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Just Silence in Plato's *Clitophon*

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Abstract

Plato's *Clitophon* presents a confrontation between two alternative views of justice, one conventional and the other philosophical – and of Clitophon's inability to move from the one to the other due to his confusion over the relationship between knowledge and virtue and his misconception of the path from ignorance to knowledge, which probably results from his ambition. The nature of this confusion is such that Clitophon can only overcome it by abandoning his submissive stance toward the authority of Socrates (or any other teacher), which fact, combined with the character of his appeal to Socrates for an answer to his difficulties makes any authentic verbal response from Socrates unlikely to help and to risk harm. Silence from Socrates at the conclusion of the dialogue would therefore exemplify the principle that it is not for the just to harm anyone.

Keywords

Plato – Socrates – justice – Clitophon

Careful consideration of the Platonic *Clitophon* has led to enhanced appreciation of its subtlety and complexity in recent years, especially with renewed focus on what this dialogue displays about the eponymous character and how well he represents Socrates in the course of criticizing him. The most fraught question addressed by commentators concerns the significance of this dialogue ending without a response from Socrates when the better part of it consists of a criticism of his ability or willingness to help someone who takes his exhortations to virtue seriously to take the next step in becoming virtuous.

This question, called the Riddle of the *Clitophon*,¹ bears on other dominant issues, such as whether the dialogue is authentic² and what its relation to Plato's *Republic*, in which Clitophon also plays a small role, is supposed to be.³ Interpretations of the Riddle vary, from holding that a lack of depicted response from Socrates does not necessarily constitute depiction of non-response,⁴ to pointing out that any possible response would be pointless or unhelpful,⁵

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- 1 D. Roochnik, 'The Riddle of the *Cleitophon*' in M. Kremer (ed.), *Plato's Cleitophon: On Socrates and the Modern Mind* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004), pp. 43-55. Originally printed in *Ancient Philosophy*, 4 (1984), pp. 132-45.
 - 2 The various grounds for doubting the authenticity of the *Clitophon* brought forward heretofore have been catalogued and answered by D. Roochnik, 'The Riddle of the *Cleitophon*', pp. 43-9; S.R. Slings, *Plato: Clitophon* (Cambridge: Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries, 1999), pp. 227-34; and K.N. Demetriou, 'Reconsidering the Platonic *Cleitophon*', *Polis*, 17.1-2 (2000), pp. 133-60, pp. 133-42; Slings only hesitantly concedes authenticity. J. Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue in Plato's *Clitophon*', *The Cambridge Classical Journal*, 58 (2012), pp. 1-22, p. 22, has bravely wagered that it would seem rather extravagant at this point 'to hypothesise an unknown author, capable of writing such a subtle and allusive dialogue in the period and style of Plato ... when we already have Plato himself'; in this she agrees with J.A. Bailly, *Plato's Euthyphro and Clitophon* (Newburyport: Focus Classical Commentaries, 2003), p. 127. W.A.F. Altman, *Plato the Teacher* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), pp. 20-1, ventures that it is authentic according to criteria derived from his idiosyncratic theory of reading order. Doubts nevertheless persist in the scholarship, e.g., C. Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates in the Platonic *Clitophon*', *Ancient Philosophy*, 32 (2012), pp. 257-78, p. 275. While this paper does not address the question of authenticity, it does assume that the author of the *Clitophon* is familiar and engaged with the philosophy of Plato – though not so 'strongly parasitic' on other Platonic dialogues for clarity about its central message as Bailly, *Plato's Euthyphro and Clitophon*, p. 123, seems to take it.
 - 3 Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue in Plato's *Clitophon*', pp. 1-2.
 - 4 Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', pp. 258, 274-5, points out that the ending is likely designed to prompt readers to consider different possible responses Socrates might have.
 - 5 Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', pp. 19-20, contests that based on the content of the dialogue – in particular on the nature of Clitophon's misrepresentation of Socrates' pseudo-aporia – there is no reasonable or productive response to his criticism to be given, and this is the point of what she takes to be depicted silence from Socrates. B. Marrin, 'What's Next in Plato's *Clitophon*? Self-Knowledge, Instrumentality, and Means without End', *Epoché*, 21.2 (2017), pp. 307-19, p. 308, whom this paper is in closest agreement with, holds that silence is the only viable response because 'Clitophon's criticism already contains its own rebuttal' and nothing Socrates can say will make him see what is before his very eyes due to the peculiar nature of his misunderstanding. Slings, *Clitophon*, p. 42, agrees with G.M.A. Grube, 'The Cleitophon of Plato', *Classical Philology*, 26:3 (1931), pp. 302-8, p. 304, that Clitophon's criticism is unanswerable, but not that the Clitophon therefore represents Plato's ultimate break with Socrates; rather, Slings argues the target of the criticism is a body of Socratic literature and not the man himself.

to claiming that a response is not really possible,⁶ to positing that the *Republic* is in fact Socrates' response – that Clitophon is the anonymous auditor to whom Socrates recounts the drama of the *Republic*.⁷ This paper follows the lead of others in evaluating Clitophon's character and locating flaws and errors of reasoning in the content of his criticism of Socrates and will suggest that, given the nature of those errors and what they reveal about his psychology, it may be that silence from Socrates in response to Clitophon is in accordance with the Socratic principle that it is unjust to harm anyone; that Socrates may not be able to vocalize response without assisting Clitophon's regression from wishing to have knowledge of justice back to conceiving of it in terms of conventional opinions, which would be harmful in the sense that Clitophon would become worse off than he now is in his quest for virtue.

The following analysis of the dialogue and interpretation of the Riddle closely follows and is guided by three recent interpretations of the *Clitophon* which complement one another in a way that brings out aspects of the dialogue worthy of appreciation and discussion. These are J. Bryan's 'Pseudo-Dialogue in Plato's *Clitophon*' (2012), Moore's 'Clitophon and Socrates in the Platonic *Clitophon*' (2012), and Marrin's 'What's Next in Plato's *Clitophon*? Self-Knowledge, Instrumentality, and Means without End' (2017).

Bryan, Marrin, and Moore rightly question 'the cogency of and warrant for Clitophon's criticism' of Socrates,⁸ targeting Clitophon's misinterpretation of Socrates and failure to recognize or appreciate his own self-ignorance in a way that would allow him to be helped any further by Socrates. Agreeing that 'The explicit criticism of Socrates should be read as implicitly critical

6 Roochnik, 'The Riddle of the Cleitophon,' p. 53, argues that Clitophon is a radical relativist and that 'from a Platonic perspective radical relativism is indistinguishable from silence' and vice versa. M. Kremer, 'Interpretive Essay: Socratic Philosophy and the *Cleitophon*' in M. Kremer (ed.), *Plato's Cleitophon*, pp. 17-39, p 28, also remarks on 'the unbridgeable chasm between [Socrates] and Clitophon'. A. Pichanick, 'Socratic Silence in the *Cleitophon*', *Plato Journal*, 17 (2017), p. 68, concludes that 'Socratic, philosophical *eros* and Clitophon's tyrannical *nomos* ... cannot be reconciled to one another at all. Nor can they even talk to one another'.

