliminary to the *epode.* He is also, in bringing Critias into his argument, ignoring the fact that Plato decided to write the dialogue the way he did for a reason. While it might be true that if this were a transcript of a real conversation, it would be plausible to say that Critias flat-footedly interrupts in the exact moment Socrates seems to have planned to introduce the *elenchus* as the *epode.* But it is not a transcript. And surely, if Plato had wanted the *epode* to be the *elenchus,* he would have had Critias not interrupt, or he would have, quite simply, written the dialogue in a way that introduced the *elenchus* as the *epode*.

Tuozzo gives one more reason the opening of the dialogue should not be taken to mean that the *elenchus* is preliminary: "at the end of the dialogue, Charmides himself seems to recognize that the preceding dialectical argumentation has been an instance of what Socrates had meant by his incantations: in announcing his willingness to spend more time with Socrates in the future […]" (130). Tuozzo claims that the fact that Charmides asks to submit to Socrates' *epode*

He also believes that the opening of the dialogue shows that the *elenchus* is preliminary to some other form of philosophy. He makes sense of this by saying that the *epode* is preliminary to the cure, so the *elenchus-epode* is preliminary to some greater philosophy. (Szlezak (1993) 63, 86-87)

every day (176b) shows that Charmides realizes he has already undergone the *epode.* He does not, however, explain why we should think this shows that. It seems consistent to say, instead, the fact that Charmides asks to submit to Socrates' *epode* shows that, though he did not receive the *epode* that day, he still believes that Socrates has it and can give it to him.

My own interpretation, in contrast to the *Elenchus-Epode* View, accounts for the opening and close of the dialogue. We are told at the opening that we need to know whether Charmides is temperate to know whether he needs the *epode.* At first Socrates simply asks Charmides whether he is temperate, but after receiving an unsatisfactory answer, decides that they should inquire together. The *elenchus* is this inquiry. Because it ends in *aporia,* this inquiry does not provide the information Socrates needs. The dialogue, in closing with Socrates asking Charmides for a second time to see whether he has temperance, returns to the question that began the discussion of this virtue. When Charmides answer that he does not know whether he is temperate, but has no objections to being charmed by Socrates every day, he is not asking for more of the *epode,* but for the *epode* for the first time. The dialogue, therefore, ends without a demonstration of the *epode,* and we can only guess what form the *epode* might take.

So, given that we do not see the *epode,* how are we meant to fill in this final element according to my theory of *epodes*? If we *were* to see the *epode* of the *Charmides,* would it be an argument, or a myth? Of course, if the *Elenchus-Epode* View were right, the *epode* would not look too different from the *epode* of the *Crito* or *Republic,* and would be an argument. However, as I have suggested, there is no clear indication in the dialogue that *elenchus* is the *epode,* and, I think, good reason to think it is not. The only direct description we get of the *epode* is that it is made up of beautiful *logoi* (157a). While *kaloi logoi* could be translated "beautiful arguments," I think a better translation is "beautiful words." This description of the *epode* is provided during

Socrates' story about the Thracian doctor. Recall that in this story, the cure has two parts, a leaf and an *epode,* and is meant to cure two parts of a person, body and soul. So, we have a contrast between tangible things, the leaf and the body, and intangible ones, *logos* and soul. Taking *logoi* to mean "arguments" is adding too much interpretation to the translation. It is more likely that this contrast to the leaf is all that is intended. Because myths and arguments are both made up of words, and both would affect the soul in the way that seems to be necessary for the contrast to the leaf and the body, this description of the *epode* does not serve our purposes. We must look at indirect evidence, then, if we want to know whether the *epode* of the *Charmides* would be a myth or an argument.

I would like to argue that the *epode,* though we do not see it, would likely take the form of a myth.[151] In a sense, it is not important one way or the other for my theory: either as myth or as argument, the *epode* could conceivably help Charmides. Remember, according The Principle of Exercise, if we exercise the rational part of the soul and the non-rational parts of the soul not too much and in accordance with reason, then the soul will become more well-ordered. So, why bother targeting different parts of the soul? There is a clue to the answer of this question in our passages from the previous chapter. In the passages about myth, from the *Laws* and the *Phaedo,* age is mentioned. In the *Phaedo,* Cebes, when introducing the fear of death that Socrates' myth will act as a charm against, says, "do not assume that we were afraid, but perhaps there is a child (*pais*) in us who has these fears" (77e-78a).[152] In the *Laws,* the Athenian says of the impious

[151] Levine (2016) comes close to saying this. He thinks that the *epode* is unlikely to be *elenchus,* and draws a parallel, because of the talk of the health of the soul, to the *Republic:* "[…] it is appropriate to recall Socrates' reflections on the necessity of beautiful speeches for the proper upbringing of youth" ("Doctor Socrates" n. 39). While he does not mention myth specifically, he cites *Republic* 392b. the method Levine envisions these working is slightly different than I have proposed, citing 377a-b: our souls "assimilate themselves to the available models."
[152] Trans. G.M.A. Grube

men, "If only they believed the stories (*muthos*) which they had as babes (*pais*) and sucklings from their nurses and mothers! These almost literally 'charming' stories (*epode)* were told partly for amusement, partly in full earnest" (887c-d).[153] Myth as charm seems to be particularly suited to children.

This is one reason, then, to think that the *epode* might be a myth. Charmides is a boy in the dialogue, so it would be appropriate to give him an *epode* that is geared to children. Of course, it might be objected that Charmides is no longer a child, but a youth (*meirakion*). The fact that *epode* as myth might be especially directed to children, then, would not count as evidence that the *epode* intended for him is a myth. This distinction in age (between that of a *pais* and a *meirakion*) is made at 154b, where Socrates and Critias discuss Charmides' growing up since last Socrates saw him. While this is presumably an important distinction for the erotic effect Charmides has on his followers and Socrates ("I saw inside his cloak and caught fire, and could possess myself no longer" (155d)[154]), I do not think it is an important one for the consideration of *epodes.* I think that it is youth more generally, rather than childhood, that is the important consideration in choosing a myth as the *epode*. One reason to think this is that, though in the *Phaedo* we are to pretend there are children that are targets of the *epode,* and in the *Laws,* we know that the impious man had undergone *epodes* when he was a child, the people who hear the *epodes*, Simmias and Cebes and the impious man, are adults. There is some reason a myth might be suitable for a child. But even adults can have child-like aspects to them. It is not hard to believe that a youth would be even more likely to have these childlike aspects. What exactly

[153] Trans. Trevor J. Saunders
[154] Trans. W.R.M. Lamb

these are, and how they make a person more appropriately the recipient of myth as *epode* than argument as *epode*, I will leave as an open question.[155]

Another reason to think that the *epode* is a myth is the structure of the dialogue. How the *epode* fits into the rest of the *Charmides* is more in-line with the structure of the passages about myth than the ones about argument. This should be a small consideration, as I see no theoretical reason one structure should be particularly attached to a type of *epode.* However, in the passages about myth, we always see the problem first, then are given the *epode;* in passages about argument, we are given the argument, then told it is an *epode* that can combat a problem. In the *Charmides*, we are told about a problem, and never see the *epode*. If the *epode* were added on to the end of the dialogue, then the dialogue would fit the pattern of the passages about myth: we hear about a problem, then get an *epode* to fix it.

