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## IN DEFENSE OF CLITOPHON

G. S. BOWE

THE *CLITOPHON* WAS ACCEPTED as Plato's work by all ancient authors,<sup>1</sup> and it is being accepted as such by more and more modern scholars.<sup>2</sup> Clitophon the character seems to have been ill received by both ancient and modern writers, and this reception is something that I think needs more reflection. In this article I offer a brief review of some issues regarding the authenticity of the *Clitophon* before I go on to discuss how the dialogue and its main character have been understood. I want to suggest that various attempts to understand the meaning of the *Clitophon* in light of its perceived dramatic relationship to *Republic* 1 contain serious difficulties, and I want to argue that the dialogue ought to be understood on its own terms as a reflection on the importance of the protreptic implications of ἀπορία.<sup>3</sup>

This article has three parts. Part I discusses some aspects of the ancient tradition's acceptance of the *Clitophon*, followed by a discussion of confusions in Ficino's translations of the dialogue for Aldus. Many scholars attribute the *Clitophon*'s reputation as spurious to the 1513 Aldine edition, but the confusion can be traced further back. I also discuss several scholars who have changed their minds regarding the authenticity of the *Clitophon* from Ficino onwards, and I review a discussion of the *Clitophon*'s authenticity by Simon Slings, who has done the most extensive work on the dialogue in the twentieth century. Part II examines attempts to understand the *Clitophon* that rely on one of two perceived dramatic orderings, *Republic* 1–*Clitophon*,

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1. A possible exception is Xenophon, of which I say more later.

2. See for example, G. M. A. Grube, "The *Cleitophon* of Plato," *CP* 26 (1931): 302–8; H. Kesters, *Kérygmes de Socrate: Essai sur la formation du message socratique* (Louvain, 1965); C. Orwin, "The Case Against Socrates: Plato's *Cleitophon*," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 15 (1982): 741–53; D. Roochnik, "The Riddle of the *Cleitophon*," *Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1984): 132–45; J. Blits, "Socratic Teaching and Justice: Plato's *Clitophon*," *Interpretation* 13 (1985): 321–33; S. R. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon"* (Cambridge, 1999); M. Kremer, "Socratic Philosophy and the *Cleitophon*," *Review of Politics* 62 (2000): 479–502; J. Bailly, *Plato's "Euthyphro" and "Clitophon"* (Newburyport, Mass., 2003); M. Kremer, *Plato's "Cleitophon": Socrates and the Modern Mind* (Lanham, Md., 2004).

3. I employ the phrase "dramatic ordering," or "dramatic orders," as a shorthand way of referring to an understanding of events/conversations in dialogues intended by Plato to be understood as happening before or after one another. I do not mean to imply (in the case of *Republic* 1 and *Clitophon*) that we should think of this as an uninterrupted dramatic order, although it is possible to do so on some accounts.

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or *Clitophon–Republic* 1, and the problems involved in adopting either, followed by an examination of interpretations of the *Clitophon* that do not depend on any dramatic order. Part III explains why I think the dialogue should be understood in terms of the protreptic nature of ἀπορία.

## I

With the possible exception of Xenophon,<sup>4</sup> no one in the ancient tradition regarded the *Clitophon* with suspicion.<sup>5</sup> Olympiodorus, in his *Commentary on the “Gorgias,”* uses the *Clitophon* as evidence that, contrary to received opinion, Socrates does sometimes address crowds.<sup>6</sup> *Clitophon* 407d is employed by Apuleius, Hippolytus, and Alcinous in tandem with *Laws* 731c to demonstrate the involuntary nature of vice. As John Dillon has observed, this part of the *Clitophon* seems to have been absorbed into “a fairly well-worn piece of school exposition.”<sup>7</sup> Hippolytus actually cites the *Clitophon* as part of the *Republic*, suggesting perhaps that he made a mistake when consulting an edition of Plato’s dialogues arranged according to the tetralogical order of Thrasyllus.<sup>8</sup>

While no ancient authors doubted the *Clitophon*’s genuineness, their assessment of Clitophon’s character is another matter. Ptolemy is reported to have said that Socrates did not respond to Clitophon because his remarks were unworthy of response.<sup>9</sup> Plutarch also regards Clitophon negatively, listing him along with Alcibiades and Critias as a wayward student of Plato and Socrates.<sup>10</sup> The fairness of this negative characterization of Clitophon and the subsequent adoption of it by modern scholars is a point to which I shall return.

4. At *Mem.* 1.4.1, Xenophon says, “If any hold the opinion expressed in some written and spoken criticisms of Socrates that are based on inference (ὅς ἐνιοι γράφουσι τε καὶ λέγουσι περὶ αὐτοῦ τεκμαιρόμενοι) and think, that though he was consummate in exhorting men to virtue, he was an incompetent guide to it, let them consider not only the searching cross-examination with which he chastised those who thought themselves omniscient, but his daily talks with his familiar friends, and then judge whether he was capable of improving his companions” (trans. E. C. Marchant [Cambridge, Mass., 1923]). Xenophon goes on to report a conversation between Socrates and Aristodemus the Dwarf (Ἀριστόδημος τὸν μικρὸν), in which Socrates shows why it is important to respect the gods. If the passage quoted above is a reference to the *Clitophon*, it would suggest that Xenophon did not believe it to be a work of Plato’s, for he could hardly say that Plato’s writings were based on inference. There is no clear mention, however, of Clitophon or the *Clitophon* in this passage, and we must consider the wealth of Socratic dialogues by other authors, now lost, to which Xenophon could be referring. While Xenophon’s passage might be read as a reaction to the main theme of the *Clitophon*, I am not convinced that there is enough evidence to confirm that he is actually referring to that dialogue.

5. A fuller treatment of the ancient sources can be found in Slings, “*Clitophon*” (n. 1 above). Here I discuss some sources that are of relevance for this article and/or issues not discussed at length, or at all, in Slings.

6. Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Gorgiam* 20.2. Olympiodorus says that when Socrates does talk to crowds, he does so only “in an advisory manner,” and not demonstratively.

7. J. Dillon, *Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism* (Oxford, 1999), 190; Apul. *De dog. Plat.* 2.17.244; Hippol. *Haer.* 1.19.19–21; Alcinous *Didaskalikos* 31.1.

8. Diogenes Laertius (3.60) reports that Thrasyllus places the dialogue ahead of the *Republic* in Plato’s Eighth Tetralogy. Heidel thought that Hippolytus’ citation was evidence that the *Clitophon* was originally part of the *Republic*, but Slings is most probably correct in pointing out that nothing more than an interesting slip in citation has occurred: W. Heidel, *Pseudo-Platonica* (Baltimore, 1896), 47; Slings, “*Clitophon*,” 22–23.

9. Procl. *In Ti.* 7b.

10. Plut. *Mor.* 328a–c.

The *Clitophon*’s reputation as spurious or dubious extends at least as far back as Ficino. David Roochnik repeats the claim initiated by Ernst Yxem, and carried on by George Grote and G. M. A. Grube that this is the fault of the 1513 Aldine edition, wherein the *Clitophon* was printed among the *spuria* despite being listed in the table of contents among the genuine dialogues of Plato. This error was acknowledged and retracted but never corrected in subsequent editions.<sup>11</sup> We can observe confusion regarding the *Clitophon* somewhat earlier than this, in Ficino’s 1491 translations<sup>12</sup> and the Greek manuscripts<sup>13</sup> with which he worked. Ficino normally gives an abstract of each dialogue immediately preceding his translation. In the case of the *Clitophon*, he offers no abstract, and writes at the head of the dialogue, *Hic liber forte non est Platonis*.<sup>14</sup> James Hankins has observed that Ficino may have been influenced by his Greek manuscripts (*Laur.* 59.1 and 85.9), which are ambiguous as to the status of the *Clitophon*.<sup>15</sup> In the table of contents of 85.9,<sup>16</sup> one finds the following:

**A:** Tetralogies 1–7

**B:** A thin decorative line

**C:** The words πλάτωνος νοθεύόμενοι

**D:** Dialogues normally considered spurious, ending with the *Clitophon*

**E:** A thick decorative line

**F:** *Republic*

**G:** Another thin decorative line similar to B and the words πλάτωνος νοθεύόμενοι

**H:** Other works by Timaeus Locrus and Plutarch

**J:** *Timaeus, Critias*

**K:** A thin decorative line

**L:** *Laws*

If the thin lines B and G separate the *spuria* from the authentic dialogues, and the thick line E offsets the *Republic*, then the *Clitophon* would seem to

11. Roochnik, “Riddle” (n. 2 above), 133; Grube, “*Clitophon*” (n. 2 above), 302; G. Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, vol. 3 (London, 1867), 9; E. Yxem, *Über Platon’s “Kleitophon”* (Berlin, 1846), 32–33.