7 First entertained by M. Davis, *The Soul of the Greeks: An Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 160, this is the dedicated view of Altman, *Plato the Teacher*, pp. 29-36. Splitting the difference between the view that it is pointless for Socrates to answer and the view that the *Clitophon* looks forward to the *Republic*, H.W. Ausland, 'On a Curious Platonic Dialogue', *Ancient Philosophy*, 25 (2005), p. 416, offers the suggestion that if the latter is true, then the lack of response from Socrates evokes the character Socrates thinking to himself that he had better do something to address Clitophon's criticism but, as it would be unproductive to address Clitophon in his current state, instead take the next opportunity to converse with Thrasymachus about justice in Clitophon's presence.

8 Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 257.

of people like Clitophon,⁹ and joining in a critical evaluation of the motives and manifestations of Clitophon's criticism, this paper further develops the analysis of his failure. Bryan sees the *Clitophon* as representing a cautionary example of the inevitable failure in understanding that a certain way of reading dialogues – or of listening to them, in Clitophon's case – inevitably leads to,¹⁰ and Marrin insightfully discloses how Clitophon fails to see the rebuttal contained in his own criticism that arises out of his giving insufficient attention to the implications of identifying justice with knowledge when it comes to using the soul.¹¹ Moore's main point is that Clitophon, because his purported desire for justice is somehow deficient, is mistaken in believing and asserting that Socrates does not teach justice, for through conversational inquiry Socrates engages in activities and exhibits dispositions and attitudes that themselves constitute and invite participation in justice.¹² On his reading the dialogue's abrupt ending compels the reader to reflect about desire for justice, and in particular the distinction between the actual desire and the apparent desire for it.¹³

If Clitophon's understanding of Socratic philosophy is deficient, then the author of the *Clitophon* has presented the reader with the task of working out, from the content of Clitophon's criticism, more about Socratic philosophy than meets Clitophon's eye. Following Marrin's example of mining for evidence of Clitophon's misunderstanding of Socrates and its basic character through textual analysis, the following commentary also draws inferences from Clitophon's criticism of Socrates to articulate how well Clitophon really understands each of the things he says he has heard from Socrates. Specifically, it draws out an unconscious ambiguity in Clitophon's conception of the relationship between knowers of justice and those who are ignorant of it that leads to Clitophon's confusion about justice itself – on the one hand he, Clitophon, ignorant of justice, wishes to become a knower of it, and on the other hand he believes an ignorant person should once and for all subjugate his mind to someone who knows. This error, which seems to result from a tyrannical impulse in Clitophon's psychology, blinds him to the fact that if he is ever to transition from being ignorant and in need of guidance about justice and virtue into being a knower himself capable of using his own soul, he must cease passively subjugating his thought to Socrates and begin thinking for himself – and he

9 Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', p. 3.

10 Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', pp. 21-2.

11 Marrin, 'What's Next?', pp. 313-5.

12 Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 275.

13 Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 259.

displays the reasons behind his coming to a standstill on the threshold of taking that step in the *Clitophon*.¹⁴

To discover what can be learned about Socratic philosophy and justice from this short dialogue, one must attend to different moments at which Clitophon signals what he understands about what he says he has heard from Socrates or Socrates' companions. Section 1 of this paper presents a summary of key points of the dialogue and what they display about Clitophon's understanding of what he talks about. Section 2 offers an analysis of the limits of Clitophon's understanding and the most significant errors in his reasoning. Section 3 presents an argument why silence might be the only just response to the criticism that Clitophon expresses to Socrates on this occasion.

1 Summary

The *Clitophon* consists of a private conversation between Socrates and Clitophon. It begins with Socrates saying that a report has reached him about Clitophon disparaging Socrates to Lysias while highly praising Thrasymachus. Clitophon insists that this report is somewhat inaccurate: Certainly, in some things he did not praise Socrates, but in others he did, and he would gladly clear the air if allowed to explain. Socrates agrees to hear him out, saying that it would be shameful not to listen when someone wanted to benefit him; by learning his good points he could practice them, and by learning his bad points he could avoid them as far as he was able (406e1-407a5). Clitophon thereupon explains at length what he praises (Socrates' pre-eminence in exhorting others to virtue) and what he blames (that Socrates nevertheless seems incapable or unwilling to teach Clitophon how to become virtuous). He finishes by urging Socrates either to explain these things if he can, or to refrain from exhorting him to virtue any longer. If Socrates has anything to say to these accusations and this combination of pleas, the author does not depict his response. The dialogue concludes with Clitophon's criticism, Socrates having spoken only twice, briefly, at the beginning, and never voicing a single question.

Clitophon's disclosure of what he takes himself to have learned from Socrates or to know about virtue and justice may be divided into five different parts based on the manner of his presentation: 1) he recites a hortatory speech, 2) he summarizes some additional claims and arguments that he says follow upon that speech, 3) he recounts a discussion he had with Socrates' companions,

¹⁴ Bryan, 'Psuedo-Dialogue', p. 21.

4) he cites a pair of answers that he heard from Socrates, which do not agree with one another, to the question, 'What is justice?' and 5) he airs his frustrations and issues a final challenge to Socrates to explain what he wishes to know. In stages b-e of Clitophon's summary it is possible to determine from the content or form of his speech what falls within the scope of his comprehension and, to varying degrees, what surpasses it.

1.1 *Recited Hortatory Speech*

In a speech recited by Clitophon, Socrates, according to Clitophon, first suggests that knowing how to use wealth justly is good and somehow constitutes a part of the pursuit of virtue. Second, he claims that the conventional education is inadequate with regard to justice. Third, as evidence of the inadequacy of the conventional education, he cites observable evils resulting from the prevalence of injustice: strife between brothers and between cities. Fourth, he appeals to the notions that injustice is hateful to the gods and that succumbing to pleasures is a matter of weakness in order to demonstrate that no one is willingly unjust, and therefore injustice is a matter to be addressed through education. Because Clitophon recites this speech, we learn only that he remembers having heard such things from Socrates and that he admires them, but not what he understands them to mean or why he admires them.