3 Conclusion

The *Charmides*, we have seen, can be explained using my theory of *epodes*. Through some work, we can see that the main elements of my theory can explain how the *epode* of the *Charmides* is supposed to work: 1) the *epode* rectifies an improper configuration of the soul, 2) it does this through instilling temperance, and 3) likely in the form of a myth. This involved some amount of speculation, but what is important for my purposes is that the *Charmides* is consistent

[155] It may also be significant here that, as we saw in the Fineness Passage of the *Republic,* men under thirty should not be exposed to argument "while they are young (*neous*)," for "when youths (*meirakiskoi*) get their first taste of argument, they misuse it as a game, always using it *antilogically*" (539a-b).[155] Should we expose youths to argument as *epode?* I think that the type of argument in the Fineness Passage is a different type of argument than an *epode* is. Or, at least, they are arguments that are treated in a different way. To treat an argument as an *epode,* you need to have progressed to a certain stage of philosophical development. I would suggest that this stage is *dianoetic* one. At this stage, a person assumes a hypothesis, and holds onto it to see what follows. This is a similar activity to repeating an argument as an *epode* in the face of temptation. Nevertheless, it is an open question when it is safe to expose a person to an argument as an *epode.*

with my theory of *epodes*. My theory can help us understand the *epode* of the *Charmides*, and we can say that if Charmides were to receive the *epode*, it would exercise his non-rational parts of his soul in accordance with reason, and thereby make him more temperate. This chapter also showed that the *Charmides* is somewhat anomalous amongst the passages that recommend *epode.* Most notably, we do not see the *epode* in the *Charmides.*

I argued for this at length not simply because it is an interesting anomaly. As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, if someone reads the *Charmides*, as most do, with the *Elenchus-Epode* View, the dialogue could be seen as a counterexample to my suggestion that *epodes* can prepare the soul for philosophy without the need to engage in dangerous rational inquiry. Going through *elenchus* requires activity that sounds very much like what was at work in the Fineness Passage, and what was behind misology and antilogic. The fact that the *epode* is never shown in the *Charmides* means that the *epode* can work in exactly the way I have described – as a means to proper soul-configuration that works through a mechanical strengthening of soul-parts.

PART THREE

I'M IN TROUBLE, NOW WHAT DO I DO?

Sufficiently forewarned and with preventative measures in place, our aspiring philosopher is by this point well on his way to reaping the benefits of a philosophical way of life. However, sometimes, despite our best intentions, mistakes happen. It would be unfortunate if one misstep should forever damn our hypothetical reader of Plato to the unenlightened life. No guide to preparedness would be complete, therefore, without some measures he can take if this happens. If our reader finds himself falling into corruption, what can he do?

Chapter 5

CORRUPTION, EDUCATION, AND CORRECTION

1 Introduction

Recall that we have been trying to discover how to safely prepare the soul for rational inquiry. Discovering such safe preparation became pressing after the first chapter of the dissertation, where I suggested that rational inquiry and therefore philosophy holds the danger of corruption. In Part One, I suggested that rational inquiry about the Forms be undertaken only after a certain degree of education and psychological development, and in Part Two, I suggested that *epodes* can provide a way of becoming more rational without engaging in rational inquiry. These precautions should make us feel a bit more optimistic about the philosophic endeavour. However, a truly cautious individual will here note a difficulty: nothing in these measures guarantees safety. It is *likely* that when someone is thirty, they will be prepared enough to undertake dialectic, and with every *epode* a person will come *closer* to putting his soul in order or making this order *less* susceptible to disturbances. But it still seems that the only true test of preparedness for inquiry is inquiry.[156] This cautious inquirer might ask: can I know that I am ready without putting myself in harm's way?

Unfortunately, I do not have an answer to this question. Or, at any rate, the answer seems to be simply: no, you cannot *know.* I do have, however, some information that may allay some of this cautious inquirer's concern. While it may be the case that at a certain point you just have to trust that you are prepared, and begin this dangerous activity, even if the worst should happen

[156] In a sense preparing for philosophy is like baking. We have to trust the insides aren't gooey and the bottom's not burnt, even though the true test is taking it out of the pan and cutting into it. We have to trust that what we've done is enough. We have some guidelines for what generally should be enough, but the guidelines don't guarantee success.

and you fall into corruption, it turns out that this corruption can be corrected.[157] In this final chapter of this dissertation, I will explore a method for correcting corruption. This method, I suggest, is a combination of *elenchus* and *epode.* I will take a second look at two key passages from earlier in the dissertation, the Fineness Passage and *Laws* X, and show that a close parallel between them reveals this method of correction. I will conclude by showing that the *Charmides* is this point about correction dramatized. This chapter, then, brings together passages and themes from the rest of the dissertation, and unites them in a final component of preparedness.

2 Parallel Texts: The Fineness Passage and Laws X

My first task will be to demonstrate the parallel between the two passages. I will do this by showing that the central characters in these two passages are parallel. The adopted son, at the end of the Fineness Passage, and the impious man, at the beginning of *Laws* X, are in the same position. Because they are in the same position, and because there are striking similarities between the two, their differences will be put more sharply into focus. Their differences, I will argue, show that we should recognize not only the corrupting, but the correcting function of *elenchus*, and show how something like *epode* can make the difference between the two functions.

2.1 Similarities Between the Adopted Son and the Impious Man

As it has been some time since the first chapter of this dissertation, let us quickly remind ourselves of the content of the Fineness Passage. Recall that in Book VII of the *Republic*, where Socrates spells out the curriculum for prospective philosopher rulers, we are given a description

[157] Or, at least some corruption can be corrected. I think it is an open possibility that some forms of corruption are absolute. At any rate, if we are considering someone who is generally cautious and has followed precautions, then the concern that he should become corrupted absolutely seems minimal.

of a problem with how argument (*logos*) is currently treated: it is introduced too early. When young people are exposed to argument, they will be liable to mistreat it, argue for fun, get themselves confused, and become corrupted to lawlessness (537e, 539b-c). Socrates provides an image to show how this happens. The image, remember, is of a young man who is brought up from childhood by adoptive parents, surrounded by flatterers. We can see how argument can lead to corruption when we consider what will happen when this adopted son discovers the parents with which he has been raised are not his biological ones, a discovery that will come from repeated refutation (538d-e). Socrates suggests that if he cannot find his biological parents, though the adopted son honoured his adoptive parents before his discovery, he would not honour them after it. Instead, he would be led astray by the flatterers, honouring them in place of either type of parent. In this image, the adoptive parents represent beliefs about, for example, just things, with which the youth has been raised since childhood (538c6-7); the flatterers represent pursuits that give pleasure and "flatter our souls" (538d1-2); the biological parents represent the truth about the Forms, for example the form of the Just. So, a man, after being repeatedly refuted, will stop honouring his previously held beliefs, but, being unable to find the truth, turns to ways of life that flatter his soul. This amounts to corruption, which I analyzed into two elements in the first chapter of this dissertation, an epistemological one and a behavioural one. The epistemological element consists in youths no longer believing what they believed before, which leads to the behavioural one, which consists in them, for example, going around arguing with everyone, or living hedonistically.

The adopted son of the *Republic* takes on the form of the impious man in *Laws* X. In this section, I will go over the striking similarities between these two figures. There are three main similarities: 1) they both have flatterer-like beliefs, 2) they both were raised with adoptive-

parent-like beliefs, and 3) argument causes them both to move from the adoptive-parent-like beliefs to the flatterer-like ones.

There are three impious beliefs the impious man might hold: he might believe 1) the gods do not exist, 2) they do exist, but they do not care about us, or 3) they do care about us, but are easily bribed (885b). We are told that the impious man is one who has a greed for pleasure (888a), and it is his impious beliefs that allow him to pursue these pleasures; with these beliefs, a man can pursue pleasures without fear of retribution from the gods. For example, if the impious man believes the gods exist and care about us, but are easy to bribe, he thinks he can simply make up for any injustice he might perform in his pursuit of pleasure after the fact (885d-e). The impious man is presented as one who will perform injustice as long as he can get away with it. This attitude should be familiar from the *Republic*'s famous Ring of Gyges thought experiment (359bff). In this thought experiment, Glaucon has us imagine a magical ring that makes a person invisible, and he suggests that if a man can use this ring to ensure no one knows what he is doing, he will perform injustice. We can think of the impious beliefs in the *Laws* as psychological forms of possessing this magical ring: they make a man believe he can perform injustice without retribution. If the gods did not exist, did not care about us, or were easily bribed, then the impious man would not be punished by the gods for any injustice he might perform.