12. *Platonis opera Latina Marsilio Ficino interprete* (Venice, 1491).

13. *Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana* (henceforth *Laur.*) 59.1, given to Ficino by Cosimo de’ Medici in 1462, and *Laur.* 89.5. G. Boter, *The Textual Tradition of Plato’s “Republic”* (Leiden, 1989), 37, seems to confirm this. *Laur.* 89.5 is written smoothly in one hand throughout and seems to be consistent with the corrections and extensions of abbreviations made to the *Clitophon* by a later hand in 59.1. These remarks are based on my consultation of the texts at the Laurenziana. There is some dispute as to whether Ficino made the corrections in 59.1 and whether Ficino instigated the copying of 59.1 that resulted in 89.5; see Boter, *Textual Tradition*, 33–37.

14. I transcribe this from a facsimile of the MS; see also J. Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, (Leiden, 1990), 307.

15. Hankins, “Renaissance” (n. 14 above), 307.

16. *Laur.* 85.9 f. 2r–v.

belong to the *spuria*. Yet in *Laurenziana* 59.1 f. 349 (a rougher copy on which *Laur.* 89.5 appears to be at least partially based) the words τέλος τῶν νοθευομένων, appear in the main text after the *Axiochus* but before the *Clitophon*. All the same, Ficino wrote *Hic liber forte non est Platonis* at the head of his Latin translation of the *Clitophon*.

Ficino is one of many who may have had a change of heart regarding the *Clitophon*'s authenticity, for he seems to have regarded it as authentic in his earlier commentary on the *Philebus*.<sup>17</sup> A. E. Taylor, in the 1927 edition of *Plato: The Man and His Work*, says he would like to plead for the dialogue's authenticity (p. 12). However, his expanded 1929 edition discusses the dialogue in the new appendix on "Platonic Apocrypha," assigning it to a fourth-century Academic (p. 538), while still retaining the plea for authenticity on p. 12.<sup>18</sup> Paul Shorey also changed his mind. As a doctorand in 1884, he believed the *Clitophon* to be authentic, but had come to doubt this by 1933. Slings notes Shorey's palinode in reflecting on his own change of opinion. In his 1981 doctoral dissertation,<sup>19</sup> Slings pronounced the dialogue spurious; in 1999 his revised *Plato: "Clitophon"* appeared—the title indicating his new, if hesitant, belief in the dialogue's authenticity.<sup>20</sup>

Slings' distillation of the arguments for and against authenticity show the difficult balance involved in assessing the *Clitophon*, and is worth a brief review here.<sup>21</sup> For authenticity: (1) The *Clitophon* is written from a wholly Platonic point of view, showing a deep understanding of Plato's philosophy and approach to the dialogue form; (2) There is nothing particularly un-Platonic in the language;<sup>22</sup> (3) The *Clitophon* has been transmitted with the Platonic corpus since (at least) the end of the third century B.C.E. Against authenticity: (1) The *Clitophon* relies heavily on other Socratic writings; (2) Incorporation of material from other dialogues is rather clumsy at times; (3) The *Clitophon* appears to attack Socrates; (4) Xenophon might be suggesting that it is not Plato's because it is based on inferences (τεκμαιρόμενοι).

According to Slings, to dismiss the arguments for authenticity, one must assume that the *Clitophon* was written by an extremely talented appropriator of Plato's philosophy and language. Moreover, Slings thinks that a presumed attack on Socrates and the clumsiness cancel each other out. Either the dialogue is clumsy and therefore ineffectual as an attack on Socrates, or it is an

attack on Socrates that is too clumsy to do much harm. Although Slings is not explicit here, it seems that one interpretation of the latter possibility would be that the dialogue is intentionally clumsy and hence its real purpose is not an attack on Socrates.<sup>23</sup> Slings seems to think that it is not an attack on Socrates in any case, and that at least it does not aim at the heart of Platonic philosophy.<sup>24</sup> The most convincing part of Slings' argument for authenticity seems to be that it would be easier to accept the authenticity of the *Clitophon* than to hypothesize the existence of an anonymous author who was almost Plato's equal in literary capacities. In short, if Plato didn't write it, it is hard to imagine who did, despite some apparent clumsiness, which in any case is a rather subjective criterion.<sup>25</sup>

## II

Since Clitophon's complaints are about a negative Socrates who makes no positive claims about justice, they would seem to make little sense after *Republic 2* had been written. Therefore, those who assume that the *Clitophon* should be perceived as dramatically following *Republic 1* assume that it is an authentic fragment or an unfinished draft, or contend that the *Clitophon* (genuine or spurious) responds to a discrete *Thrasymachus*. Those who take the dialogue as complete and authentic place the *Clitophon* dramatically ahead of the *Republic*. In what follows I explain why I think both orderings are problematic.

Many scholars have suggested that Clitophon's complaints regarding Socrates' failure or refusal to provide a positive theory of justice would make no sense after *Republic 2–10* had been written. This leads to theories based on a spurious *Clitophon* including: (1) the claim that the *Clitophon* was written as a response to a discretely published *Republic 1* or *Thrasymachus*;<sup>26</sup> or (2) the suggestion by Wilamowitz that it was written by a precocious student who read *Republic 1* but not the rest of the *Republic*.<sup>27</sup>

23. Of course, Plato is not against writing a critique of Socrates—witness the first part of the *Parmenides*. Christopher Rowe refers to Slings' writing a critique of Socrates in the dialogue in Slings, *Commentary* (the 1981 dissertation; see n. 19 above) as his significant evidence of the *Clitophon*'s inauthenticity (C. Rowe, "Clitophon and Minos," in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, ed. C. Rowe and M. Schofield [Cambridge, 2000], pp. 303–9, n. 36). Slings, however (*Plato: "Clitophon,"* 232), along with arguing that clumsiness is a "highly subjective concept," has come down in favor of authenticity despite these oddities.

24. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 208–9 and passim.

25. The words of George Grote are *à propos* here: "On such grounds as [inferior excellence and the like] we are called upon to reject various dialogues: and there is nothing upon which, generally speaking, so much stress is laid upon as inferior excellence. For my part, I cannot recognize any of them as sufficient grounds of exception. I have no difficulty in believing not merely that Plato . . . produced many successive novelties . . . but that also among these novelties there were inferior dialogues as well as superior . . . among them some which critics declare to be low and objectionable . . ." (Grote, *Companions* [n. 11 above], 1:207).

26. For example, Thesleff, *Chronology* (n. 22 above), p. 107, n. 19, and pp. 206–8. See also D. Nails, *Agora, Academy and the Conduct of Philosophy* (Dordrecht, 1995), 124–25. One might consider that the *Thrasymachus*, so dubbed by Dümmler, has nothing of the ancient pedigree that the *Clitophon* has—one before him ever mentioned it.

27. U. von Willamowitz-Moellendorf, *Platon*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1959), 490.

17. M. Ficino, *The "Philebus" Commentary*, ed. M. Allen (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1975), 120.

18. I suspect that Grube ("Clitophon," 305) is relying on p. 12 of the 1927 or 1928 edition of Taylor when he suggests that Taylor thinks it authentic; see A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work* (London, first ed. 1927; second ed. 1928; expanded third ed. 1929).

19. S. R. Slings, *A Commentary on the Platonic "Clitophon"* (Amsterdam, 1981).

20. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 234; P. Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago, 1933), 658. I note that W. J. Verdenius had expressed "relief" that Slings found it inauthentic in 1981: "Notes on the Pseudo-Platonic *Clitophon*," *Mnemosyne* 35 (1982): 146. J. Bailly's *Plato's "Euthyphro" and "Clitophon"* (Newburyport, Mass., 2003) also contains a hesitant attribution of the *Clitophon* to Plato.

21. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 227–34; see also Bailly, "Euthyphro" and "Clitophon" (n. 20 above), 126–27.

22. There is no good philological reason to dismiss the *Clitophon*. There are a few oddities, but these have been addressed and philological detractors appear to have been silenced; Rochnik ("Riddle," 134) notes the same. H. Thesleff, *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (Helsinki, 1982), 205, reviews the suspicious words.

Grube, who thinks that the *Clitophon* is authentic, also thinks it makes no sense in light of *Republic* 2–10, and sees the dialogue as an unfinished fragment written after *Republic* 1 and before *Republic* 2.<sup>28</sup> This is not to say that Grube suggests a discrete *Republic* 1. He simply believes the *Clitophon* to have been written some time between the writing of *Republic* 1 and *Republic* 2. One possible way to think of the *Clitophon* is as part of the *Republic*'s cutting room floor, so to speak. However, stylometric analysis and the *Clitophon*'s apparent textual dependence on other dialogues (including the *Republic*) point in the direction of a late composition date for the *Clitophon*—that is a date later than that of the *Republic*.<sup>29</sup> Of course this does not affect how we perceive the relative dramatic ordering of the *Clitophon* and *Republic* 1. If we accept the authenticity of the *Clitophon*, it seems rash to assume that the composition order must parallel the dramatic order.<sup>30</sup> Composition order tells us little about the intended dramatic order—after all, Plato did write dialogues featuring a living Socrates after he wrote the *Phaedo*.