1.2 *Summarized Claims and Arguments*

The further claims and arguments about knowledge and justice that Clitophon says he has overheard from Socrates, which he summarizes without directly quoting him, begin to reveal what he takes to be Socrates' teaching and gives some clues as to the limits of his understanding of that teaching in the process.¹⁵

In this stage of his criticism, Clitophon elaborates on only the first and least developed of the points that the hortatory speech assumes: that virtue and knowing how to use wealth justly are good.¹⁶ He says that – according to Socrates – those who train their bodies but neglect their souls neglect the ruling element while being zealous for that which is ruled (407e5-9). Whereas the hortatory speech merely points out the error of caring about acquiring wealth while neglecting to learn how to use wealth justly, in arguments Clitophon

15 That Clitophon does not present these claims and conclusions in direct quotation probably indicates that he overheard them in courses of dialogue Socrates engaged in on particular occasions with particular interlocutors on particular subjects, which Clitophon could not recount in the form of a speech; see Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', pp. 265-9.

16 C. Orwin, 'On the *Cleitophon*', in M. Kremer (ed.), *Plato's Cleitophon*, pp. 59-70, p. 62. Originally published as 'The Case Against Socrates: Plato's *Cleitophon*', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 15.4 (1982), pp. 741-53.

takes to follow from it Socrates points out the error of exercising the body while neglecting to care for the condition of the soul that is going to use it. A body in good condition only benefits the whole human being if it is put to good use; but it is only put to good use by a soul that is in good condition (by one that knows the use of the body). Clitophon takes this claim to be analogous to what the hortatory speech says about wealth: that the benefit of a healthy body is contingent upon knowing its use.¹⁷

Socrates, according to Clitophon, also asserts that one should give up the use of anything one does not know how to use, a principle that applies even to the body. Saying it is the same with respect to art, Clitophon invokes the additional principle that ignorance of the use of a particular type of thing extends to the use of any thing of the same type: Someone who merely possesses a lyre while ignorant of how to play it would likewise be ignorant of how to use anyone else's lyre (407e9-408a4).

Clitophon says that Socrates nobly concludes that these three principles – 1) the benefit of a thing depends on knowledge of how to use it, 2) ignorance of how to use a given thing extends to the use of anything of the same type, and 3) one should give up using anything one does not know how to use – extend even to the human soul. Not knowing how to use this, one should prefer to be dead; or if that is not possible, then one should prefer to 'hand over the rudder of one's thought' to someone with expertise in 'piloting' human beings. Clitophon says that Socrates often names this political expertise (*politike*), saying it is the same as judicial expertise (*dikastike*) and justice (*dikaiosune*) (408a4-b5).

This argument relies on an unspoken assumption: that knowledge of how to use a given thing extends to use of anything of the same type (the inverse of the second explicit principle). This is borne out by the claim that someone who does not know the use of his soul should allow someone else to take over his thought as a pilot takes over the rudder of a ship. It is difficult not to infer from Clitophon's immediate identification of soul-piloting with political rule (to say nothing of his stated preference for associating with Thrasymachus) that the reverse of the second principle holds a special significance for him. Moreover, if he imagines it applies to the soul-as-instrument, then the same would seemingly apply to a person's wealth or body: Knowing the use of these, one would also know how to use those of others. Silent on this implication, Clitophon is likewise silent on the crucial question whether the user, and not just the possessor, would benefit in that case. If he takes for granted that becoming the ruler of the minds, bodies, and wealth of those who are ignorant of their

¹⁷ Ausland, 'On a Curious Platonic Dialogue', p. 406.

use would intrinsically benefit the knower of 'justice' – indeed, if he conceives of this as itself the main benefit of knowing 'justice'¹⁸ – then his concern for justice dovetails with a tyrannical view of the good.¹⁹ If that is the target of Clitophon's interest in Socratic philosophy, then in saying that these claims and conclusions are the noble conclusion of the hortatory speech, Clitophon indicates what he takes Socrates' exhortations to virtue to promise.²⁰ But that would be leaping to a conclusion that the claims of Socrates he has outlined do not necessarily support (more on this in Section 2).

1.3 *A Discussion with the Companions*

If virtue is teachable, Clitophon wants to learn it; but he evidently has not yet heard on the basis of the speech and statements he has so far outlined what he would consider a full-fledged teaching, the requirements for which only begin to emerge in the third part of his criticism where he relates how, wondering if others had learned more from Socrates, he made an inquiry among those whom he took to be members of Socrates' circle.²¹

Clitophon went and asked the companions of Socrates what comes next after being exhorted (408c4-7). As becomes clear from his questioning, Clitophon believes that without a formulaic teaching about virtue,²² or an art of justice that produces something tangible in addition to people who are just, Socrates' exhortations would be senseless. He would simply be exhorting others to exhort still others, endlessly, like a chain letter with no higher purpose

18 Notably, in the Hortatory speech Clitophon's Socrates censures ignorance of the just use of wealth, but in the summary of claims and arguments that follows the modifier drops out and Clitophon simply speaks of ignorance of the use of things.

19 I am grateful to Michael Davis for helping me to see that fixation on political justice and craving for tyranny exist on a continuum – the latter presenting a tantalizing solution to the former.

20 Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', pp. 268, 272-3, convincingly argues that Clitophon's interest in learning about justice is very practically motivated by the desire to publicly declaim about justice for political advancement; displaying and teaching such skill was Thrasymachus' profession (*Republic* 337d; *Phaedrus* 267c-d).

21 Clitophon does not know whether to call Socrates' associates age-mates, or those with the same desires, or simply companions. Davis, *The Soul of the Greeks*, p. 171, takes Clitophon's uncertainty about this as evidence that to Socrates' circle Clitophon is an outsider; Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', pp. 267-8, infers from it that Clitophon has gleaned that Socrates does not assume the usual role of a teacher, i.e., someone from whom knowledge flows uni-directionally to students in easy formulas. Both may be correct; perhaps before speaking to the companions Clitophon had gleaned simply that Socrates did not assume the usual role of a teacher *with him* – he wanted to discover if he was an anomaly in that respect.

22 Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 264.

than to perpetuate itself by appealing to vague wishes that it has no coherent means of fulfilling.²³ To ensure that he was not being taken in by a senseless project, Clitophon asked the companions what they had heard from Socrates about how to begin learning justice (408e2-3), and particularly about what he calls the art of the virtue of the soul (409a2-3). He demanded to hear this art explained on the model of medicine and gymnastic – arts that produce health, the virtue of the body.