Understanding these beliefs in this way allows us to see the first similarity between the impious man of the *Laws* and the adopted son of the *Republic.* The impious man, like the

adopted son, has turned to flatterer-like beliefs.[158] The impious beliefs flatter the soul in that they allow the impious man to pursue pleasure, and pursue pleasure at the expense of justice. However, we should not think that these beliefs are therefore insincerely held. That the impious man sincerely holds these beliefs is clear from what the Athenian tells us. The Athenian tells us, for instance, that the impious man is not impious solely due to his acratic nature (886a); he is not impious despite knowing how to be properly pious. Likewise, the adopted son does not honour the flatterers despite knowing they are not who he should honour; he honours the flatterers only after the realization that the parents he grew up with were not his true parents. Realizing this, and being unable to find his true parents, the adopted son thinks that the flatterers are as worthy of honour as anyone else (and besides, they give him pleasure!) Both the impious man and the adopted son, then, live lives that flatter their souls, and have beliefs that correspond to these lives.

The impious man is like the adopted son in a second way: the impious man did not grow up with flatterer-like beliefs, but was swayed from adoptive-parent-like beliefs. The Athenian says that it is "necessary to hate and bear with difficulty" the impious man, because he now requires convincing when he was raised to know better (887d). He was told stories (*muthoi*) from birth in things such as enchantments (*epode*), prayers, and the actions of their parents (887d-e), which instilled pious beliefs. These beliefs are like the adoptive parents in the *Republic* because they are ones that the man was brought up with from childhood, and seem to be endorsed as

[158] The flatterers do not seem to be beliefs themselves, but are initially described as ways of life – when we consider the youth disbelieving his adoptive-parent-like beliefs, he is said to move to a life (*bion*) which flatters him (ἔστι πρὸς βίον ἄλλον ἢ τὸν κολακεύοντα εἰκότως προσχωρήσεται;). However, it is clear that the youth will have beliefs that correspond to this way of living, and I take it flatterer-like beliefs are ones that help the person live this flatterer-like way of life. Another example: in Book VIII, in describing the role of the soul-parts of the soul in an oligarchic man (one whose appetites are in control), Socrates says that the rational part of the soul will be forced "to neither calculate nor look into anything other than how more money can be made out of little" (553d).

lawful. Moreover, they are instilled through means other than argument. As we saw in the *Republic*, myth is one main way in which adoptive-parent-like beliefs are instilled. The same is true in the *Laws.*

Finally, the impious man is like the adopted son in a third way: the cause of the change from parent-like beliefs to flatterer-like ones is brought on by argument. The Athenian makes a point of setting aside the poets as the cause of the corruption. Instead, he points the finger at the natural philosophers (886d).[159] The natural philosophers, for example, have the ability to present an opposing argument to the argument that Clinias presents a few lines earlier. Clinias argues that the sun and the stars exist, the sun and stars are gods, therefore the gods exist (886a). The philosophers refute this by arguing that the sun and stars are mere lumps of earth that cannot play the role that the Athenian and Clinias want to ascribe to the gods (886d-e). The cause of the impious man's corruption, then, is argument, just as the cause of the adopted son's corruption is argument.

2.2 Difference Between the Adopted Son and the Impious Man: Correcting vs Corrupting

So, there is a deep parallel between the adopted son in the *Republic,* and the impious man in the *Laws,* across three key similarities. There is also an important difference between them. While we leave the adopted son to his corruption at the end of Book VII of the *Republic,* we see the Athenian devote almost the entirety of Book X of the *Laws* to curing the impious man of his corruption. This difference is important because it suggests that the corruption we have been worried about since the beginning of this dissertation is reversible. We know from the *Republic*

[159] The parallel isn't exact, but it is clearly the natural philosophers' ability to present an opposing argument or refutation to the view that Clinias just presented that is being singled out as dangerous here. But the difference is that there is a stress on specific beliefs in the *Laws* that isn't in the *Republic*. It is specifically beliefs about the moon and the stars, that they are simply earth and stone, that is the problem the Athenian is concerned with.

that there are ways to prevent corruption from happening. For instance, we can prevent some corruption by not exposing youths to argument. Now we can see that the *Laws* suggests that we can not only prevent corruption, but correct it. When we look at the way the Athenian cures the impious man, we will find two methods familiar from Part Two of this dissertation. In trying to convince the second type of impious man, the one who admits the gods exist, but claims that they do not care about us, the Athenian uses a two-pronged approach: argument and myth. The change of method as well as the reason for this change is noted at 903a-b, where the Athenian concludes his argument (*logos*), and moves onto his myth (*muthos*). As we saw in my chapter on *epodes,* this myth is described as an *epode.* I take both of these steps to be important to the correction of corruption, and I will spend some time here going through them.

In the argument step, the dialogue looks not too different from a Socratic dialogue. The Athenian assumes the role of questioner, questioning his interlocutor Clinias, who is standing in for the impious man. The argument is several pages long, from 900b-903b. The impious man in this section is presumed to have some basic pious beliefs about the gods, so Clinias agrees that the gods are virtuous (900c), omniscient (901d), and omnipotent (901d). Because of these qualities, the argument goes, the gods would not neglect human affairs. The Athenian takes Clinias through several options why someone might think the gods neglect humans, and shows that no option is compatible with all three of these agreed-upon qualities of the gods. At the end of the arguments, the Athenian claims that the impious man "has been forced by the argument to agree that he was not speaking correctly" (903a-b). In other words, he has been refuted.

The first part of the correction of the corruption of the impious man, therefore, is to present him with an argument that refutes his position: to present him with *elenchus*. That the *elenchus* leads to correcting corruption should be both familiar and surprising. It is familiar

because this is, in fact, a common way to think of the function of *elenchus:* it is meant to rid a person of his false beliefs. In the most explicit description of *elenchus* in the corpus, which comes from the *Sophist*, *elenchus* is described as, "the greatest and most powerful of cleansings," which cleanses the refuted person of false beliefs (230c-d). [160] Once refuted, the person will realize that though he thought he knew the things about which he was refuted, he really does not (230a, 230d). As we can see, in this passage *elenchus* is described as a beneficial process, one that would not surprisingly lead to a correction of corruption.

However, as I said, that *elenchus* should help cure the impious man in the *Laws* should also be surprising. It should be surprising given the man's similarity to the adopted son in the Fineness Passage of *Republic*, and given my interpretation of the Fineness Passage in the first chapter of this dissertation. In the *Republic*, the arguments that refute the adopted son's position and make him disbelieve what he believed before lead to his corruption. We have just seen how the impious man is like the adopted son of the *Republic*. So, it turns out the same thing that causes corruption in the *Republic* is the first step of curing this corruption in the *Laws*. What explains this same activity leading to different results?

2.2.1 Inadequate Explanations of the Difference

One important difference between the passages that one might think explains the difference between *elenchus* leading to corruption and leading to correction is the nature of the beliefs that the *elenchus* targets. The adopted son, before the refutation, honoured his adoptive parents, but the impious man, before the refutation, honoured his flatterers. Stripping away the

[160] This activity is not introduced with "*elenchus"* and its cognates, but with "cross-examining" (*dierōtaō*) and "scrutinizing" (*exetazō*) (230b). However, this quickly changes, and when the whole activity is referred to a page later, it is described as *elenchus* (231b).

metaphor, this means that the adopted son believes lawful beliefs that are images of the truth (even if not the truth itself), while the impious man believes unlawful and false beliefs. Therefore, in the *Republic*, the adopted son comes to question beliefs that are lawful and true, while in the *Laws*, the impious man questions beliefs that were unlawful and false. Questioning false beliefs is important philosophical work:[161] false beliefs are harmful to one's soul, and can prevent gaining true beliefs. The Athenian is doing good work by making the impious man question these beliefs, but those who make the adopted son question his adoptive-parent-like beliefs is doing bad work.

This is an important difference, but cannot completely explain why the adopted son is corrupted and the impious man saved. [162] We can see the inadequacy of this explanation when we consider a point I made in Section One of this dissertation: in order to become a philosopher, a person must question the beliefs he unquestioningly believed before.[163] The adopted son must realize that the parents he grew up with are not his biological parents – only then will he search for and be able to find his true parents. So, the difference between the illicit use of argument in the *Republic* and the legitimate use of argument in the *Laws* is not simply that it is bad to question adoptive-parent-like beliefs, but good to question the flatterer-like beliefs. In fact, a

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[161] And is the purpose of *elenchus*. See for example *Sophist* 230b-c.