Given the way the *Clitophon* opens, the temptation to assert the dramatic order *Republic* 1–*Clitophon* is very strong, whether one accepts a discrete *Thrasymachus* or not.<sup>31</sup> For someone has told Socrates of a conversation between Lysias (who is present but mute in *Republic* 1) and Clitophon (present and all but mute in *Republic* 1). Clitophon has been heard expressing high praise for Thrasymachus and finding fault with Socrates (*Clit.* 406a). One could imagine a situation in which Lysias and Clitophon were discussing the debate between Socrates and Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1, a debate that prompts the remarks that Clitophon is said to have made about Socrates and Thrasymachus.<sup>32</sup> One will recall that the opening of *Republic* 2 starts

28. Grube, "Clitophon," 308.

29. L. Brandwood, "Stylometry and Chronology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. R. Kraut (Cambridge, 1992), 112; G. R. Ledger, *Recounting Plato: A Computer Analysis of Plato's Style* (Oxford, 1989), 146, 187, 196–97, and passim; D. Nails, "Platonic Chronology Reconsidered," *BMCR* 03.04.17; Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 216–22, 228, 231; an exception is Thesleff, *Chronology*, 209.

30. The distinction between composition order and dramatic order seems to escape commentators on the *Republic* as much as Clitophon himself does. Charles Kahn, in "Proleptic Composition in the *Republic*," *CQ* 43 (1993): 131–42, and C. D. C. Reeve, in *Philosopher Kings* (Princeton, 1998), argue for a unitary *Republic* based on certain kinds of "proleptic" readings of *Republic* 1. They barely mention Clitophon the interlocutor (Reeve, pp. 11–12, in the context of Thrasymachus; Kahn not at all), and never mention the dialogue. While I would not argue for it myself, I am puzzled that they do not entertain the idea that *Republic* 1 may have been composed after the rest of the *Republic*. This would also be consistent with the fact that *Republic* 1 is thought to contain both early and late stylometric traits—late Plato imitates early style for overture. This is something that those who argue for a *Thrasymachus* might also like to consider. It is also possible to imagine that the *Clitophon* was written merely as an extension of a "post-proleptic" draft of *Republic* 1. If *Republic* 1 is proleptic of the rest of the *Republic*, it would seem altogether more reasonable to envision Plato composing such an overture after the *idée fixe* of the opera is fully articulated. Approaches to music composition vary, in that some may compose the overture after the *idée fixe* either concurrently or after the opera has been fully articulated, but certainly no composer could reasonably conceive the overture before the *idée fixe*.

31. Grube certainly did not accept the *Thrasymachus* hypothesis, and ostensibly Grote's suggestion is that the dialogue was a preliminary sketch intended for inclusion in the *Republic*, abandoned by Plato because its criticism of Socrates was too harsh.

32. Taylor (*Plato* [n. 18 above], 12) makes this very suggestion. However, he has changed his reading somewhat by the time of the third edition of *Plato*. On p. 538 of the third edition (1929) he suggests that we are meant to read the *Clitophon* as indicating the danger of Clitophon falling into the hands of a "quack" like Thrasymachus.

with a reflection on Socrates' discussion with Thrasymachus, one in which Glaucon expresses dissatisfaction with Socrates' performance (*Resp.* 357a–b), although it is not of the same impatient tenor as that expressed in the *Clitophon*.

While there are good dramatic reasons to want to place the *Clitophon* in between *Republic* 1 and *Republic* 2, to do so would require that the dialogue be authentic but fragmentary (perhaps an outtake from the *Republic*), or spurious (i.e., written by Wilamowitz's precocious student). There are important counter-considerations here. The form of the dialogue suggests that it is finished, not fragmentary, certainly when one considers the strong recapitulation culminating in the expression of concern over εὐδαιμονία at the end (410e). According to Plutarch, who is well aware of the *Clitophon*, Plato's only unfinished dialogue was the *Timaeus*.<sup>33</sup> A precocious student equal to Plato in literary capacities is rather far-fetched and highly speculative.

Those who take the dialogue to be complete and authentic often place the *Clitophon* dramatically before the *Republic*. While this may seem to some to be a more natural order, it also leads to interpretations of the *Clitophon* that see Clitophon as going from bad to worse, based on his few brief remarks in *Republic* 1. On such readings, the interpretive weight of the *Clitophon* falls on the few lines that Clitophon has in *Republic* 1. As Jacques Bailly has suggested, one may ask whether Clitophon's remarks in *Republic* 1 represent his own position, or whether he is merely trying to make sense out of what Thrasymachus has just said.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, Roochnik's claim that Clitophon is a radical relativist, to which Socrates' silence is an appropriate response, is most convincing if we read Clitophon's remarks in *Republic* 1 as his own position, and read the *Clitophon* in light of this. This kind of reading results in or assumes a negative characterization of Clitophon that I will later suggest is unwarranted.

Roochnik sees Clitophon as going from τέχνη to radical relativism. Following Johannes Geffcken,<sup>35</sup> he argues that the *Clitophon* is a riddle regarding Socrates' silence—why it is that Socrates does not respond to Clitophon's criticisms—and answers it by suggesting that Clitophon's moral relativism is a position to which the rational philosophy of Socrates cannot respond.<sup>36</sup>

33. Plut. *Sol.* 32.3. Plutarch twice mentions Plato in the context of *Clitophon* 407c–d at *Mor.* 439c and 534e. See also Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 11.

34. Bailly, "Euthyphro" and "Clitophon," 116.

35. J. Geffcken, "Das Rätsel des Kleitophon," *Hermes* 68 (1933): 429–39.

36. Roochnik ("Riddle," 138, 141) points out that Socrates' silence in the *Clitophon* is mirrored by Clitophon's silence in *Republic* 1. I would point out that the "mirroring effect" observed by Roochnik is not as mirrored as one might like. I would be inclined to argue that Clitophon falls silent as a result of Thrasymachus' harsh rejection of his suggestion regarding what the stronger believed to be to his advantage (340b–c), for Socrates is certainly willing to entertain the idea. Roochnik claims that when Socrates says it "makes no difference" (οὐδὲν διαφέρει) whether Thrasymachus adopts Clitophon's suggestion or not (340b–c), it is because Thrasymachus' moderate relativism is untenable, leaving the real choices to be radical relativism or objective knowledge. I suspect that Socrates is simply allowing, as he so often does, for his interlocutor to revise his statement. When Socrates says οὐδὲν διαφέρει, he is remonstrating the eristic rigidity of Polemarchus, who is arguing with Clitophon over the way Thrasymachus articulated his opinion: οὐδὲν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὡς Πολέμαρχος, διαφέρει ἀλλ' εἰ νῦν οὕτω λέγει Θρασύμαχος, οὕτως αὐτοῦ ἀποδεχόμεθα (*Resp.* 340b–c, my emphasis). Socrates is telling Polemarchus that Thrasymachus is free to

This claim would be consistent with the report that Ptolemy considered Clitophon's remarks unworthy of a reply by Socrates. Mark Kremer also sees Clitophon getting worse, revising Roochnik's assessment of Clitophon as a relativist to suggest that Clitophon moves from disillusionment with τέχνη in the *Clitophon* to legal positivism in *Republic 1*.<sup>37</sup> This perhaps reflects the observation of Clifford Orwin that legal positivism better describes Clitophon's position.<sup>38</sup> Most recently Debra Nails has followed Roochnik and others in foisting the attributes of Theramenes onto Clitophon in virtue of the association of the two in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (967) and the *Athenian Constitution* (34.3).<sup>39</sup> While I greatly admire Nails' prosopography, the truth is that we know very little about the historical Clitophon, and it is unfair to make Aristophanes' remarks in *Frogs*, which are quite clearly about Theramenes alone, apply to Clitophon. Moreover, while Clitophon does act with Theramenes once in the *Athenian Constitution* (34.3), he also acts alone in another passage (29.3), and in both cases he acts consistently, appealing to the ancestral laws.<sup>40</sup> When we combine these reported appeals to the law in the *Athenian Constitution* with his understanding of Thrasymachus' position in the *Republic*, "legal positivist" seems like a fair characterization of him (*Resp.* 340a–b):

[Polemarchus:] "Thrasymachus himself admits that the rulers sometimes enjoin what is evil for themselves and yet says that it is just for the subjects to do this." [Clitophon:] "That, Polemarchus, is because Thrasymachus laid it down that it is just to obey the orders of the rulers. . . . by the advantage of the superior he meant what the superior supposed to be for his advantage. That is what the inferior had to do, and that this is the just was his position." (trans. P. Shorey [Cambridge, Mass., 1930])

As a legal positivist, Clitophon understands the force of Thrasymachus' argument in terms of its appeal to the law. If one asks, "Why did Plato assign to Clitophon this place and this comment in the *Republic*?" one likely answer

revise his statements, that it "makes no difference" if his words did not express his true intentions in the first place. It is also worth noting that it is not only Clitophon who falls silent. By the end of *Republic 1*, everyone has fallen silent; Socrates begins *Republic 2* with new interlocutors. Cephalus has left, and Polemarchus is interrupted by Thrasymachus, who has effectively fallen silent as soon as Socrates abandons the sincere assent rule of elenchus, and allows Thrasymachus to keep answering in order to please the company (349b), as Callicles does at *Grg.* 501c. On sincere assent, see J. Beversluis, *Cross-Examining Socrates* (Cambridge, 2000), 236–37 and passim.