According to the companion of Socrates who was by reputation most vigorous (*erromenos*) when it comes to such things, the art that makes the soul virtuous is the very thing you heard Socrates discussing: justice. Clitophon accepted this answer, but more than the name of the art he wanted to know what it produces. Medicine produces health in addition to doctors, and carpentry produces houses in addition to carpenters; so what does justice produce in addition to just men?²⁴ (Clitophon conflates ‘just men’ with ‘teachers of justice,’ thereby precluding the companions’ answering that justice produces just men.) According to Clitophon, an art that produces practitioners but nothing more would be no art at all. Perhaps it would rather be something like the chain letter of exhortations.²⁵

After an abortive attempt by the companions to answer that justice produces the advantageous, the needful, the useful, or the profitable (things which Clitophon countered might be said to be produced by any of the arts, all of which produce something else in addition),²⁶ Clitophon says that finally the one reputed to be the cleverest speaker said that justice produces friendship in the cities. When pressed, however (from this point forward Clitophon uses the passive voice), this cleverest speaker was forced to agree, first, that the product

23 Orwin, ‘On the *Cleitophon*’, p. 69.

24 Socrates attempts to make use of the same assumption that all arts are productive in Plato’s *Charmides* in order to refute one of the definitions of moderation put forward by Critias, but Critias is clever enough to deflect by pointing out that some arts, e.g., calculation and geometry, do not produce anything apart from knowledge of them (165c-166a). Indeed, the *Charmides*’s more thoroughgoing exploration of the nature of knowledge of virtue, or moderation in any case, is useful to compare with the *Cleitophon*. There Socrates appears to take the same side in his discussion with Critias that Clitophon takes in his discussion with the companions in the *Cleitophon*; but Socrates’ opposition to Critias’ definition is, unsurprisingly, exaggerated and in places his own more modest and dynamic understanding of knowledge of virtue (or moderation as the case may be) shines through (167a, 172b).

25 Orwin, ‘On the *Cleitophon*’, p. 69.

26 That this list of unsatisfactory answers is nearly identical to that which Thrasymachus forbids Socrates to appeal to in answering what justice is in the *Republic* appears significant (336d). It might suggest that these stock answers were starting points or talking points in discussions about justice among Socrates’ circle.

of justice must be good, and second, that not everything that is called friendship is good. What is called friendship among children or beasts is sometimes harmful, those present pointed out, as is unity of mind (*homonoian*) by way of opinion. The clever one's definition of friendship therefore had to be restricted to unity of mind between adult human beings on the basis of knowledge rather than mere opinion. But this answer was also determined to be unsatisfactory: Other arts produce unity of mind on the basis of knowledge among practitioners, and these arts still produce something else as well (409d2-410a6).

The discussion with and among the companions certainly reveals that Clitophon has thought through some of what he has heard from Socrates. He comes short of a potential breakthrough, however, as a result of assuming that what constitutes a teaching should follow a certain preconceived form. Clitophon imposes a narrow epistemological standard for what he allows himself to say he understands: Knowledge of justice must resemble knowledge not just of the arts but specifically of tangibly productive arts, or it is nothing to speak of. Given that there are forms of knowledge beyond tangibly productive know-how, e.g., calculation, this imposed limitation significantly inhibits the scope of Clitophon's comprehension of what one might call human matters.

1.4 *Two Answers to the Question 'What is Justice?'*

Clitophon's statements about what transpired when he ultimately questioned Socrates in person about justice is revealing in its context, its content, and its brevity. He says that Socrates said to him that justice was to harm enemies and to help friends – but later on, Clitophon says, it appeared that the just man never harms anyone, but in all things tries to help everyone. Because Socrates did not speak to him consistently about justice – and not just once or twice – Clitophon gave up (410a7-b4). The brevity of Clitophon's summary may indicate that it is a mere gloss on an entire conversation that Clitophon, for his part, found bewildering, without yet responding to his *aporia* by reexamining his core opinions.²⁷

1.5 *Frustrations and Ultimatums*

The different points that Clitophon stresses in summarizing his frustrations and issuing his ultimate challenge to Socrates shed further light on his limited understanding. It takes eight lines for Clitophon to voice the charge that possibly Socrates does not know how to become virtuous – in which he interrupts himself to politely deny that he himself accuses Socrates of this – and only two lines to voice the charge that possibly Socrates knows it but does not wish

²⁷ Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 271.

to share his knowledge. Clitophon treats charging Socrates with ignorance as a matter of greater delicacy than charging him with unwillingness to share knowledge.²⁸ The reason is that the charge of ignorance in this case entails a graver accusation. According to Clitophon, it would be senseless for Socrates to go around exhorting others to virtue unless he actually knew the art that makes human beings virtuous.²⁹ Charging Socrates with ignorance would be tantamount to accusing him of senselessness, which Clitophon lamely tries to smooth over by comparing him to someone who praises the art of piloting without knowing that art – which would still show senselessness if such a person neglected to rectify his own ignorance of what he exhorted others to care about seeking teachers or trainers in. To Clitophon's thinking, if Socrates is not simply like a withholding god, then he is either an idiot or a madman.

Because Clitophon is uncertain whether Socrates is merely withholding the knowledge he seeks or does not possess it, he enjoins Socrates to stop exhorting him to care about virtue, but rather to tell him if he can, once and for all, how to become virtuous – just as he might, had he exhorted Clitophon to be careful about the body, to follow up with speeches about the nature of the body and the sort of therapy of which it has need.³⁰ Clitophon says to put it down that Clitophon agrees that it is absurd to make other things a concern but to be careless about soul, on behalf of which we labor at everything else;

28 One might be tempted to read it the other way – that Clitophon's parenthetical comments serve the purpose of delaying his expression of the more delicate point – but his assuring Socrates with these comments that he himself doesn't take Socrates to be ignorant shows what he is anxious about. This point is reinforced by the fact that Clitophon nowhere refers to Socrates' ever having professed to be ignorant in the matters about which Clitophon heard him discussing, showing that if he had heard Socrates profess ignorance, as is likely, then he did not take such professions to be serious; see Slings, *Clitophon*, pp. 121-2; Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', p. 15.

29 I disagree with Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', p. 16, fn. 55, that Clitophon 'never considers ... that it might be illegitimate to exhort x in the absence of knowledge of x,' and that 'such a criticism is beyond him' because of his blindness to Socrates' self-professed ignorance. On the contrary, I interpret Clitophon's blindness or non-susceptibility to Socrates' self-professed ignorance to result from his belief that exhorting others to seek knowledge of something that one does not know oneself would be illegitimate. This belief is closely related with his inability to conceive of a middle ground between ignorance and knowledge of virtue, which I discuss in Section 2.