[162] That the nature of the beliefs that are refuted is an important difference is consistent with my claim in the first section of this dissertation, that the topic of refutation is not important. The point there was that the destabilizing force of argument is effective whether the argument is about ethical topic or about non-ethical topics. Here, the same is still true. However, we can say that the topic of refutation is important in that it is important that the refutations are against false beliefs rather than true ones. Refuting someone's true beliefs (someone who, as the first part of this dissertation argues, is not properly prepared for it), and making them disbelieve these beliefs, is the first step of corruption. Refuting someone's false beliefs, and making them disbelieve theses beliefs, is the first step of correction. That being said, refuting either someone who has true beliefs or someone who has false beliefs *can* lead to corruption. This will become clearer in the following paragraphs.

[163] In Section One I describe what this means in detail. The same point, I take it, is made briefly at *Republic* 534b-d, where Socrates says that in order to be considered dialectical, a person must be able to give an account that survives refutation. For how could

person should question the adoptive-parent-like beliefs – eventually. Thus, it is not necessarily true that a person who makes someone question adoptive-parent-like beliefs is corrupting them.

From this, you may recall that in the first chapter of this dissertation, I argue that the psychological development and stage of education can make the difference between education and corruption in a case of repeated refutation. One might suppose, then, that a complete explanation of why *elenchus* is beneficial in the *Laws* but harmful in the *Republic* is a combination of the difference in the beliefs that are being overturned (adoptive-parent-like vs flatterer-like) and the difference in preparedness for that overturning. The reasoning behind this would be: it is good to get rid of flatterer-like beliefs at any point in time, and it is only good to get rid of adoptive-parent-like beliefs at a late stage of education and maturity. So, a person needs to be more prepared to have adoptive-parent-like beliefs overturned than to have flatterer-like beliefs overturned. Then, the explanation would continue, the adopted son of the *Republic* is corrupted because he is not prepared to have his adoptive-parent-like beliefs overturned; the impious man of the *Laws* is benefited because he is prepared to have his flatterer-like beliefs overturned.[164]

However, this explanation does not accurately represent the process of corruption under consideration. Although it is true that having false beliefs is bad and getting rid of false beliefs is good, it is not true that refuting a person's false belief will ultimately be good for them. In order to understand why this is the case, let me remind you of a point Socrates makes in the Fineness Passage. He tells us that age makes a difference in behaviour: a youth will imitate an

[164] This solution would be parallel to the solution I presented for the contradiction about contradiction in chapter one of this dissertation (where the youths were prepared for the contradiction about sensory data, but not prepared for the contradiction about the Forms).

antilogician, whereas an older man will imitate a dialectician (539c). Both the youth and the older man, being exposed to argument, come to disbelieve what they believed before; to re-apply the image of the adoptive parents, they both realize that their adoptive parents are not their biological parents. However, while the younger man, after being unable to find his biological parents, will turn to his flatterers, the older man will continue to live well. As I put it in the first chapter, the effects of argument are different depending on a person's soul-configuration. The difference between good and bad results here is not dependent on the beliefs that are disbelieved – those are the same in both cases. The difference depends on what the person does once he has come to disbelieve what he believed before. In this way, the impious man could potentially, after being refuted, still turn to flatterer-like beliefs.

And this potential is dangerously real. There is evidence the impious man is in the position of the young man, not the old man.[165] The Athenian tells us that part of the reason for the impious man's brand of impiety is his lack of reason (*alogias*), which makes him unable to reconcile evidence that unjust people seem to prosper in life with his belief that the gods are not unjust (900a-b). This should remind us of the misologist in the *Phaedo*. A person becomes a misologist, remember, when he lacks skill in argument (*logous*) (90b). A person without skill in argument is susceptible to misology because he will not be able to distinguish a good argument from a bad one. It is this inability that constitutes the adopted son's inability to discover his biological parents. He hears an argument that the fine is fine, then one that the fine is shameful,

[165] The impious man is even called a young man (*tou neou*) at 900c, and at 905c his opponents (the Athenian and his interlocutors) are called a gathering of elders, or senate (*gerousia*). However, I take it that the reasoning I present in this paragraph is more important than this reference to age in determining the psychological position the impious man is in. Although Plato seems to have certain ideas of how psychological development is associated with age, I want to leave the possibility of a juvenile older man open – that age is not a guarantee of psychological development.

and he is unable to discern which of these arguments is right (or independently come up with his own argument about the fine and the shameful). He gives up his search and turns to his flatterers. The fact that the impious man becomes impious rather than continuing to search for a way to reconcile the evidence with his belief means he is at a similar level of preparedness as the adopted son. He is not in the position of the older man, but the younger man. So, we should not think that the reason *elenchus* leads to corruption in the case of the adopted son but correcting corruption in the case of the impious man is a difference in their level of preparedness for *elenchus.* On the contrary, it is reasonable to think they are equally unprepared for independent rational activity that we might expect from an older man. But then we are still left wanting an explanation for the difference between corruption and correction.

2.2.2 The Real Explanation of the Difference

In order to see how the Athenian corrects the corruption of the impious man with *elenchus,* we must realize one thing: that the correction (and the corruption) that follows the *elenchus* is dependent mostly not on the *elenchus* itself but what follows it.

At this point I should say a few words about *elenchus* more generally. We need to get a bit clearer on what this activity is, to make sure we are talking about the same activity when we say it can lead to correction or corruption. So far, I have been relying on my description of the activity described in the Fineness Passage for my interpretation of *elenchus,* or refutation. There, recall, the description is: a person answers a question like ‘what is the fine?’, then an “argument refutes him,” and, “being refuted many times and many ways, he is thrown into the belief that this is no more fine than shameful,” etc. (538d-e); and later, when the person exposed to arguments have “refuted many and been refuted by many, he quickly and violently falls into not

believing what he believed before" (539c). Note the similarity between this and the description of a person undergoing *elenchus* in the *Sophist:*

> They [the proponents of *elenchus*] cross-examine someone when he thinks he's saying something though he's saying nothing. Then, since his opinion will vary inconsistently, these people will easily scrutinize them. They collect his opinions together during the discussion, put them side by side, and show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects in relation to the same things and in the same respects. (230b)[166]

These two passages paint a picture in which *elenchus* happens when a person is made to question, through argument, his prior beliefs. As I put it in the first chapter of this dissertation, and as the *Sophist* emphasizes ("show that they conflict with each other at the same time on the same subjects…"), refutation amounts to showing a person a contradiction.

It is important to carve out *elenchus* from its possible downstream effects. The direct and immediate effect of *elenchus,* and what shows it has been successful, is puzzlement. As described in detail in my first chapter, the soul does not know what to do when it is presented with a contradiction. This creates puzzlement, and it is up to the puzzled person to decide how to get himself out of it.[167] A person could, for instance, decide that he had good reason to believe his initial belief, and thus ignore the argument that refuted it;[168] he could decide the argument is better than his belief, and thus take his initial belief to be false;[169] or he could, like the adopted

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[166] Trans. Nicholas P. White

[167] Though he may not have much agency in this. For instance, our youths turn to their flatterers not so much because of a conscious decision to as because their psychology did not allow them another option.

[168] As, for instance, Adeimantus seems to in *Republic* 487a-d, where he says he thinks his inexperience in argument makes it so that he is led astray by Socrates' arguments bit by bit.

[169] As, for instance, the people who are to benefit from refutation in the *Sophist.*

son, take the initial belief and its negation to be equally plausible, and give up on truth. These alternatives, however, should not be thought to belong to the *elenchus.* I will, shortly, investigate reasons why *elenchus* can lead to different results. For now, I simply suggest that anything that follows the puzzlement brought on by showing a contradiction through argument is an addition to *elenchus,* and *elenchus* proper is the arguments that present the contradiction.