37. Kremer, "Socratic Philosophy" (n. 2 above), 18.

38. Orwin, "Case" (n. 2 above), 743.

39. Compare D. Nails, *The People of Plato* (Indianapolis, 2002), 102–3: "Clitophon was a person well-known for his flip-flopping political associations," with the more cautious remarks of Orwin, "Case," 120: "A close associate of Theramenes, he may have shared in the twists and turns of the latter's political career." More cautiously, Bailly ("*Euthyphro*" and "*Clitophon*," 116) remarks, "Given Theramenes' reputation as supporting the rule of law, and the association of Clitophon and Theramenes, perhaps the position which Clitophon tries to give to Thrasymachus in the *Republic* is not coincidentally his." Roochnik ("Riddle," 138) does not discuss the passage (*Ath. Pol.* 29.3) where Clitophon acts alone.

40. Once, in 411, Clitophon puts forth a motion that the ancestral laws be consulted by a committee created to establish proposals for the safety of Athens. Later, in 404, along with others who are said not to be attached to a political party, he supports Theramenes' call to uphold the ancestral laws, aiming to bring about a more moderate tyranny than that of the Thirty. These two actions seem to show Clitophon to be consistent in his legal positivism, even if the outcomes of his actions in 411 and 404 may have served different political factions.

is that he wished to make it clear that he is offering Thrasymachus a way out of his problematic position via a representative of legal positivism, and Clitophon seemed an obvious choice of character. When in doubt, Clitophon appeals to the law, but not to any moral grounding for the law. If we accept that Roochnik's "relativism" or Orwin's "legal positivism" deserves no response, we are left wondering why the *Republic* provides such a good response to it—why it provides a reason for believing that justice is higher than law and thus is not a matter of mere convention—or, as one might more traditionally say, why the *Republic* clearly defends φύσις against νόμος.

It would appear that understanding the significance of the *Clitophon* based upon the dramatic ordering *Clitophon–Republic 1* contains as many problems as assuming that the *Clitophon* comes after *Republic 1*. One may wonder why we should interpret the *Clitophon* as Roochnik or Kremer do, since such interpretations depend so heavily on a perceived dramatic order, the culmination of which is the briefest of brief interpolations by Clitophon in *Republic 1*. To show just how far the dependence goes, one may consider Kremer's response to Christopher Bruell's claim that Plato gives us no clear indication of which dialogue comes first. Kremer maintains that his own theory—that Clitophon moves from τέχνη to legal positivism—will not work unless the *Clitophon* precedes *Republic 1*.<sup>41</sup> To my mind, this is circular. Plato may have very well intended us to read the *Clitophon* on its own terms, despite its obvious connection to *Republic 1*. Could not Clitophon's presence in *Republic 1* merely be an acknowledgement of the fact that Clitophon is sometimes within earshot of Thrasymachus?

There is no strong evidence that we are meant to understand the *Clitophon* primarily in terms of its relationship to *Republic 1*. We may want to accept the authority of Thrasyllus' Eighth Tetralogy, but applying such a principle is tenuous at best.<sup>42</sup> One might think that Plato gives us a clue that the *Clitophon* should be taken as preceding *Republic 1* in a particular passage, 410c. Among others,<sup>43</sup> Roochnik's interpretation of 410c would coincide with an underlying current of thought, explicitly pronounced by Grote, that the *Clitophon* belongs in direct antecedence to the *Republic* such that the *Republic* can serve as a "reproof to Clitophon himself for having threatened to quit Socrates and go to Thrasymachus."<sup>44</sup> For Grote this is meant to answer why

41. C. Bruell, *On the Socratic Education* (Lanham, Md., 1999), 192–93; Kremer, "Socratic Philosophy," 492. We may also ask the following. If it was Plato's intention to reflect a movement in Clitophon's soul in *Republic 1*, why give him such a short interpolation in the *Republic*? Where is his clear recantation of τέχνη? If he has "joined forces" with Thrasymachus in *Republic 1*, he should be endorsing τέχνη in any case.

42. I am inclined to agree with Grote (*Companions*, 1:163) when he says, "The dramatic classification, which stands in the foreground, rests upon a purely fanciful analogy, determining preference for the number four. If indeed this objection were urged against Thrasyllus, he might probably have replied that the group of four volumes together was in itself convenient, neither too large nor too small for an elementary subdivision; and that the fanciful analogy was an artifice for recommending it to the feelings, better (after all) than selection of another number by haphazard . . . it does some honour to his ability, that he has built, upon so inconvenient a fiction, one tetralogy (the first), really plausible and impressive."

43. R. B. Rutherford (*The Art of Plato* [London, 1995], 98) refers to him as preparing to abandon Socrates for Thrasymachus. Much of Kremer, "Socratic Philosophy," depends on this kind of reading.

44. Grote, *Companions*, 3:19–20.

Thrasyllos put the *Clitophon* at the head of Tetralogy 8, insofar as the *Clitophon*'s meaning is bound up with this perceived threat. Roochnik also takes 410c to suggest that Clitophon will join forces with Thrasymachus: "In his frustration, [Clitophon] declares his intention to join forces with Thrasymachus or whoever else can aid him."<sup>45</sup> Of the three primary Greek manuscripts of the *Clitophon* only one allows for such a reading, and that reading would require accepting a copyist's emendation. Below is the passage on which this kind of interpretation appears to be based (410c), in two versions of Greek, one based on *Parisinus graecus* 1807, s. ix (henceforth A), and the other accepting the hand of the copyist (henceforth A<sup>2</sup>). *Venetus* 185, s. xii (henceforth D), and *Vindobonensis Suppl. gr.* 39, s. xiii /xiv (henceforth F) agree with A.<sup>46</sup>

ADF διὰ ταῦτα δὴ καὶ πρὸς Θρασύμαχον οἶμαι πορεύομαι καὶ ἄλλοσε ὅποι δύναμαι, ἀπορῶν·

That's precisely why, I think, I go to Thrasymachus and wherever else I can, because I am at a loss.<sup>47</sup>

A<sup>2</sup> διὰ ταῦτα δὴ καὶ πρὸς Θρασύμαχον οἶμαι πορεύσομαι καὶ ἄλλοσε ὅποι δύναμαι, ἀπορῶν·

On account of these things, I suppose I will go to Thrasymachus even, and whomever else I am able, as I am at a loss.<sup>48</sup>

How we interpret the passage depends on whether we accept the copyist's emendation of πορεύομαι in ADF (present) to πορεύσομαι in A<sup>2</sup> (future).<sup>49</sup> Orwin seems to take ADF as correct, as does Francisco Gonzales, whose note in his translation reflects his awareness of the issue. Grote reflects the Greek of A<sup>2</sup> in his abstract; Robin Waterfield's translation reflects A<sup>2</sup>. Bailly, who presents the Greek of Ast's edition with commentary, reproduces A<sup>2</sup> without comment.<sup>50</sup> Slings, accepting ADF, also points out that A<sup>2</sup> is base: "The future requires ὅποι ἂν δύναμαι because πορεύσομαι (. . .) ὅποι δύναμαι

45. Roochnik, "Riddle," 133.

46. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 329. 340. Boter, *Textual Tradition* (n. 13 above), 3, makes it clear that A is the oldest of the families A, D, and F.

47. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 259.