30 This is the closest Clitophon comes to asking Socrates to tell him what the nature of the soul is, and what sort of therapy brings it into good condition; compare with Marrin, 'What's Next?', p. 315: Clitophon 'can assert his agreement with Socrates' that the 'soul [is that] for the sake of which we perform all other labors' (410d5-e1), but his own, purely instrumental understanding of 'use' causes him to miss the phenomenon of the soul altogether. This appeal by Clitophon also contains the only occurrence of *therapeia* in the *Clitophon*, though *epimeleia* and related forms occur frequently throughout.

and in his conceit, he asks Socrates to assume that he has made an adequate summary of what is entailed by putting care for the soul before all other matters. Clitophon follows up with an ultimatum: If Socrates does anything else but say what Clitophon wishes to hear, he will continue as he does now, praising Socrates for some things to Lysias and others, but blaming him also. Finally, he declares that while Socrates is best when it comes to those who have yet to be turned to caring about virtue, he is practically a stumbling block when it comes to acquiring virtue and becoming a happy man (410c8-e8).

2 The Limits of Clitophon's Understanding

What Clitophon takes himself to understand about Socratic philosophy may be summarized as follows: to become virtuous is to be happy; virtue is the good condition of the soul; because the soul rules the body, one cannot really benefit from having a body in good condition unless one has a virtuous soul; benefiting from the body requires knowledge of its use, as indeed benefiting from anything requires knowledge of the thing's use; justice or statesmanship is piloting human beings by the rudder of their thought – it is knowledge of using human beings. The unspoken implication is that justice must be the art by which one knows the use of one's own soul. The soul in turn rules the body and wealth; justice then, as Clitophon judges, is the art that discovers how to use one's own things, and for that matter what belongs to others. Or is it, as Clitophon also vaguely senses, the art that discovers the nature of the soul and the therapy for putting it in good condition? Clitophon seems convinced, at any rate, that as an art justice must produce something tangible apart from new knowers of justice. A mark of his insistence on this last point is that the Clitophon has the highest density of occurrences of the word *techne* and derivatives of any Platonic dialogue.³¹

Even if Clitophon faithfully represents claims he has heard Socrates make or discuss, he gives no sign of having adequately explored important associated questions that might lead to disillusionment on the very points that seem to appeal to him about those claims. He seems most confused over the relationships between knowledge and virtue and knowledge and ignorance.

31 D. Roochnik, 'Socrates' Use of the Techne-Analogy', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 24:3 (1986), pp. 295-310; reprinted in H.H. Benson (ed.), *Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 185-97, p. 194.

2.1 *Knowledge and Virtue*

Clitophon follows Socrates as far as the conclusion that knowledge is a necessary condition for using things as diverse as wealth, instruments, bodies, and souls. But surely there is much that he has overlooked. For example, in these arguments Clitophon recounts, knowledge of the body's use and having a soul in good condition are alternately said to be necessary for benefiting from the use of the body. This implies that knowledge might well *be* the good condition of the soul.³² Be that as it may, Clitophon also believes that justice is an art, that is, knowledge (409a2-3);³³ since justice is surely a virtue, this suggests that *justice is the virtue of the soul*. But in that case justice would not simply be a means of benefiting from the use of things, it would be something Clitophon at least initially appears to regard as good in itself (410d5-e1). Clitophon's summary of Socrates' arguments barely suggests this possibility because he fixates on the instrumental role of knowledge – as he later fixates on the instrumental, productive role of justice.³⁴ He also fails to consider what it might mean for someone to know how to use his own soul. He treats the soul as just another thing to be used,³⁵ without considering that the soul as the ruling principle is what uses things, and as the cognitive principle is what knows the use of things. Clitophon doesn't engage with what Socrates' arguments suggest about the questions of self-knowledge and self-rule, but instead marvels at what he takes for the 'noble conclusion' of Socrates' speeches exhorting human beings to virtue, which according to him is that justice is political expertise in using the souls of those who would be better off dead because they don't know how to use the soul themselves.

2.2 *Knowledge and Ignorance*

Related to the confusion over the relationship between knowledge and virtue in Clitophon's account of Socratic philosophy is an ambiguity in his expectations regarding the consequences of there being a teaching about justice. On the one hand, he vaguely senses that to become virtuous one must learn the art that discovers the nature of the soul and what sort of therapy puts it in good condition (410d5-e1), which he takes to be justice (408d1-409a3). On the other

32 Bailly, *Plato's Euthyphro and Clitophon*, p. 112. See *Meno* 88c-89a for a sketch of Socrates' argument for the identification of knowledge with virtue. To be sure, his discussion with Meno turns toward identifying knowledge with opinion upon failing to identify teachers of virtue – but that failure is the result of conceiving of virtue again in conventional terms as soon as they begin to look for teachers (*Meno* 91a).

33 Roochnik, 'Socrates' Use of the Techne-Analogy'.

34 Marrin, 'What's Next?', pp. 312-3.

35 Orwin, 'On the *Cleitophon*', p. 63; Marrin, 'What's Next?', pp. 313-5.

hand, he believes hortatory and helpful the claim that the next-best alternative to death for anyone who is ignorant of justice is to utterly subjugate his thought to someone who knows (408b5-c4). Clitophon's conception of the status of the ignorant is ambiguous: In his own case, he wishes to transform ignorance into knowledge; but in general terms the non-miserable solutions to ignorance that interest him are either death or enslavement to a knower who takes over one's thought as a pilot takes over the rudder of a ship.³⁶ The piloting analogy coupled with the presentation of subjugating one's thought to someone skilled in political expertise as a second-best alternative to death seems to rule out anything between knowledge and ignorance – for example, temporarily following the guidance of a master in acquiring the knowledge one lacks while retaining sovereignty over one's own judgment.³⁷ This accounts for why Clitophon thinks that exhorting others to virtue when one does not have knowledge of virtue would be senseless: He has no conception of a middle position of making progress toward knowledge without yet having arrived at the end. This also causes him to be blithely unconcerned with the fact that if the knower successfully teaches what he knows, then ruling others by mental enslavement would be unnecessary; or that if the knower must mentally enslave others, then he does not really impart knowledge of justice, which is the same as self-rule.

2.3 *Unity of Mind by Way of Opinion*

The question whether the art of justice imparts knowledge to those it presides over also emerges in connection with the concept of 'unity of mind' on which Clitophon's discussion with the companions founders. That discussion is of great importance, for it affords a point of entry for Socratic philosophy that is neither couched in terms of conventional opinion as the hortatory speech is nor necessarily restricted to the compass of Clitophon's understanding as the arguments he takes to follow it are. This is especially true of the conclusion,

36 This ambiguity constitutes a special feature of Clitophon's more general failure to fully recognize the significance of, or to be properly activated by, his own lack of self-knowledge, which 'most importantly distinguishes [him] from Socrates'; Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 276; also pp. 272, 275.