What *elenchus* amounts to, however, has been a hotly debated topic in Plato scholarship. A central issue in this debate has been whether *elenchus,* as Socrates performs it, is a solely negative or purgative process, or whether it has a positive or constructive element.[170] Is *elenchus* only capable of making someone question their previously held beliefs? Or is it also capable of suggesting new beliefs? (Usually, according to proponents of the positive view, the new belief is that some original belief is false.) What I have described in the previous paragraph is the negative view of *elenchus.* However, I do not intend to solve the debate between these two views here.[171] I believe, even, that for the purposes of what follows, I can remain more or less neutral (though, as my description in the previous paragraph suggests, I do prefer the negative view).

It is important for my argument that *elenchus,* at least in the passages I am considering, has a purely negative immediate effect – this is what I describe above as puzzlement. It is not

[170] Vlastos, G. (1983) is usually credited with making *elenchus* a hot topic in Plato scholarship, and is also a key example of the constructive interpretation.

[171] There is also a way in which what I am interested in sidesteps a large part of this debate. Scholars have been interested partly in determining what *elenchus* is because they want to determine whether Socrates has a distinct method, and if he does, what it is. I do not want to make any claims about Socrates' Method, other than that he sometimes refutes his interlocutors in the way I understand refutation to work – a modest claim, I think, by anyone's reckoning. Carpenter and Polansky (2002), for instance say, "[w]hat can be said universally about refutation is this: Given that someone has stated a belief […] or some belief can be taken as an implication of or be construed from what the person has said, refutation occurs when one or more statements are made or a series of questions asked that raise a difficulty for holding that belief in the way the interlocutor does, a difficulty that would, if appreciated, require some significant modification of the belief" (90-91). Benson (1989) gives a similar account, and points out that the difference between the negative and positive (what he calls the nonconstructivist and the constructivist) theories of *elenchus* is that the negative ends here, and the positive goes on to identify some proposition that was part of the *elenchus* as false (592).

important to me, however, that this negative effect is all that *elenchus* is capable of, as a proponent of the negative view would claim. It is possible (though I think unlikely) that the *elenchi* I am considering are positive in nature, and the different downstream effects can be explained by the interlocutor's inability to see or understand whatever it is in the *elenchus* that would produce the positive effect. So, for example, the positive view says that we should expect the interlocutor, after being refuted, to believe that their initial position is false. As I have pointed out, there are situations where this does not happen. These situations can be explained by the proponent of the positive view as ones where the interlocutor has failed to see the positive aspect of the *elenchus.*[172] However, in situations in which there might not have been such a positive belief,[173] puzzlement is the immediate effect, and what happens downstream is determined by factors other than the *elenchus*.

I suggested in my first chapter, briefly, that we can think of the immediate effect that follows *elenchus*, the puzzlement, as characterized by a destabilization of the youth's rational soul resulting from the confusion brought on through multiple refutations. With the discussion of psychology from my theory of *epodes* on the table, we are in a better position to understand this. We know that the ideal configuration of the soul puts the rational part in charge of the non-rational parts, and that when a lower part of the soul takes charge, the person will behave in ways dictated by that part. So, considering the adopted son, we know that his lawless behaviour is the

[172] Although, it is perhaps more likely that the proponent of the positive view would not count these as instances of *Socratic Elenchus.* Some, especially those who claim that Socrates' *elenchus* has a positive element, want to make a sharp distinction between early and middle/later dialogues. Thus, it might seem odd to those familiar with this debate that I am discussing the *Republic* and the *Laws* (and my claim that the *elenchus* in these cases are purely negative might be less controversial). However, I will, in a moment, return to the *Charmides.* As the *Charmides* is considered an early dialogue, this discussion will be more relevant.

[173] The reader can look to the literature on this topic for more detailed picture of this debate. For a defense of a version of the negative view I endorse see Benson (1989) and Benson (2002).

result of having a lower part in charge. The puzzlement, the destabilization, is the step between his leading a lawful existence and leading a lawless one.

There is an image from *Republic* VIII that will be useful in understanding *elenchus* in terms of psychology. Book VIII recounts the four different unjust constitutions of the state and their corresponding unjust men. It describes how state and man can be corrupted from the just philosophic state, to the timocratic, to the oligarchic, to the democratic, to the tyrannical (or from being ruled by the rational part, to being ruled by the spirited part, to three increasingly bad ways of being ruled by the appetitive part). These degenerations often involve some sort of conflict in the youth's life, where the youth initially has the constitution of his father, but some event or external influence shakes this constitution. For instance, Socrates describes the young oligarch as growing up following in his timocratic father's footsteps, but he sees his father get disgraced: "perhaps he [the father] has been a general, or has held some other important office, and has then been dragged into court by mischievous sycophants and put to death or banished or outlawed and has lost all his property" (553b).[174] Seeing his father disgraced upsets the timocratic constitution of his soul, and as a result, he,

> drives from the throne in his own soul the honor-loving and spirited part that ruled there. Humbled by poverty, he turns greedily to making money, and, little by little, saving and working, he amasses property. Don't you think that this person would [then][175] establish his appetitive and money-making part on the throne, setting it up as a great king within

[174] Trans. Paul Shorey
[175] The translation does not make explicit the temporal story as clearly as the Greek. I have added "then" to account for the "*tote"* in the Greek.

himself, adorning it with golden tiaras and collars and girding it with Persian swords? (553a-c)[176]

So, the story goes, the youth gets a shock when he sees that the life his father led, which he looked up to and tried to emulate, was not successful. Because his father was timocratic, and the youth was emulating his way of life, the spirited part of his soul was sitting in "the throne of his own soul" – the spirited part of his soul was in charge. However, as the passage shows, the upset leads to an overthrowing of this part of the soul, and even worse, the appetitive part takes control.

The image of the throne of the soul is useful in understanding the destabilization brought on by *elenchus.* Note that the passage above suggests that in the overthrowing, the turnaround of soul-parts is not immediate. The spirited part of the soul is de-throned; because the youth has to live in poverty, money becomes important to him; *then* (*tote*) the appetitive part of the soul gets the throne. There is a time when the throne is empty. The youth exposed to refutation in Book VII, like the youths described in Book VIII, moves from a better to a worse soul-configuration. The youths in both books require an upheaval for this change in configuration to occur. In Book VII, puzzlement is the equivalent of the empty throne of Book VIII, and this puzzlement is brought about by *elenchus.*[177] And, because *elenchus* leads to puzzlement, we can say that *elenchus* generally causes an empty throne that primes the soul for a re-configuration.[178]

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[176] Trans. G.M.A. Grube and rev. C.D.C Reeve

[177] So, for example, in the case of the adopted son exposed to refutations, it is the puzzlement that leaves the throne open. When the person is surrounded by flatterers, or "ways of life that flatter the soul," then, it is easy for the person to move to these ways of life, and have a lower part of their soul assume the throne.

[178] *elenchus* → puzzlement(empty throne) → corruption(worse soul-part takes throne)/correction(better soul-part takes throne). Whether education would also fit, along with corruption and correction, in the last part of this progress is an open question, I take it. Perhaps, because a person who will be educated is the person who is well-prepared for

How does this analysis of *elenchus* help us determine why the adopted son is corrupted and the impious man corrected of his corruption by *elenchus*? As I argued, this difference between corruption and correction cannot be explained by the fact that *elenchus* makes the adopted son question true beliefs while it makes the impious man question false beliefs. Nor, as I have argued, can the difference be explained by a relative difference in maturity and therefore ability to strive for the truth after *elenchus* between these two characters, as they both seem to lack maturity. Well, recall how these two characters are similar. At the beginning of *Laws* Book X, the impious man is in the position of the corrupted adopted son of the *Republic,* so he no longer believes the parents he grew up with are his true parents and he no longer honours them. He instead honours flatterers and believes they are worthy of honour. To take the imagery of *Republic* Book VIII, the appetitive part of him is sitting in the throne of his soul. We want to see how the Athenian returns this impious man to his former lawful way of living. Book VIII suggests that in order to do this, the Athenian must somehow upset the impious man's current soul-arrangement, and de-throne the appetitive part. Luckily, he has just the method for destabilizing the soul: *elenchus.* Thus, the Athenian makes use of the *elenchus* to make the impious man believe that the flatterers are no longer worthy of honour. Then there is a void of honouring that must be filled – there is an empty throne over which the soul-parts can vie. What I have been trying to show is that, at this point, a person is susceptible to outside influence.[179]

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refutation, he has an immunity to the danger of puzzlement. This might mean that the puzzlement that occurs before education is not characterized by an empty throne.