48. Kremer, *Plato's "Cleithron,"* 14. Kremer includes Orwin's "Case" in *Plato's "Cleithron,"* under the title "On the *Cleithron*." This is a version of "Case" that originally appears in *The Roots of Political Philosophy: Ten Forgotten Socratic Dialogues*, ed. T. Pangle (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987). Given that Orwin's translation in Pangle follows ADF, it is not quite clear where he stands on the issue in "On the *Cleithron*." On p. 69 of Kremer, *Plato's "Cleithron,"* Orwin says, "We should not be surprised to find [Clitophon] impressed with the specious clarity of Thrasymachos. The seeming futility of the quest for justice rooted in nature has prepared him for the conclusion that it is merely convention." This is ambiguous with regard to the dramatic order of the two pieces. Does Orwin mean that something like νόμος is where Clitophon finally lands, or does it merely explain why Clitophon praises Thrasymachus at the beginning of the *Clitophon*? I note that Kremer ("Socratic Philosophy," 480) cites Orwin as someone who supports his "soul movement theory."

49. I note that Ficino's Latin renders the Greek *conferam*, which is consistent with A<sup>2</sup>, i.e., the *Clitophon* in *Laur.* 59.1 and 85.9. *Laur.* 59.1 (f. 350) has οο and μαι written above the line that gives only πορεύ.μ., while 85.9, the smoother copy, adopts the suggestion and gives πορεύσομαι (f. 216). These remarks are based on my consultation of the texts in the Laurenziana in Florence.

50. C. Orwin, trans., *Cleitophon*, in *Roots* (n. 48 above), 116; Grote, *Companions*, 3:18; F. Gonzales, trans., *Cleitophon*, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper, (Indianapolis, 1997), p. 970, n. 9; R. Waterfield, trans., *Plato: "Republic"* (Oxford, 1993), 467; Bailly, "Euthyphro" and "Clitophon," 167 (and see also G. S. Bowe, *BMCR* 2004.05.12, for a review of Bailly).

means 'I shall go wherever I (now) can,' which is inept."<sup>51</sup> There is, I suggest, no such intention to join forces with Thrasymachus in ADF, but rather an explanation of why Clitophon already does consult with him, and the reason is quite clear. Clitophon is ἀπορῶν. We know that Clitophon has seen Thrasymachus before, for he is said to have praised him at the beginning of the *Clitophon* (406a). Moreover, if we take into account that he seems to have nothing negative to say about Thrasymachus, and that he does have something negative to say about Socrates, we can say that he already consults Thrasymachus, and that he will continue to seek him out because of his ἀπορία. Clitophon may be planning on joining forces with Thrasymachus, but there is no indication that he declares his intention to do so in the *Clitophon* or that he has done so in *Republic* 1.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, as Slings quite rightly points out, "though one should read πορεύομαι and not πορεύσομαι at 410c7 . . . , which means that Clitophon is at the moment a pupil or visitor of Thrasymachus, the words καὶ ἄλλοσε suggest that he is not going to be an orthodox disciple."<sup>53</sup> If not an orthodox disciple, we should wonder about claims that Clitophon is so clearly connected with Thrasymachus in *Republic* 1 and interpretations that rely on his going from disillusionment with τέχνη to some worse condition, like legal positivism. If there were a threat in the *Clitophon* that was followed through on in the *Republic*, we might have grounds for a claim that he "crossed the floor" from philosophy to rhetoric, but in the absence of a threat to do so in the *Clitophon*, this seems less likely. The fact that Clitophon does already go to Thrasymachus and others, and is not threatening to do so at *Clitophon* 410c, has another significance that I will discuss later. For, along with other considerations, Clitophon's seeking answers in many quarters is something that makes his character closer to that of Socrates than one might expect.

Perhaps the larger difficulty with viewing Clitophon as "crossing the floor" is the implication that the Socratic negative elenchus corrupts. It hardly needs saying that this would strike at the heart of Plato's disavowal of this in the *Apology* and *Meno*, although there remains the issue of Alcibiades, at least in the *Symposium*.<sup>54</sup> It is worth pointing out that Plutarch mentions Clitophon along with Alcibiades and Critias as a specific example of someone who could not be convinced by Plato and Socrates (*Mor.* 328a–c):

καὶ πολλοὺς οὐκ ἐπεισαν ἀλλὰ Κριτία καὶ Ἀλκιβιάδα καὶ Κλειτοφῶντες, ὥσπερ χαλινὸν τὸν λόγον ἐκτύσαντες, ἄλλη πη παρετράπησαν.

For they did not persuade many; indeed Critias and Alcibiades and Clitophon would spit out the argument like a horse spits out the bit, and were diverted to another course.<sup>55</sup>

51. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 329–30.

52. Indeed, if he had, he would be in for a surprise in any case, since Thrasymachus is there embroiled in his own τέχνη argument, for which Socrates takes him to task.

53. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 48.

54. I here ignore the issue of *Alc.* I and *Alc.* II, which would go far beyond the scope of this article.

55. In fairness to Plutarch, in the passage where he describes Clitophon as a wayward student, he is merely making a rhetorical move to show that Alexander's greatness is borne out by the fact that he had more success in bringing about moral reform among "barbarians" than Plato and Socrates had with native Greek speakers.

It is not exactly clear what Plutarch's justifications are for saying this, but it does help with some issues. If the *Clitophon* is genuine, the decline of Clitophon would seem to suggest that Plato expressed dissatisfaction with Socratic philosophy in the *Clitophon*. However, Plutarch expressly says that Clitophon was not convinced by the teachings of both Socrates and Plato, not Socrates alone. "Socrates alone" would require a Socratic/Platonic distinction to which Plutarch appears not to subscribe.<sup>56</sup>

The tendency to "fill the gap" about Clitophon's character with information about Theramenes would seem to predispose us to accept Plutarch's account that he is of a kind with the historical Alcibiades. Indeed, an examination of the latter's drunken encomium in the *Symposium* yields certain similarities to the *Clitophon*. Consider this exchange (214d):

"... [Socrates is] the one who will most surely beat me up if I dare praise anyone else in his presence—even a god!"

"Hold your tongue!" Socrates said.

"By god don't you dare deny it!" Alcibiades shouted. "I would never—never—praise anyone else with you around." (trans. A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff [Indianapolis, 1989])

At the beginning of the *Clitophon*, Socrates asks Clitophon to explain why he praises Thrasymachus and criticizes him, and Clitophon immediately tries to placate him (406a). Both dialogues suggest that Socrates does not like others to be praised instead of him.<sup>57</sup> Alcibiades begs to be allowed to tell his story of Socrates, promising that he will only tell the truth (*Symp.* 214e). Clitophon, who also asks to be allowed to speak, says he will disclose all (*Clit.* 406a). Both frank disclosures consist of the interlocutors' respective impressions of Socrates. Alcibiades compares Socrates to a mythical Silenus

56. I think that the idea of a Plato implicitly criticizing Socratic method as corrupting Clitophon would seem base or unintelligible to Plutarch, or—one suspects—to just about any ancient commentator. The notion of early, middle, and late dialogues is not a framework in which they conceive Plato's dialogues. If the Thrasyllian distributions (dramatic or philosophical) tell us anything, it is that there is no such conception of developmental division. I have previously suggested that even Aristotle's remarks at *Met.* 1078b often used "in support of an ancient developmental reading of Plato may merely describe the prelude to a perspective that was then ingressively written" (Bowe, review of Bailly [n. 50 above]). Julia Annas writes: "for Plutarch, Platonism is a set of true doctrines, but you only take them over in the right way if you learn in the way that Socrates' audience learned. Here *ad hominem* negative argument is an essential part of Platonism as a system of doctrines. It is not a prior stage that you leave behind to go on to positive ideas. Plutarch, as a doctrinal Platonist, accepts *ad hominem* arguments in Plato as part of the system, indicating how the positive positions should be regarded; hence he feels no temptation to find an earlier phase of Plato's development in which to locate them" ("What Are Plato's 'Middle' Dialogues in the Middle Of?" in *New Perspectives on Plato, Ancient and Modern*, ed. J. Annas and C. Rowe [Harvard, 2002], 1–24). However, not all arguments are negative, nor do they happen at the stage of a given interlocutor's psychic development. Stages might occur in the "system of doctrines" without implying the developmentalism Annas here wants to deny. In other words, I suspect that Annas could be right in denying stages of Plato's thought; this does not exclude stages in an interlocutor's thought or development on a given issue.

57. When invited by Eryximachus to offer an encomium on Love, Alcibiades asks whether he should "unleash himself on Socrates," to which Socrates replies, "Now wait a minute . . . are you going to praise me only in order to mock me?" (*Symp.* 214e). Plato explicitly points out the possibility of, and Socrates' sensitivity and resistance to, being falsely praised in the *Symposium*, yet there is no explicit indication of such a possibility in the *Clitophon*. This is perhaps instructive with regard to Slings' "ironic" reading of the *Clitophon*, of which I say more in Part III.