37 As Marrin, 'What's Next?', p. 313, points out, Clitophon's turning his soul over to Socrates is not necessarily a false step, for 'the very recognition that one is ignorant of the use of the soul, if it leads to turning over one's soul in the direction of another, is itself an example of the proper use of the soul ... and so already indicative of a certain knowledge, however partial, of justice.' Clitophon, however, never receives the full benefit of turning his soul over to Socrates because of his failure, as Marrin argues, to consider the self-relation implied by the Greek word for 'use' (*chresthai*), a middle-voiced verb that in fact bypasses the user/used (active/passive) dichotomy.

where the question of friendship as unity of mind was raised after Clitophon appeared to have lost control of the discussion, which began moving by the direction of other participants. Clitophon's shift from active to passive voice (beginning with *erotomenos*, 'he being asked,' at 409d6), leading to his assigning objections to 'the others,' signal his loss of control of the discussion;³⁸ they may be attempts to gloss over the difference between him and the others as a lame attempt to conceal his having been reduced to a passive observer in a discussion that he initiated.³⁹ In any case, this shift leaves open the possibility that Clitophon might not of his own accord have found anything particularly objectionable about the clever speaker's argument that justice produces friendship in the cities.⁴⁰ More importantly, the considerations that defuse the clever speaker's argument (that friendship must be beneficial to be the work of justice and that unity of mind therefore must be grounded in knowledge rather than opinion) may issue from the companions, who are closer to Socrates and hence more familiar with Socratic philosophy. These considerations therefore deserve revisiting.

The claims that friendship must be beneficial to be the work of justice and that friendship as unity of mind must be grounded in knowledge rather than opinion bear importantly on how one conceives of justice as expert knowledge

38 Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 259, takes Clitophon's recitation of the discussion with Socrates' companions as evidence that Clitophon was skilled in refutation; Marrin, 'What's Next?', p. 310, reads Clitophon as 'able to dialectically refute' the various answers that the companions offer to the question of what work justice produces – but Clitophon's use of the passive voice makes his role in the refutations ambiguous at best.

39 Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', p. 9, takes Clitophon's use of passive voice as evidence of his carelessness about accurately representing the views of others; Marrin, 'What's Next?', p. 312, following Davis, *The Soul of the Greeks*, p. 171, reads it as evidence that Clitophon regards the problem of learning justice as abstract rather than personal. Neither of these interpretations is incompatible with the point I wish to make about the significance of this moment in the discussion.

40 Clitophon claims to have greatly admired a speech urging that justice is needful to prevent conflict, and the production of friendship would surely do that much; see M. Ivins, 'On the Silence of Socrates in Plato's *Cleitophon*', draft, panel 'Reading Plato: Socratic Education', 50th Anniversary Conference on Liberal Education: 'What is Liberal Education For?', St. John's College, Santa Fe (2014). Pichanick, 'Socratic Silence', p. 67, asserts that Clitophon finds cities' need for friendship 'especially wondrous'. Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 265, who implicitly assumes Clitophon retains full control of the discussion throughout, takes it for granted that 'Clitophon's dismissive attitude toward ... the plausible (but refuted) analysis of justice as producing ... friendship in the city (409d5) suggests that Clitophon does not much care about the relationship of justice to other goods or about the significance of friendship'. But this inference does not track with Clitophon's initial agreement with the principle that justice is a necessary condition for benefiting from goods such as wealth.

of 'piloting' human beings. One would presumably not hand over the rudder of one's thought to someone without first trusting that the person in question was actually a knower. One trusts another to be a knower either on the basis of knowing the same things in common or on the basis of being persuaded to hold the opinion that the other is a knower. In the former case, turning over the rudder of one's thought would be superfluous. It follows that someone with the political expertise of which Clitophon says he has heard Socrates speak must be concerned with persuading those who do not know what is just to hold that he knows, and that obeying him is desirable. But in that case justice or political expertise *would* involve something beyond producing new knowers and teachers: It would preside over the souls, bodies, and wealth of human beings who did not understand the advantageous use of their own things.

This observation points to a possible source of Clitophon's fixation on justice as a productive art. If 'the just' were knowers of justice as political expertise in the sense outlined above, then the work that justice produces beyond more teachers would be persuasion of the ignorant about who the knowers are and that it is desirable or necessary to follow their guidance.⁴¹ In producing more knowers and teachers, the art would deal in unity of mind on the basis of knowledge; in 'piloting' human beings, it would deal in unity of mind on the basis of opinion. Perhaps Clitophon doesn't really want to know what justice is so much as he wants to be able to produce agreement on the basis of opinion about what is just – and who is. When he speaks of 'just men,' does he have in mind those who simply possess this skill? Does his focus on the mention of one person ruling over others and blindness to what Socrates' arguments suggest about the questions of self-knowledge and self-rule indicate that he

41 This is not to say that Clitophon has already embraced the cynical view that he expresses in the *Republic* that justice is simply persuading or coercing others to do whatever one wills. He may well have the impression that Socratic philosophy holds the promise of an art that makes rulers infallible. Such an art would be monstrous, but the notion of it does sometimes come up in Socratic philosophy. As S. Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 15, notes, Socrates' refutation of Cephalus' view of justice in the *Republic* points toward the principle that, 'if formulated universally, would run: Knowledge alone determines right. Not only do prodigals thereby lose the right to use their own property, but anyone who does not know how to use anything he has – including his life – either has it taken away from him or handed over to another to manage. The principle is so terrifying that one must hope that either no one has this kind of knowledge, or, if anyone does have it, either he does not on its basis lay claim to rule, or he promises not to apply his knowledge too strictly'. In the *Charmides*, Socrates' description of the benefit that Critias seems to believe moderation-as-knowledge holds is quite similar (171e-172a), but of course Socrates cannot share that view and later argues that it would not itself be beneficial without the addition of knowledge of the good and the bad (173e-174c).

takes Socrates' exhortations to virtue for exhortations to acquire this skill, and nothing more?

2.4 *Unity of Mind by Way of Knowledge*

As previously noted, Clitophon does not seem to have explored the question of such an art's benefit. On the one hand, if justice were merely a matter of inculcating opinion, then it would not exactly raise to virtue those over whose souls it presided – though it might help them to avoid the evils of injustice. On the other hand, it is not apparent how a knower of justice, if his soul were already in good condition, would derive any additional benefit from 'piloting' others.⁴² Would it not be preferable, then, for a knower of justice (or someone who had made progress along the path to genuine knowledge of justice) instead to discuss as much as he knew with a small group of others who were willing and able to converse on such matters – fostering unity of mind on the basis of knowledge, which after all might be the good condition of the soul? Whatever might be the issue of this latter form of teaching, it would stand a better chance of benefiting human beings than merely inculcating opinion. Clitophon, however, wants it both ways: He wishes admittance into the community of knowers of justice, but he demands Socrates instruct him by imparting formulaic lessons to be passively absorbed – in other words, by inculcating opinion and 'taking over the rudder' of his thinking without promoting mutual critical engagement, which would be all-important for acquiring the knowledge he seeks.⁴³ His evident fascination with the prospect of ruling the thoughts of the ignorant seems to blind him to the fact that admission into the community of knowers of justice – whatever that means – must deal in unity of mind on the basis of knowledge, which in the case of virtue cannot be attained by mental subjugation.