[179] And internal influence. For instance, let's take the case where the appetitive part of the soul is dethroned. If it is strong and if nothing is done to further weaken it, even if it is temporarily dethroned, it will likely simply re-take the throne. Here, internal influences seem to be the deciding factor. But I take it the external and internal influences are not easily separated, and that the internal structure of the soul will factor into what kind of external things will

The soul-parts are in disarray, any one of them could vie for the throne. This is what the flatterers take advantage of when the youth in the *Republic* comes to believe the parents he grew up with are not his true parents. And it is what the Athenian must take advantage of here.

The only difficulty now is ensuring that the soul-part that takes the throne after this dethroning is the soul-part we want. In the case of the adopted son, no aftercare is provided – he is left to his own devices after his *elenchus.* The difference for the impious man is that the Athenian does not abandon him. Rather, the Athenian provides an *epode* after his *elenchus*. At 903a-b, the Athenian concludes his argument, suggesting that his opponent would by this point be forced by the argument to agree that he was not speaking correctly in expressing his impious belief. However, the Athenian wants to convince this man not only that it is not true that the gods do not care about us, but also that it is true that the gods care about us. For this second goal, he suggests a change in tack; he suggests using a myth, and he calls this myth an *epode.* This is what makes the difference between corruption and correction. The similarities and difference between the impious man and the adopted son can be seen in the following diagram (where A represents a soul that follows adoptive-parent-like beliefs, B represents the soul in instability, and C represents the soul following flatterer-like ways of life (a corrupted soul)):

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influence it. For instance, tragic poetry will be more of an external influence when the internal part of the soul attuned to it, the appetitive part, is stronger. (See, for example, *Republic* 560a-b).

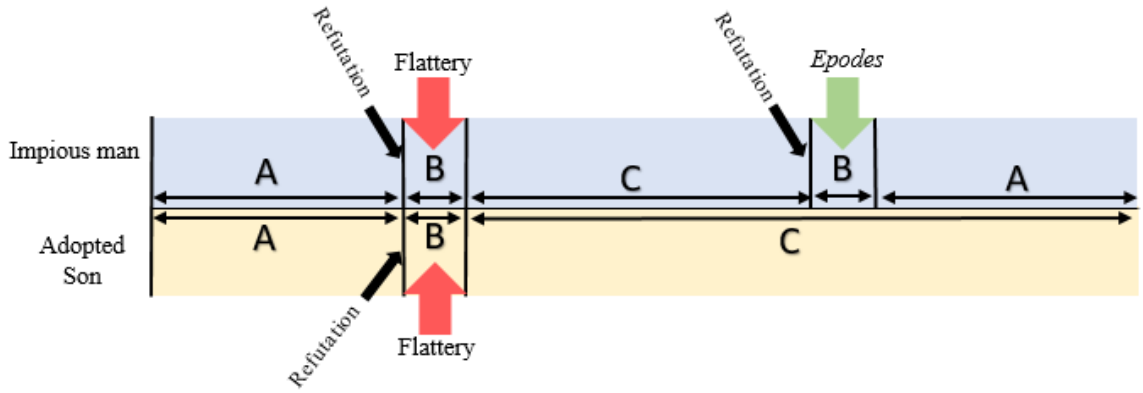

Figure 1: Lives of the Impious Man and the Adopted Son, Compared

We have already seen how this myth works as an *epode* in Chapter 3. What should be evident is the pressing need for the *epode* at this time. The Athenian has just performed an *elenchus* on the impious man, leaving him vulnerable to influence. Without anything strengthening the parts of his soul that need strengthening, then he will simply turn to whatever things currently flatter his soul. Because he is not a mature inquirer, it is unlikely he will come to find the truth or even come to lawful conclusions. The *epode* is therefore a safe way to steer the impious man in the right direction after destabilizing him with *elenchus* because it will exercise his soul in accordance with reason in a way that does not involve rational inquiry.[180]

3 Application: Charmides

There is a remarkable parallel between the *Laws'* impious man and the *Republic*'s adopted son. I hope at this point to have made a strong case that, because of this parallel, these two characters' opposite fates can tell us something interesting about *elenchus* and *epode:*

[180] As long as the they are the recommended kind of *epode.* Recall, there will be some things (like some myths, for instance), that function just like the recommended kind of *epode*, in that they exercise soul-parts, but exercise the wrong parts or parts not in accordance with reason.

elenchus can be the first stage of corruption or correction of corruption, and *epode* can make the difference in determining which of these two happens. In this final section, I will show that this point about *elenchus* and *epode* is dramatized in the *Charmides*. Through doing this, I will in part make the case for the roles of *elenchus* and *epode* even stronger, and in part add to my interpretation of the *Charmides.*[181]

In the previous chapter, we saw that one question that has concerned scholars is whether Charmides and Critias have been benefitted by the end of the dialogue. Most believe they have not been benefited.[182] A related question that has concerned scholars is: why did Plato choose Charmides and Critias, notorious tyrants, as Socrates' interlocutors?[183] This question is related to the previous one in that we might think, as I suggested in the previous chapter, that Charmides' and Critias' becoming tyrants is further reason to suppose that they do not benefit from the activity of the dialogue.

I have an answer to this question that follows from what I have just argued and from interpreting the dialogue as I have done in the previous chapter. The fact that Charmides, in particular, goes on to become a tyrant can be explained by the fact that he is an interlocutor in a dialogue that mentions *epode,* but does not show this *epode.* Socrates, in performing his *elenchus,* destabilizes the rational part of Charmides' soul. The *epode,* we have seen, can be used as a form of after-care for the potentially dangerous *elenchus.* Socrates does not give the proper

[181] I see the parts of this chapter and the last working together and re-enforcing each other. Thus, what I say in this section about the *Charmides* depends on and re-enforces the claims about *elenchus* and *epode* from the previous section. It also depends on and re-enforces my interpretation of the *Charmides* from the previous chapter (where I argue that the *epode* is not seen in the dialogue).
[182] with the notable exception of Tuozzo (2011), who argues that Charmides has been benefited at least a little bit.
[183] It is almost universally accepted that Plato

after-care that a young person should be given, and thus leaves Charmides susceptible to corruption.

I want to point out that my claim in this section is not that Socrates was wrong to *elenchize* Charmides simply because of the danger of *elenchus*, especially for young people. Rather, it is that, in addition to the danger of *elenchus*, the fact that the *epode* mentioned is not given to Charmides, and the parallel between the adoptive son and the impious man, mean that Socrates did not do as he ought to have in the *Charmides*, and that we are meant to see this. Let me quickly go over the evidence.

There are two main things that should make us think that we are meant to see that Socrates did not do as he ought. First, the absence of the *epode* is a conspicuous absence. There is a great deal of space devoted to talking about the *epode* in the dialogue. It also holds prominent places, marking the beginning and end of the discussion about temperance. I think it is no stretch to say we are supposed to think *something* about the *epode* when we read the dialogue. Moreover, that we do not even get to see this thing over which such a great deal is made clearly suggests that we should be noting its absence, and considering why we do not get to see it. Seeing how *epode* works in other dialogues should make it seems strange that Socrates does not give this one to Charmides. Moreover, when we see that, for instance, in the *Laws*, *epode* can be used as a form of aftercare to *elenchus*, we should be suspicious of Socrates' withholding of his *epode.*

Second, the dialogue gives us ample evidence of how Charmides will be influenced for the worse if he does not receive the *epode.* We know that the external influence is important after *elenchus*, and we saw that what made the difference between corruption and correcting corruption in the Fineness Passage and *Laws* X, respectively, was whether the external influence

was flatterers or *epodes.* When we see that Charmides does not receive the *epode,* we ask ourselves, what external influences will he be subject to?