(*Symp.* 215b, 221d–e); Clitophon compares him to a soaring god in a tragedy (*ὄσπερ ἐπὶ μηχανῆς τραγικῆς θεός*, *Clit.* 407a). Alcibiades says that he has heard and admired the orations of Pericles and others, but none of these were capable of moving him like Socrates, who causes him to realize the insignificance of his political career in comparison with the importance of caring for his soul (*Symp.* 215e). Clitophon was stunned (*ἐξεπλητόμην*) by what he heard from Socrates and thinks he says fine things in his protreptic speeches about the importance of caring for the soul (407a–b). The important difference between Clitophon and Alcibiades, however, is that Alcibiades wants to attach himself physically to Socrates, so that Socrates will make him virtuous, whereas Clitophon merely wants his knowledge. Both are wrongheaded in their attempted attachment to Socrates, but for very different reasons. Alcibiades' *ἀπορία* is the stupefaction of unrequited sexual infatuation, whereas Clitophon's *ἀπορία* represents disillusionment with the negative elenchus, with which he shows a clear facility.<sup>58</sup> Alcibiades' and Clitophon's *ἀπορία* share this much in common: both express the etymological sense of *ἀπορία*—the lack of a clear path. Socrates tells Alcibiades that the mind's sight grows keen when the body grows dull; he is not sure that sexual love will be a fair exchange for a wisdom that Alcibiades cannot yet appreciate (218e–19a). Clitophon has also not seen that knowledge is not acquired by passive reception, but through active dialectic. Alcibiades cannot be reformed until he recognizes the true nature of love, and Clitophon cannot be cured until he realizes the true nature of dialectic. Socrates responds neither to Alcibiades nor to Clitophon. What is implied by Socrates' silence in both cases is that the Socrates of the negative elenchus cannot help them. Alcibiades' career and *akratic* incorrigibility in the *Symposium* might speak to the decline of Alcibiades, but we have no such clear sequence or corroborating historical evidence for Clitophon.<sup>59</sup>

To summarize: both possible dramatic orderings have difficulties. To assume that the *Clitophon* comes in between *Republic* 1 and *Republic* 2 demotes the dialogue to an unfinished fragment (the complaints make no sense after *Republic* 1), or requires the assumption of an (unlikely) early date for the *Clitophon* (before *Republic* 2 if not before *Republic* 1, whereas stylometry suggests after the *Republic*), a discrete *Thrasymachus* and/or the *Clitophon*'s inauthenticity (written by a precocious student). The assumption that the *Clitophon* comes before *Republic* 1 and that this must mean that we are to understand that Clitophon has followed through on a threat to join forces with Thrasymachus requires us to accept A<sup>2</sup> over ADF and places the weight of interpretation on *Republic* 1. Clitophon's role in *Republic* 1 is based on tendentious philological evidence and interpretation, an interpretation that leads to the conclusion that *ἀπορία* irrevocably corrupts Clitophon. While it is tempting to want to interpret the *Clitophon* on the basis of one

58. Rutherford (*Art of Plato* [n. 43 above], 100) notes his facility with elenchus as do others.

59. If it was Plutarch's intention to say that the careers of Alcibiades and Clitophon show that they were not convinced by Plato and Socrates, this says nothing, in the absence of speculation on Clitophon's career, of Plato's literary or philosophical intention at the time of writing the *Clitophon*.

dramatic order or the other, this may distract us from assessing the dialogue on its own terms. Two interpretations that do not rely heavily on a perceived dramatic ordering are those of Orwin and Slings, and it is to these that I now turn.

Orwin's treatment of the *Clitophon* stresses the relationship of the dialogue to the *Apology*, and follows Hanns Christof Brennecke in suggesting that the *Clitophon* represents something of a counter-*Apology*.<sup>60</sup> Clitophon is defending himself against Socrates' charge that he finds fault with him. Orwin has a different account of Socrates' silence from that of Roochnik or Geffcken. The *Clitophon* appropriates the structure of an indictment where the defendant gets the last word. Moreover, nothing short of a full account of justice would satisfy Clitophon. To think that Socratic philosophy can give this is to misinterpret the exhortation to seek justice for an exhortation to find justice.<sup>61</sup> In my own interpretation, I suggest that the problem is not that justice cannot be found (in Plato's extrapolation of the figure of Socrates), but that in his *ἀπορία*, Clitophon does not realize that it is not the Socrates of the negative elenchus that can do this for him. I will have more to say about this in Part III.

Slings' assessment of the meaning of the *Clitophon* depends on the deep irony he observes in the dialogue, irony on the part of Clitophon, not Socrates.<sup>62</sup> According to Slings, if we are not sensitive to the irony in the dialogue, we run the risk of being seriously misled as to its intention. More specifically, Slings claims that Clitophon's explicit praise of Socratic protreptic is highly ironic, and really amounts to a criticism of explicit protreptic. At the same time implicit protreptic, or elenchus, is implicitly praised. Indeed, as has been observed, Clitophon appears to have successfully appropriated the Socratic elenchus, and seems to employ it with great skill.<sup>63</sup> However, I am inclined to agree with Bailly that Slings relies too heavily on an ironic interpretation of the *Clitophon*, insofar as reception to this kind of irony is highly subjective.<sup>64</sup> What happens if we take Clitophon at his word? His

60. Orwin, "Case," 120, 129; H. Brennecke, "Kleitophon wider Sokrates," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 26 (1913): 452–57. I think Roochnik ("Riddle," 136–37) dismisses Orwin's position too quickly on the grounds that he cannot imagine a compatible context. It seems to me that Orwin is thinking more in terms of structure and meaning than literal setting.

61. Orwin ("Case," 130–31) suggests, "As the *Republic* confirms, Socrates can say what justice is, but only in the sense of achieving a comprehensive articulation of the problem of the relation of one's own good to the demands of the city. He can offer only problematic and paradoxical definitions of justice, and none that would gratify in the least any actual city. . . . The Socratic formulation . . . implies that there can be no end to discussing virtue—and therefore no beginning to practicing it. Practically speaking, the search replaces the object sought. Philosophy is not, as Socrates' protreptic seems to suggest, a means to specifying the virtuous life: it takes the place of that life."

62. Dorothy Tarrant (who believes the dialogue is spurious) points out that Socrates is represented as using his εἰσθητὰ εἰρηνεῖα ("The Pseudo-Platonic Socrates," *CQ* 32 [1938]: 167–73). Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 204–6, dismisses the *Thrasymachus* hypothesis for good reason, and he suggests that "we can hardly evade the conclusion that the readers of the *Clitophon* were meant to grasp the author's intention in light of the *Republic*" (p. 204). At the same time, it is not clear to me that his own interpretation depends heavily on the perceived dramatic ordering.

63. Rutherford, *Art of Plato*, 100.

64. Bailly, "Euthyphro" and "Clitophon," 122.

desire to placate Socrates by claiming that he said good things as well as bad things in the conversation Socrates asks him about at the beginning (406a), and his recapitulation at the end that Socrates' exhortations are "worth the world" to the unexhorted (410e) hardly seem a frame for an irony-laden critique. If Clitophon is being sincere, he thinks that explicit Socratic protreptic is a great benefit to men who have not considered the value of justice, and he himself has taken the exhortation to heart.<sup>65</sup> For Clitophon, the problem is that once you accept the exhortation, and have acquired elenctic skill, you have nowhere to turn. If we take Clitophon at his word, he thinks that the elenchus is obstructive if it can yield no positive definitions. Slings would say that the elenchus might be given a wider scope so as to include positive results, pointing to possible examples in the *Meno* and the *Sophist*, and hence Slings is challenging readings of Plato that suggest a break between say, negative elenchus and positive dialectic.<sup>66</sup>

### III

My reading of the *Clitophon* suggests that the so-called riddle of the *Clitophon*, Socrates' silence, has an explanation that is more obvious than the solutions that have been suggested by other commentators. Having brought Clitophon to *ἀπορία*, Socrates has done his job. There is no more that he can say or do for Clitophon. In order to support this thesis, I will draw a distinction between aporetic dialogues and constructive ones. My approach is to regard this distinction rather broadly. I do not want to deny that there may be implicit positive lessons to be gained from aporetic dialogues, but I do want to assert that constructive dialogues like the *Republic* assert or assume the necessity of an interlocutor being brought to *ἀπορία* as a prelude to the further inquiry that is carried out there.