Clitophon's error provides a clue to his psychology. Fostering unity of mind by discussing justice, the actual path to virtue that Socrates or his companions might be able to offer Clitophon, evidently does not hold sufficient appeal for him. As Moore puts it, 'Socrates shows that desiring to be just, considered robustly – recognizing one's ignorance, listening to others' views, and trying to learn about the good – is much the same as being just'.⁴⁴ But that is so far from what Clitophon is actually seeking that he is oblivious to it. Clitophon's

42 The philosopher kings of the *Republic* would have no inclination to return to the cave if they were not compelled through an obligation to help the city that institutionally raised them in philosophy (*Republic* 519c-520b). Athens lacked such an institutional education. See also *Republic* 347b.

43 Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', p. 15.

44 Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 257.

'self-oblivion',⁴⁵ together with his ambition, leads him to conceive of the virtue he seeks in such active, dominant terms that he paradoxically demands Socrates take over his soul's care in a prohibitively passive manner. He wants a teaching about justice and virtue to elevate him to ascendancy over others. This leads him to mistakenly believe that students learn virtue through being dominated by their masters.

2.5 *Socrates' Way*

Even if a doctrinaire teaching of justice and virtue is impossible, Socrates' behavior at the beginning of the *Clitophon* signals that human beings are not then simply left with the choice between slavery and death, as Clitophon's understanding of Socratic philosophy would seem to indicate. Socrates accepts Clitophon's offer to explain what he praises and does not praise about him because, as he says, it would be shameful not to submit to someone eager to benefit him. By learning his good and bad points, he says, he could pursue the former and avoid the latter according to his strength. There is, of course, a hint of irony here: Socrates does not say that it would be shameful not to submit to Clitophon's judgment as though it were authoritative, but rather that it would be shameful to neglect to listen to criticism and heed it just in case he should learn something of value from it. Socrates is willing to turn over his thinking to another, but only provisionally; he remains sovereign over his own thought. He seizes any opportunity to learn to improve, that is, to learn about virtue;⁴⁶ but since it is by no means certain that the one who attempts to instruct him knows what he is talking about, it is Socrates' way, if nothing prevents him, to go through with such a person what he says to determine if there is in fact something good in it – to determine if he has found an instructor or competent discussant in the most needful knowledge of the human good.⁴⁷ There might even be some benefit to cross-examining a pretender to such knowledge: One might learn how certain opinions take hold in human beings, or to what errors they are apt to lead; and one might instruct the would-be instructor about the shortcomings of his point of view, to set him aright or at least to reign in the bold dissemination of his deficient understanding. This of course invites the question, why does the *Clitophon* conclude with the eponymous

45 Marrin, 'What's Next?', p. 311.

46 Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', p. 18, characterizes Socrates as 'someone who, whilst committed to the idea that thinking about how to be good is important, still claims to be trying to work out for himself what being good actually entails'. See also Moore, 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 265.

47 Moore 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 263.

character's 'instruction,' rather than with any depiction of Socrates responding to his interlocutor?

3 Just Silence?

There is reason to believe that Socrates has already engaged with Clitophon in an elenctic examination of his opinions about justice, but that Clitophon took nothing constructive away from the experience. Moore has convincingly argued that Clitophon's brief account of Socrates' response to his direct inquiry about justice is most likely a gloss on a conversation in which Socrates probably answered Clitophon's question with another question – 'Would you agree that it is just to help friends and harm enemies?' – which, supposing Clitophon answered affirmatively, Socrates followed with an interrogation designed to bring Clitophon to also agree with a conflicting principle – e.g., that it is never just to harm anyone – on the basis of some of his other opinions. Rather than resulting in a desire to rectify his own state of ignorance, however, the encounter only disappointed and frustrated Clitophon because it did not result in a formulaic teaching to be passively absorbed by him.⁴⁸ A repetition of that therefore does not seem promising. What's more, in order to initiate an elenctic examination of Clitophon about justice and virtue after hearing his criticism and demand for a teaching about virtue, Socrates would have to plead ignorance of justice and virtue. But Clitophon believes that exhorting others to virtue would be senseless if one did not in fact know an art of making human beings virtuous. Socrates cannot plead ignorance of what virtue is without appearing to admit in Clitophon's eyes that all his talk of virtue is senseless – which would risk causing Clitophon to revert back to conventionalism or finally embrace the teaching of Thrasymachus. Supposing this is not inevitable and that Clitophon still has a chance of authentically making progress in philosophy – and his criticism of Socrates does indicate that the answers he seeks are, as it were, before his very eyes⁴⁹ – then attempting to cross-examine him on his views of justice here and now would not be helpful

48 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 271.

49 Marin, 'What's Next?' p. 308. I disagree with Pichanick, 'Socratic Silence', pp. 67, 68, that Clitophon displays 'a complete lack of movement in his soul' and is not moved by a desire for wisdom: responding to Socrates' exhortation to virtue, listening to him, and thinking about what he says far enough to encounter some difficulties seems to display movement in Clitophon's soul prompted by desire for wisdom; though perhaps his desire for wisdom up to this point has a degenerate ground.

and might indeed be harmful. Moreover, Clitophon has specifically asked him to respond differently. So how else might Socrates respond?

To be sure, Socrates cannot helpfully or honestly give Clitophon the sort of response he is asking for. At the conclusion of his criticism of Socrates, Clitophon demands that Socrates 1) stop exhorting him to care about virtue, but rather 2) say how to become virtuous; 3) assume that Clitophon agrees that it is best to put care of the soul before other matters and that he is perfectly cognizant of what that entails; and 4) in doing this to say only what Clitophon wishes to hear (410c8-e3). But if showing someone the way to virtue requires continually exhorting him to care about it; or if Clitophon does not adequately understand what putting the soul before all other concerns entails, or if at heart he is ambivalent about virtue of the soul being the greatest good; or if what he wishes to hear is not actually the truth; then it is impossible for Socrates to respond properly, adequately, and truthfully while meeting all of his demands.