It is clear that the main external influence Charmides will be subject to is Critias. We can see that he has already influenced the youth: in Charmides' last attempt at defining temperance he provides a definition that turns out to have come from Critias (161b-c, 162b-d). We can also see that he is likely to continue having a strong influence over the youth – at the end of the dialogue, we see this exchange: Charmides says,

> 'I would be acting badly if I failed to obey my guardian and did not carry out your orders.'
>
> 'Well then,' said Critias, 'these are my instructions.'
>
> 'And I shall execute them,' he said, 'from this day forward.'" (176c).[184]

That this influence should turn out to be corrupting is not surprising given that Critias was a ring leader of the Thirty Tyrants. Moreover, we get a glimpse at this corrupting influence in the dialogue itself. The instructions that Critias gives Charmides, leading to the exchange above, is to receive the *epode* from Socrates (176b-d). This instruction might at first seem like a positive influence, but we immediately see that this is not the case in the exchange following the one above, in which Charmides reveals he is willing to use force against Socrates to obey Critias' orders.[185] Thus, it seems as though Critias will continue to influence Charmides, and this influence will be corrupting.

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[184] Trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague

[185] Which seems to already indicate that corruption is happening, for at the beginning of the dialogue, after Charmides first asks for the *epode,* and Socrates asks if Charmides would like to get his permission first (*peithō*), Charmides wants to get his permission (156a). At the end of the dialogue he has apparently given up on getting permission, and will take the *epode* by force (*biazō*). Incidentally, the distinction between *peithō* and *biazō* plays an important role in the *Laws,* where it is said that laws should not use force alone, but a combination of persuasion and

Critias is also a corrupting influence in a more familiar way: as a flatterer. We see, for instance, Critias singing Charmides' praises throughout the opening of the dialogue. He praises his beauty at 154a, his philosophical and poetic skills at 154e-155a, and his temperance (and everything else) at 157d.[186] And it seems that others have noticed these fine qualities in Charmides, for when he first enters the dialogue, we see him surrounded by a group of admirers (154a). We know what happens when a youth is exposed to flatterers. Of course, before now we have been speaking only of metaphorical flatterers (flatterers within the adopted son metaphor, which represent ways of life that flatter the soul). However, it is not difficult to see how a literal flatterer would have a similar corrupting effect. And indeed, we see a description of such an effect in Book VI of the *Republic*, where we are told a promising youth, with good looks, noble lineage, courage, temperance, etc. (rather like Charmides),[187] is liable to become corrupted by flatterers (491b-492a, 494a-495a). Socrates predicts the path of corruption for this youth:

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force (see, for example, 722b). In *Laws* X, this theme is reprised at 885c-d, where the Athenian says the impious men will say to him and his interlocutors, "we claim now, as you claimed in the matter of laws, that before threatening us harshly (ἀπειλεῖν ἡμῖν σκληρῶς), you should first try to convince and teach us (ἐπιχειρεῖν πείθειν καὶ διδάσκειν), by producing adequate proofs (τεκμήρια), that gods exist…" (trans. R.G. Bury). Interestingly, in the transition between using argument to using myth (903a-b), these words arise again, and we are told that the argument has forced (*biazesthai*) the impious man to think he wasn't speaking correctly, and the first sentence of the myth begins with persuasion (*peithōmen*).

[186] He also rebukes him at 162d, after Charmides has failed to defend Critias' definition of temperance. Critias is said to grow angry with Charmides "just the way a poet is when his verse is mangled by the actors. So he gave him a look and said, 'Do you suppose, Charmides, that just because *you* don't understand what in the world the man meant who said that temperance was 'minding your own business', the man himself doesn't understand either?'" (trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague). A passage from the *Republic* comes to mind, where Socrates, in describing the effect the multitude will have on a man, says, "What private teaching do you think will hold out and not rather be swept away by the torrent of censure and applause, and borne off on its current, so that he will affirm the same things that they do to be honorable and base, and will do as they do, and be even such as they?" (492c-d, trans. Paul Shorey).

[187] Thanks to Tad Brennan for pointing out the potential similarity between Charmides and the promising youth of *Republic* VI (often thought to be a reference to Alcibiades)

> will his soul not be filled with unbounded ambitious hopes, and will he not think himself capable of managing the affairs of both Greeks and barbarians, and thereupon exalt himself, haughty of mien and stuffed with empty pride and void of sense [188]

It seems, then, that Charmides is in a particularly vulnerable position. He is already under the suspect influence of his uncle and guardian,[189] Critias, and he is also surrounded by flatterers. Performing an *elenchus* on him and not giving him any influence that would get him back on the straight and narrow, is dangerous. Socrates, then, in not providing the much-discussed *epode,* left the vulnerable Charmides to corrupting influences.

With all this in mind, below is a figure representing the two possible paths for Charmides, one that could have been provided for him, with an *epode* ("What could have happened"), and the one that was provided for him, with flatterers ("What did happen").

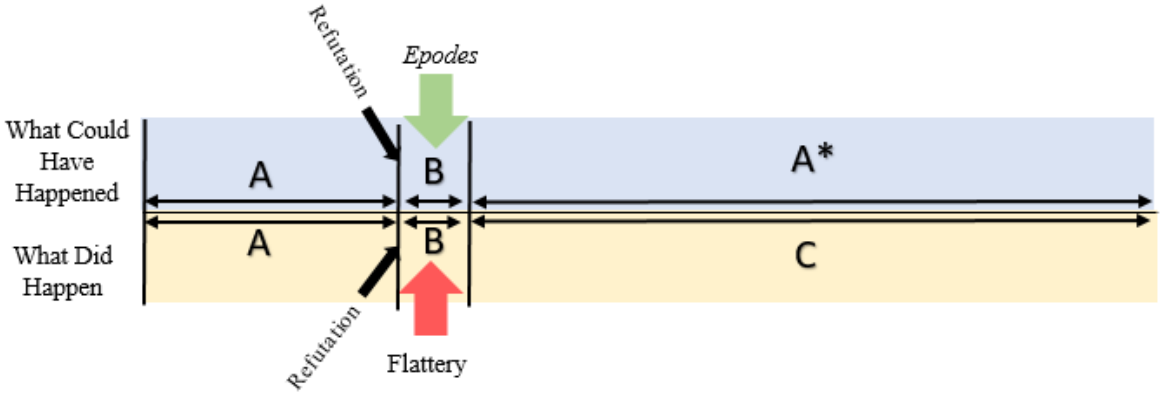

Figure 2: What Could Have Happened and What Did Happen to Charmides, Compared

[188] Trans. Paul Shorey

[189] Making Critias, as Tad Brennan has pointed out to me, not only a flatterer, but also quite literally an adoptive parent. Debra Nails (2002) says that Critias had become Charmides' guardian sometime within the three years preceding the dialogue, so this adoptive-parent status might be quite recent. However, she cites Plato for this fact, and it is unclear that this is implied anywhere in the dialogue. She might be inferring this from the fact that Critias is mentions as his guardian in the *Charmides,* which is set in 429, and not mentioned when Charmides is mentioned in the *Protagoras,* which is set in 432 (91). (Although, see Walsh (1984) for the dating of the *Protagoras*)

As in Figure 1, A represents a soul associated with lawful ways of living, B represents the soul in instability, and C represents a soul that has been corrupted. Note the similarity between the "What did happen" path and the path of the adopted son from The Fineness Passage.[190] Also note A* in the "What could have happened" path. I think it is an open question whether a person exposed to the process represented in the "What could have happened" path (*elenchus* followed by *epode*) would return exactly to their starting point, would become slightly better-off, or become slightly worse-off. A decision between these three options will depend on how much of an effect both the *elenchus* and the *epode* have.