In the first place, we should pay attention to where Clitophon's remarks are aimed, and the types of Socratic method he mentions. We find that he himself has mastered the negative elenchus, and that he has brought himself and others to *ἀπορία*, and he worries that protreptic is all that Socrates has to offer. I would maintain that in a certain way he is right. The idea that Clitophon's claims may make sense as a response to *Republic* 1, which is aporetic in form, but not to *Republic* 2–10 suggests that Clitophon is directing his remarks at the Socrates of the aporetic dialogues. This Socrates is merely protreptic, and *ἀπορία* is the vehicle of that protreptic. It is also possible that Clitophon is directing his remarks towards the historical Socrates, but the dependence of the *Clitophon* on other Platonic texts draws us into the realm of the Socrates of the aporetic dialogue. However, if we were to accept that the Socrates of the aporetic dialogues is closer to the historical Socrates than the constructive ones, we may say that to a degree Clitophon is directing his remarks to the historical Socrates. This claim would be strengthened by

65. Rutherford, *Art of Plato*, 100; Roochnik, "Riddle," 141.

66. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 136–41. He has in mind texts like R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford, 1953), or G. Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge, 1991).

the fact that Socrates is characterized in the *Clitophon* as being explicitly protreptic, whereas from Demetrius onward, it is generally accepted that Plato's Socrates is implicitly protreptic.<sup>67</sup> While it is possible to read certain remarks in the *Apology* as Socrates' own contention that he is explicitly protreptic,<sup>68</sup> Socrates is not himself clear about this, and it is the *Clitophon* that Olympiodorus uses as an example that Socrates does sometimes address crowds—something that one may take as a mark of explicit protreptic.

The fact that *Republic* 1 can be recognized as reproducing in form an aporetic dialogue that prefaces the remaining constructive books of the *Republic*<sup>69</sup> suggests that in the *Republic*, Plato sees ἀπορία as a necessary step in searching for knowledge. It then seems reasonable to say that Plato sees elenchus as a step to ἀπορία, and that this is intended to be protreptic of further philosophizing. In my reading of the *Republic* there is both a symbolic and a dramatic continuity that is consistent with such a methodology. The *Republic* takes place at the festival of Bendis (the Athenian Artemis, the barren midwife goddess of the moon and duality),<sup>70</sup> pauses as Socrates proclaims his ignorance at the end of *Republic* 1 and expresses his ἀπορία at the beginning of *Republic* 2 (368b), and reaches its apex with the myth of the Sun, where Glaucon cries "By Apollo!" (*Resp.* 509c). Plutarch has remarked on the Pythagorean use of the word "A-pollo" (not many) to symbolize unity, and further tells us that Artemis (= Bendis) represents duality in the same scheme.<sup>71</sup> There is a continuous movement, from weak dispersed light to strong, unifying light in Plato's great work, expressing a continuity of the negative elenchus, ἀπορία, and positive dialectic.

Perhaps the prototype of protreptic ἀπορία is to be found at *Meno* 84a–d, wherein Meno's slave, once relieved of a false conceit of knowledge, gladly and willingly inquires. Once his false conceit has been removed, constructive, cooperative inquiry can take place. This is how ἀπορία is supposed to work. Along with willing inquiries like that of Meno's slave (or perhaps Glaucon and Adeimantus in the *Republic*), we see symptoms of ἀπορία like recalcitrance, torpor, and misology (Meno), to frustrated accusation (Clitophon), to anger, blushing, and stubbornness (Thrasymachus), often accompanied by an allegation that Socrates is being ironic. The abandonment of the argument (implicitly by Thrasymachus or Polus, who answer but have lost interest, or explicitly, as in the hasty departure of Euthyphro) is not meant to suggest

67. Slings, *Plato: "Clitophon,"* 88–89.

68. At *Ap.* 30a–b, Socrates says, "For I go about doing nothing else than urging you, young and old, not to care for your persons or your property more than for the perfection of your souls, or even so much; and I tell you that virtue does not come from money, but from virtue comes money and all other good things to man, both to the individual and to the state."

69. It is commonly accepted that *Republic* 1 carries the form of an aporetic dialogue. This is not to make claims for a discrete *Thrasymachus*; see for example, D. Clay, *Platonic Questions* (Pittsburgh, 2000), 166; Kahn, "Proleptic," 100.

70. Cf. *Th.* 149b–c.

71. *Plut. Mor.* 354f. *Plot. Enn.* 5.5.6 repeats this claim about Apollo.

that aporetic conditions are irrevocable and unchangeable.<sup>72</sup> If the epistemic or protreptic benefits of elenchus leading to ἀπορία are really to be benefits, this cannot be the case for all interlocutors, but it may be the case for a given interlocutor at a given point in their intellectual or psychic development. This would also explain why Socrates begins afresh with new interlocutors in *Republic* 2, those who display courage and patience.<sup>73</sup> Those who react badly to ἀπορία serve as examples of how not to respond to Socrates properly; our instinctive negative responses to characters like Thrasymachus and Meno bear this out.

The heart of Plato's educational theory is bound up with the statement that everyone has the capacity to learn and that education is turning the mind in the right direction (*Resp.* 518c). This would seem to suggest that psychic conditions are not permanent if one has the right instruction. One might notice that Socrates confesses ἀπορία about how to respond both to Meno and to Glaucon, but nonetheless goes on to introduce methods for resolving the ἀπορία. If taking up the exhortation implied by the ἀπορία is a defining characteristic of a constructive dialogue, and bringing ἀπορία about a characteristic of a Socratic one, we would do well to appreciate this distinction in assessing the *Clitophon* on its own terms. For if the Socrates that Clitophon is criticizing in the *Clitophon* is the aporetic Socrates and not the constructive one, the reason for his silence is obvious—his work with Clitophon in this frame of mind and at this stage of his development is over.

Whereas ἀπορία is the point at which the kinds of dialogues that Clitophon is addressing ends, it is commonly accepted that the *Meno* marks a turning point whereby Socrates forges beyond ἀπορία. I agree with Charles Kahn's contention that the explanation of ἀπορία one finds in the *Meno* is Plato's reflection of the significance of ἀπορία in the aporetic dialogues.<sup>74</sup> I would also say that the *Clitophon* serves as an extended reflection on the nature of ἀπορία.

Ἀπορία is generally understood as the end result of the Socratic elenchus, whereby an interlocutor has been "relieved" of a false conceit of knowledge. While such a definition of ἀπορία indicates the cause, it does not describe the condition of ἀπορία itself. In the *Theaetetus*, the condition is likened to "birth pangs,"<sup>75</sup> which Socrates the barren midwife will help via elenchus to discover whether the pregnancy is real. While this may be one kind of ἀπορία we encounter in Plato's dialogues, it cannot be the only kind. Socrates in the aporetic dialogues, who can hardly be said to have a conceit of knowledge (ironically or not), often expresses his own ἀπορία. Moreover, if Socrates is a barren midwife his own ἀπορία can hardly be accompanied by birth pangs, real or not.

72. One may note with some caution that according to *Diog. Laert.* 2.5.29 Socrates did in fact convince Euthyphro not to prosecute his father.

73. ὁ γὰρ Γλαύκων αἰεὶ τε δὴ ἀνδρείοτατος ἂν τυγχάνει πρὸς ἅπαντα, καὶ δὴ καὶ τότε τοῦ Θρασύμαχου τὴν ἀπόρρησιν οὐκ ἀπεδέξατο . . . (*Resp.* 357a).

74. Kahn, "Proleptic Composition" (n. 30 above), 99.

75. See the treatment of the *Theaetetus*, in Clay, *Platonic Questions* (n. 69 above), 167.

Despite the fact that the *Meno* and *Republic* forge beyond ἀπορία, we should also note the reflexivity of the prototype of ἀπορία expressed in the *Meno* (80c). There both Socrates and his interlocutor are numb. At *Republic* 368b, when Socrates expresses his ἀπορία, he again says that he is at a loss as to how to proceed.<sup>76</sup> Both texts offer a characterization of ἀπορία in terms of not knowing how to proceed—being, as the word suggests, without passage, without a road or knowledge of a road, or knowledge of where the road leads. As Beversluis has pointed out:

Although ἀπορία is usually translated as theoretical “perplexity,” it has wider implications which may be seen by noticing its connection to other terms of the same family. A *poros* is a means of passage—a way out or through. Hence to be *aporos* is to be without passage. Uncharted seas induce ἀπορία in sea-farers who lack the τέχνη of navigation which enables them to find the way through uncharted territory. Socrates tries to induce the same state in his interlocutors by making the familiar unfamiliar. The victim is not just in intellectual difficulty . . . he is also at a loss as to how to act.<sup>77</sup>

What is required of Meno is the right response to ἀπορία, one that requires cooperative inquiry instead of a desire for wisdom to be transferred by touch (*Symp.* 175d), or a view that arguments can be poured into the soul (*Resp.* 345b). After the aporetic first book of the *Republic*, Socrates can only proceed once he takes up a fresh conversation with fresh interlocutors who have the right response to their ἀπορία, the ἀπορία that Glaucon professes at *Republic* 358c and that Socrates professes at 368b. What is instructive in the *Meno* is that the slave, like Glaucon and Adeimantus in the *Republic*, grasps what is implicitly protreptic in ἀπορία—they grasp the implication that it is necessary to willingly inquire. This, however, is a characteristic of constructive dialogues. Aporetic dialogues by their very nature do not forge beyond the ἀπορία. On this rather obvious criterion, and with an extended scope to the idea of ἀπορία, the *Clitophon* deserves to be called an aporetic dialogue because it ends at the point where ἀπορία is expressed.