More than that, if Socrates were to explain some things that Clitophon didn't quite grasp but took to be the truth about justice, this would not only fail to free Clitophon from his perplexity, it would be damaging. Clitophon would almost certainly regard such an account as a formulaic teaching.⁵⁰ He would then believe himself to know much more than he actually did – would believe himself to have attained unity of mind with Socrates on the basis of knowledge, while in fact he would have simply turned his thinking over to an opinion received from someone who knew better.⁵¹ If Clitophon were to take such a lesson to heart, if he believed himself to be in possession of a philosophically supported understanding of justice while remaining somewhat stuck in conventionalism, this too would make him worse off than he already is.

If Clitophon's admiration for Socrates' speeches and arguments stems from the impression that the main benefit of knowledge of justice and virtue is being able to use the souls, bodies, and wealth of others – political ascendancy – then what he really needs is to be brought back to square one. The whole point of the exhortation to care about virtue before wealth is that wealth, which can be used for good things or bad things indiscriminately, really has no benefit unless one knows what is good. In the same way, political rule, if it is advantageous for the ruler at all, could only be advantageous for a ruler who knows what is good (*Republic* 339c, 347b) – and in any case political ascendancy is not the point of Socrates' exhortations to virtue. Might Socrates then say to Clitophon, 'I hear what you're saying, and I am glad to hear that you initially

50 Moore 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 271.

51 Bryan, 'Pseudo-Dialogue', p. 4.

found my exhortations of value, but you are mistaken about the bad points that you blame me for. Don't you see, my friend, that you very nearly have the answer to the difficulties you have just laid out? Only you seem to have overlooked some important matters. Why don't we begin by inquiring about that last bit you came close to mentioning – the nature of the soul and the therapy that puts it in good condition. Now, do you suppose that the good condition of the soul is active or passive? And what about a therapy, is it an activity or not?'

The question is whether Socrates can legitimately expect here and now to be able through question and answer to nudge Clitophon away from his mistaken expectation that unity of mind on the basis of knowledge may be achieved through passively receiving a formulaic lesson. In other words, the question is whether Socrates' responding along such lines – or in any other way – can effectively prompt Clitophon to actively and critically engage with his own thoughts and opinions and piece together for himself what Socrates' exhortations to virtue finally aim at. There seems to be a genuine risk that speaking at all would only cause Clitophon to once more passively nod his head to Socrates up to the point when he would walk away in frustration – to go find Thrasymachus.⁵² But perhaps the point of the ending is to prompt readers to acknowledge that Socrates has landed himself in a real difficulty by agreeing to listen to Clitophon's criticism and to elicit speculation about what sort of question he might ask in response (he has not voiced a question so far) or what he might say to avoid the risk of making Clitophon worse off than he now is in his quest for virtue. But who is to say that Socrates would not take such a risk with Clitophon, as he seems to do with so many other interlocutors with deficient understanding of what they believe themselves to know and how they might amend their ignorance?

Perhaps Clitophon is a special case, both because of the nature of his difficulty and of the circumstances of his meeting with Socrates in the *Clitophon*. Anytus is a lost cause because he is so thoroughly conventional and hostile to philosophy. Meno invites and is willing to engage in discussion, though he demonstrates an inability to make any progress with Socrates and seems to have been corrupted by Gorgias, and in any case he is only a visitor to Athens, probably on his way to a military campaign in Persia. Callicles is also hostile to philosophy and a lost cause, and Socrates' aim in engaging with him is

52 Moore presents an extensive list of possible ways that Socrates could respond to Clitophon, though most of them, in the opinion of this author, would be unhelpful or even harmful given that, as Moore puts it, Clitophon 'does not want to establish a relationship of back-and-forth discussion, of challenge and counter-challenge, of admission and concession and explanation' ('Clitophon and Socrates', pp. 274-5).

probably not for his sake but to put on a display for Gorgias.⁵³ Protagoras may or may not be a lost cause, but Socrates' aim in engaging with him is to put his deficiencies and Socrates' strengths on display in front of young people he wishes to associate with. Thrasymachus is somewhat similar to Clitophon, but he is also a rival whom Socrates engages with in front of young people (including Clitophon). Critias is quite similar to Clitophon and even seems to share his inflated sense of the promise both of the power that knowledge of virtue (or of moderation as the case may be) holds and of the status it would bring whoever had it (*Charmides* 171d-172a), but Socrates' aim in engaging with him may be to put an end to Critias' 'usurpation and transformation of his philosophic project' during Socrates' time abroad in Potidaea by refuting him in public, again in front of young people.⁵⁴ Clitophon, however, does not seem to be a lost cause and he and Socrates are alone together in the *Clitophon*: Socrates' only possible aims in cross-examining him would either be to help him out of his difficulty if that were possible or to learn a bit more himself, and the latter hardly seems necessary given what he can already glean from what Clitophon has already said.

Perhaps, then, the abrupt ending of the *Clitophon* not only implies that Socrates remains silent, as others have suggested, but that silence would be the best response⁵⁵ – maybe especially because it would be so untypical of Socrates. Remaining silent would surely prompt Clitophon to wonder what Socrates might be thinking. Remaining attentive, one eyebrow raised, while keeping silent would also convey the message that Socrates has listened to Clitophon and will continue to listen and that he expects or wants to hear more from Clitophon, that he believes Clitophon has more to say.⁵⁶ It would prompt Clitophon to consider what more he might have to say and what he has said so far, and maybe to think about this in conjunction with the last thing that Socrates himself said to him about learning one's good and bad points so as to practice the former and amend the latter – behavior that displays neither paralysis in ignorance nor godlike authority in knowledge. The hope would be that Clitophon learns to take his lessons from what Socrates does in addition to what he says, that he continues to think over what he himself has heard and

53 D. Stauffer, *The Unity of Plato's Gorgias: Rhetoric, Justice, and the Philosophic Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 39.

54 R. Burger, 'Socrates' Odyssean Return,' in C. Dustin and D. Schaeffer (eds.), *Socratic Philosophy and its Others* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013), p. 218.

55 At least on this occasion. I am sympathetic with Ausland's suggestion that Socrates should be understood at the conclusion to be planning to follow up with Clitophon later ('On a Curious Platonic Dialogue', p. 416).

56 Moore 'Clitophon and Socrates', p. 275.

said, and above all that he continues discussing justice.⁵⁷ Indeed, prompting Clitophon to go over once more all that he has heard and reconsider it may be the purpose behind Socrates' initiating this exchange in the first place.⁵⁸

57 Of course, there is some risk that silence, too, would drive Clitophon to Thrasymachus – but not without these other thoughts in mind.

58 I am very grateful to Ronna Burger, Richard Velkley, Wayne Ambler, Brian Marrin, and the anonymous reviewers whose comments and suggestions have been incredibly helpful in the development of this paper.