How negligent does this make Socrates? The problem is, if even in the better path, where Socrates gives Charmides the *epode,* there are minimal gains to be had, why subject Charmides to the dangerous *elenchus*? We cannot accept Socrates' ostensible reason, that is, to determine Charmides' temperance. In the chapter on *epodes,* we saw that *epodes* can have a positive effect without requiring an *elenchus,* so even if Socrates followed the "What could have happened" path, it is not clear what performing the *elenchus* before the *epode* would do what performing the *epode* on its own would not. Consider again the impious man. The impious man has his corruption corrected by the Athenian through a two-step process: *elenchus* and *epode.* Now, in that case, the *elenchus* was necessary because putting the soul in a state of instability would prime it for the *epode* – it is easier to establish a new order if the previous one is destabilized first. However, if the previously established order is already lawful, as it was in the case of the

[190] Remember that the specific worry in the Fineness Passage in introducing youth to argument too early is that they will become lawless. As I said briefly in the first chapter of this dissertation, lawlessness is associate with tyranny, the worst devolution of the soul, because the tyrannical man is governed by his lawless desires (see esp. 571bff). By saying that lawlessness is the worry, Socrates is not saying that tyranny is the direct result of premature exposure to argument. However, because tyranny is the end of the road of degeneration, it is the eventual worry. In the *Charmides,* because Charmides literally becomes a tyrant, we can see this worry become realized.

adopted son and the impious man before he was impious, and seems to be in the case of Charmides, then it is not clear that this destabilization is necessary.

We know good can be had from performing an *elenchus* if the person is ready to use reasoning on their own to puzzle through their perplexity, or if they are in a corrupted state. To absolve Socrates of intentional wrong-doing, then, it seems there are three options. We could say that Socrates thought that Charmides was ready to think for himself, that he thought Charmides was already in a state of corruption, or that Socrates did not realize the dangers of *elenchus* or the benefits of *epodes*. I will not decide between these options here, but leave it open that any of these are possible. I will merely point out that the final option seems to be the most critical of Socrates, as the *elenchus* is a method he used often.[191]

4 Conclusion

Now we can see how truly interconnected the dangers and successes of philosophy are. *Elenchus* can educate, corrupt, and help correct corruption. We can see how, if our aspiring philosopher follows the proper stages of education and carefully navigates the dangers, *elenchus* will lead to his education. He will be able to successfully rationally inquire about the contradiction that *elenchus* presents him with, and eventually he will gain knowledge of the Forms. However, if he does not follow these stages and comes to it unprepared, *elenchus* can

[191] It seems that scholars are divided on whether to take the *Charmides* to be evidence that Plato wanted to criticize Socrates' methods. Notomi (2000) concludes, for instance that "Socratic cross-examination actually has destructive effects on young politicians" (250). While Schmid (1998), for instance, says Charmides' and Critias' connection to the thirty tyrants, as well as the seemingly Socratic definition of temperance given by Critias "raises urgently the question, whether Plato can show us that his teacher was *not* responsible for the future crimes of these, two of his most famous companions" (13). No one, to my knowledge, who thinks the *Charmides* contains a criticism, has argued that this criticism lies in Socrates' failure to produce his promised *epode.* This, no doubt, is in no small part due to the fact that most think the *elenchus* is the *epode*. McPherran, who we saw in the previous chapter, realizes that the *elenchus* is a preliminary to the *epode*, suggests that the *elenchus* has shown that Charmides and Critias to be too far gone for an *epode* to help them, (31).

lead to his corruption. He will be thrown into confusion, and his soul will become destabilized. This destabilization allows for a re-configuration of the soul, which, without proper attention, can be a re-configuration for the worse. Finally, not only can *elenchus* educate and corrupt, it can also correct corruption. Moreover, *elenchus* corrects corruption through the same mechanism through which it corrupts. If our aspiring philosopher finds himself with an improper soul-configuration, *elenchus* can destabilize the soul and prime it for a re-configuration. If this re-configuration is to be for the better, then he had better ensure that he has sufficient after-care.

One way to ensure this is with *epode. Epode*, like *elenchus,* turn out to be multi-purpose. *Epodes* can safely prepare our aspiring philosopher for education and they can help correct corruption. They do this through the same mechanism – through mechanical strengthening of appropriate soul parts, which is safe because it avoids dangerous rational inquiry.

CONCLUSION

The basics of what Plato thought about philosophy are perhaps widely known. That he argues that philosophers ought to be rulers in the *Republic*, for instance, is taught in many an Intro to Philosophy class. The caricature of Plato's views is essentially: knowledge and truth are all important, and philosophy is the only way to get at these; the philosophic life is the best way of life, so good as to be divine; it is a life of which the uninitiated, be they common folk, politicians, or kings, can only dream. Like all caricatures, there is some truth in this. However, from the emphasis of these details, we get the false impression that philosophy is clearly defined in Plato's works. Given philosophy's vast superiority to other ways of life, it is natural to think that it must be easily distinguishable from them. If there is one conclusion I would like to draw from this dissertation, it is that this impression is indeed false. It is false, moreover, in a surprising way. It turns out that the types of activities that are recommended for doing philosophy and becoming a philosopher look an awful lot like the ones warned against. More specifically, argument and rational inquiry seem to be at the heart of both what is good about philosophy, and what is dangerous about it. [192]

Thus, argument and rational inquiry have an ambiguous status in Plato, and this dissertation shows that what Plato tells us about philosophy pulls us in two directions. Argument and reasoning are hugely important to Plato, and necessary for philosophy. But – and this is something not fully recognized within Plato scholarship – Plato thinks that argument and rational inquiry are also dangerous: we are liable to fail if we do not know what we are doing, and, moreover, this failure can often lead to corruption.

[192] See footnote 4 for the issue of delineating philosophy, non-philosophy, and philosophy done badly.

The ambiguous status of argument and rational inquiry is something I have been drawing attention to throughout this dissertation. In Chapter 1, I showed that the same activity, rational inquiry brought on through contradiction, is educational in one context, and corrupting in another. Through a discussion of contradiction, I showed that we need to pay careful attention to the content of what we are asking a prospective philosopher to inquire about (for instance, whether we are asking him to inquire about Forms or particulars), as well as to the state of this prospective philosopher (for instance, his age, psychological development, and stage of education). In Chapter 2, I emphasized that these issues can be found throughout Plato, and that it is lack of skill in argument that is especially dangerous, and that it is especially dangerous because of how rational inquiry works. Chapters 3 and 4 took this as a challenge to finding a suitably safe form of becoming more philosophical, and argued that there is a way to use argument that avoids rational inquiry, but that nevertheless prepares a person for philosophy, namely, through *epode.* In Chapter 5, I returned to the ambiguous state of argument and rational inquiry, and showed that *elenchus* can be corrupting or corrective through the same psychological mechanism.

Let us finish this dissertation in the way we began it: by considering our aspiring philosopher. He wanted to become a philosopher because Plato had convinced him that the philosophic way of life is the best way of life. He was also worried about the potential corruption he might experience in trying to attain this way of life. Now, at the close of this dissertation, what can we say to our aspiring philosopher?

To begin, we can say that realizing that there is a potential for corruption is an essential first step. After this, he can know to avoid argument until he is older, and then approach it with an aim for the truth rather than a contentiousness or love of winning; he can practice myth and

argument as *epode* in the meantime, and know that *elenchus* and *epode* are there in case he strays from the path by mistake.

We can synthesize the advice from this Guide for our aspiring philosopher. Much of the advice on avoiding the dangers of philosophy amounts to, "Don't think!" Don't think about things that are beyond your comprehension, don't think until you can think correctly, don't think. Even when our aspiring philosopher is repeating arguments to himself as *epodes,* he is not thinking about how the argument works.

This brings home the idea that the philosophic activity is ambiguous for Plato. Because, of course, this prohibition on thinking isn't permanent, or even absolute. When our aspiring philosopher is ready, he is commanded, "Think!" And, were he to have followed the methodological suggestions in this Guide, he would indeed be prepared to do so.

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