So far I have drawn a distinction between constructive dialogues and aporetic dialogues, and I have suggested that Clitophon directs his remarks at the latter and not the former. When Clitophon expresses ἀπορία with regard to justice, and says that he does not know to whom to turn or how to proceed, Socrates provides no answer to him because the job of the Socrates of aporetic dialogues is over once an interlocutor is brought to ἀπορία. As a constructive dialogue, the *Republic* moves beyond ἀπορία. In fact, the end of the *Clitophon* and the end of *Republic* 1 are strikingly similar. Both end in ἀπορία. At the end of the *Clitophon*, Clitophon is ἀπορῶν, at the end of *Republic* 1, Socrates is ἀπορῶν. Clitophon expresses ignorance regarding

76. ὅσφ δὲ μᾶλλον πιστεύω, μᾶλλον ἀπορῶ ὅτι χρήσομαι. It is not merely that Socrates is confused, it is that he does not know how to proceed. It should be noted that this leads up to an examination of justice by hypothesis, and indeed shows the right approach to ἀπορία, much as Meno's slave, in contrast with Meno, has the right approach to ἀπορία. This is not to suggest that hypothesis in the *Meno* is the same as hypothesis in the *Republic*; see R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford, 1953), passim.

77. Beversluis, *Cross-Examining Socrates* (n. 36 above), p. 1, n. 1.

the nature of justice at the end of the *Clitophon*; Socrates expresses this same ignorance at the end of *Republic* 1. Clitophon expresses concern about the acquisition of εὐδαιμονία, as does Socrates at the end of *Republic* 1. I would go so far as to suggest that Clitophon's approach to virtue thus far is not that different from Socrates' approach.

Clitophon, having reached ἀπορία, is already on the Socratic road, but because of the frustration that goes along with ἀπορία he does not realize it. Note what Clitophon says in expressing his ἀπορία: (1) He seeks answers with whomever he is able (410d);<sup>78</sup> (2) Clitophon goes on to say that if Socrates were to teach him gymnastics, he would explain the nature of the body and the particular kind of treatment it requires (410d), which analogically means that he is asking Socrates to tell him the nature of justice and the kind of life it requires; (3) Clitophon is convinced that caring for the soul is of the highest import (410e). Clitophon, in short has been inspired by Socrates, and he has been exhorted. His ultimate complaint is that (4) Socrates' only value is protreptic, and that (5) Socrates almost gets in the way of someone who has been exhorted. Of these elements of Clitophon's final statements, in addition to his own facility with elenchus, one might notice that the first three points are significant characteristics of the Socratic way of life. If that is the life that Clitophon is indeed leading—continually seeking wisdom from others, and practicing elenchus in the manner he has described in the preceding pages of the dialogue, seeking definitions—if in fact Clitophon has recognized the primary import of caring for the soul, he comes very close to a Socratic ideal in many important respects. For in the *Apology*, these are precisely the kinds of things that Socrates says about himself. He describes how he sought knowledge in many quarters (21e), he describes his elenchus, and he describes his own protreptic activity in terms of exhorting men regarding the primary import of caring for the soul (30a–b).

Socrates' silence at the end of the *Clitophon*, then, is best explained by the fact that the aporetic Socrates can do no more for Clitophon. But it can hardly be a criticism of Clitophon to say that he has emulated to some real degree a Socratic way of life and has been brought to ἀπορία. Nor can it be a condemnation of Socrates to say, as Clitophon does, that Socrates is almost an impediment to the τέλος ἀρετῆς. Clitophon, in his ἀπορία, is suspicious of Socrates' claims to ignorance. This is familiar territory; apart from Glaucon, Adeimantus, and Meno's slave, almost every subject of Socrates' elenchus accuses him of being ironic or eristic. Making such accusations might well be taken as a symptom of ἀπορία. Socrates is only an impediment if one mistakes the aporetic Socrates for the constructive one. The road of the aporetic Socrates is quite literally an eternal one, for Socrates does tell us in the *Apology* that if there is an afterlife, he would be quite happy to continue his questioning in Hades (41a–c).

78. If for no other reason, the tense of πορεύομαι is important here because it suggests a continuous activity, not an intended future one.

The *Clitophon* explicitly ends in ἀπορία about the ἔργον of justice, but at the same time it calls us to inquire into the nature of ἀπορία resulting from negative elenchus and exhorts us to sympathize with those who are numbed by the torpedo's shock. Read as a preface to constructive dialogues, the *Clitophon* is protreptic of further investigation into the nature of justice, something that is only possible once Plato has established the necessity of ἀπορία for such an investigation, along the lines of the *Meno* and the *Republic*. If this is the case, it would be wrong to criticize Clitophon for having come so close to the ideal of the aporetic Socrates. It would also be wrong to suggest that the *Clitophon* expresses dissatisfaction with the aporetic dialogues or with the historical Socrates, since negative elenchus is seen by Plato as fundamental to constructive philosophy. Clitophon's own criticisms of Socrates must be regarded as a symptom of his ἀπορία, a symptom that, although necessary and, indeed, celebrated, Plato believed it was possible to forge beyond. This is borne out not only by Plato's constructive attempts to do so, but by the very implication of the protreptic implicit in aporetic dialogues.

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BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES: PLINY *EPISTULAE* 5.6  
AND THE ANCIENT THEORY OF EKPHRASIS

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NOWADAYS THE WORD ekphrasis is frequently used to denote the rhetorical or literary description of works of visual art.<sup>1</sup> In the ancient world, however, its meaning was much broader, encompassing descriptions of all types, usually characterized by the common feature of vividness (*enargeia* in Greek; *evidentia* or *perspicuitas* in Latin).<sup>2</sup> In this paper I will argue that Pliny *Ep.* 5.6 contains a significant perspective on the ancient concept of ekphrasis, a concept that has in many ways shaped the modern use of the word. Ultimately I will suggest that this letter's interest in description is motivated by the existence in Pliny's time of a conception of ekphrasis that is more "modern" than we might have expected. In other words, the sophistication of Pliny's discussion seems to have quite a bit in common with modern theories of ekphrasis in spite of the fact that he, like most other writers in antiquity, does not limit the term to descriptions of works of art.

Although the word ekphrasis nowhere appears in the letter, Pliny's villa description constitutes a unique intertextual nexus of ideas associated with the term. *Ep.* 5.6 contains an epistolary introduction (1–3), a long description of Pliny's Tuscan villa (4–40), a digression that reflects on this description (41–44), and a brief conclusion (44–46). A cursory reading of the letter shows, first, that Pliny's self-reflective digression articulates a kind of theory of description and, second, that the extended villa description puts into practice

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1. Webb (1999) argues that the definition of ekphrasis as description of art objects appears to stem from 1950s accounts such as Spitzer (1955, 72) and Hagstrum (1958, p. 18, n. 34). Much earlier, however, Friedländer (1912, 83–85) had criticized this kind of definition. More recent formulations of the art-object definition of ekphrasis may be observed in Heffernan (1993, 3) and Clüver (1998, 36). Classicists too have employed such a definition, either explicitly or implicitly: Palm (1965–66, 108–17) acknowledges that ekphrasis is not limited to art objects, but limits his own discussion to them. Manakidou (1993, 4), Becker (1995, 2), and Elsner (2004, p. 157 and n. 1) do the same. Putnam (1998, p. 1, n. 1) explicitly avoids defining ekphrasis but discusses Virgil's descriptions of art objects nonetheless.

2. It appears that the only places in antiquity where the term ekphrasis is specifically associated with descriptions of works of art are in the late rhetorician Nicolaus of Myra (3.492.10–18 Spengel) and the late prose ekphrasis of Philostratus and Callistratus. For the *progymnasmata*, see Kennedy 2000; for Philostratus' ekphrasis, see Anderson 1986, 259–82. On the issue of definition, see especially Webb (1999), who critiques the "art definition" of ekphrasis and details how the term was actually used in antiquity. For other valuable discussions of the term, see Graf 1995; Fowler 1991; Bartsch 1989, 3–39; and Downey 1959.