DISCIPLESHIP THEME IN PLATO'S *CRATYLUS**

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The present paper seeks to discuss the theme of teaching and learning in Plato's *Cratylus* – a theme that pervades the whole dialogue and is closely linked to questions about the rōle of authority in the philosophical inquiry in general. In order to consider these questions, an attempt will be made to uncover the hidden dialectics that frames the dramatic flow of the dialogue with a set of half-explicit and, on the first reading, hardly noticeable pointers.[1]

1. The very first sentence of the dialogue – Hermogenes' question: βούλει οὖν καὶ Σωκράτει τῷδε ἀνακοινωσώμεθα τὸν λόγον; 'Shall we share our discussion with Socrates he-re?'[2] – introduces the theme of 'sharedness'. Hermogenes is eager to 'share' his λόγος – 'argument', 'talk', 'discussion' – with Socrates. The motif will acquire further development and will be echoed in the ultimate exchanges of the dialogue. Cratylus' answer to Hermogenes is indifferent: εἴ σοι δοκεῖ, 'if you like'. The characterisation of the dramatis personae – and the hinting reference to 'communication' as the dialogue's underlying preoccupation – has begun from the very first words.[3] Hermogenes' eagerness for λόγοι, as opposed to Cratylus' self-contained indifference, will develop into elaborate representation of the two characters and provide a setting for the whole dialogue.

2.1. The dialogue 'proper' starts with Hermogenes' complaint to Socrates (383a4–384a7).

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[1] The account offered here was influenced and stimulated by the readings of the *Cratylus* proposed by Timothy Baxter (T. Baxter, *The* Cratylus*. Plato's Critique of Naming*, Leiden: Brill, 1992) and Thomas Alexander Szlezak (T. A. Szlezak, „Kratylos. Das geheime Wissen des Herakliteers", in: *idem*, *Platon und die Schriftlichkeit der Philosophie*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985, 208–220), although anyone who has read those works will notice not only my indebtedness to, but also my divergence from the accounts proposed there.

[2] The Greek text is quoted from the Duke-Nicoll edition in the OCT, the English translation is sometimes indebted to Benjamin Jowett's revised version (printed in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. by E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) which I find more congenial to my aims, even if less accurate, than C. D. C. Reeve's translation given in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. by J. M. Cooper, Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett, 1997.

[3] See M. Burnyeat, 'First Words. A Valedictory Lecture', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 43 (1997), p. 1/020, esp. p. 12.

He protests Cratylus' lack of explicitness concerning his own position, and solicits Socrates' help in finding out Cratylus' views (ἡδέως ἂν ἀκούσαιμι). Alternatively – and that would be even better – Socrates could tell what he himself thinks about the correctness of names (ἔτι ἂν ἥδιον πυθοίμην; note the movement from ἡδέως to ἥδιον). In response, Socrates invokes the ancient proverb χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά ἐστιν ὅπη ἔχει μαθεῖν (384b1), and adds that there is a great μάθημα concerning the names. He finally refuses to *teach* Hermogenes on the ironic pretext that he had not heard the 50 drachmae-worth course on the subject by Prodicus. He agrees, however, to 'search together' and to 'look at it' instead (συζητεῖν μέντοι ἕτοιμός εἰμι καὶ σοὶ καὶ Κρατύλῳ κοινῇ; 384c2–3; εἰς τὸ κοινὸν δὲ καταθέντας χρὴ σκοπεῖν 384c7–8).

Thus Socrates introduces three major themes that will interest us throughout the dialogue: the theme of learning and teaching (μανθάνειν / διδάσκειν, both words are used as complementary terms) and the question of learning from and relying on authority, which is opposed to the constantly recurring motif of 'looking at' (σκοπεῖν / σκοπεῖσθαι, sometimes translated as 'contemplation') and 'searching' (ζητεῖν). Besides – and this is our third theme – along with the stress on the 'sharedness' of philosophical search, there is a repeated emphasis on the need for critical reflection on that which has been achieved. Hermogenes is supposed to be a critical interlocutor, not allowing Socrates to go – and to lead Hermogenes – astray in his speculations: this seems to be the meaning of the emphasis on shared inquiry. At 384d7–e2 Hermogenes, having proposed his views concerning 'correctness of names', expresses his willingness to 'learn' (μανθάνειν καὶ ἀκούειν), to which Socrates answers: σκεψώμεθα δέ (385a1), thus initiating their 'search'.

These opening remarks aptly characterise the dialogue's personae, stressing, on the one hand, Hermogenes' willingness to learn, and on the other hand, Socrates' unwillingness to commit himself to 'teaching' instead of the shared 'search' and 'looking at', or reflection, that are proper to the real philosopher and dialectician. This introductory section, however, has a precise counterpart in the second part of the dialogue, where the conversation switches from Hermogenes to Cratylus.

2.2. Socrates finishes his disquisition on correctness of names at 427d1–3: αὕτη μοι φαίνεται, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, βούλεσθαι εἶναι ἡ τῶν ὀνομάτων ὀρθότης, εἰ μή τι ἄλλο Κρατύλος ὅδε λέγει. Immediately Hermogenes resumes the subject that prompted him to draw Socrates into the dialogue in the first place – namely, his perplexity regarding Cratylus' real views (one may compare the repetition of the complaint and the explicit reference to the beginning of the dialogue: ὥσπερ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἔλεγον (427d5, as well as the whole replica)). Hermogenes challenges Cratylus either to accept Socrates' conclusions, literally: 'to learn from Socrates', or, if he has something 'nobler' (κάλλιον) to say, to teach them both (427e3–7): καὶ εἰ ἔχεις [*scil.* πῃ ἄλλῃ κάλλιον λέγειν], λέγε, ἵνα ἤτοι μάθῃς παρὰ Σωκράτους ἢ διδάξῃς ἡμᾶς ἀμφοτέρους.

Cratylus' answer echoes Socrates' answer to Hermogenes' invitation at the beginning – there is notable similarity between Cratylus' remark here: δοκεῖ σοι ῥᾴδιον εἶναι οὕτω ταχὺ μαθεῖν τε καὶ διδάξαι ὁτιοῦν πρᾶγμα, μὴ ὅτι τοσοῦτον, ὃ δὴ δοκεῖ ἐν τοῖς μέγιστον εἶναι; (427e5–7) and Socrates' earlier response to Hermogenes: χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά ἐστιν ὅπη ἔχει μαθεῖν (384b1; note also the emphasis on κάλλιον in Hermogenes' question at 427e3).

Thus there is an implicit parallel drawn between Socrates' behaviour at the beginning of the

dialogue and Cratylus' bearing at the beginning of his part in the dialogue. Also, there is an inversion of rōles, as it were: Cratylus is put into a recognisably analogous situation to that in which Socrates was at the beginning of the dialogue. The inversion of rōles is further stressed by the fact that now it is Socrates who will ask Cratylus to accept him as a pupil.

We must notice, however, that parallelism simultaneously serves to differentiate interlocutors. Cratylus' refusal to teach does not stem from the same ground, from philosophical modesty, 'love of wisdom', dialectical skills or what have you, as (one may suppose) does Socrates' refusal at the inception of the dialogue. Cratylus does not propose 'to search together'; his refusal is a holding back of whatever knowledge he possesses or does not possess. It is the same attitude which Hermogenes in the beginning of the dialogue characterises as 'oracles', μαντεία and which is admittedly consistent with 'Heracliteanist' mode of talking[4] – one could agree with Szlezak that it is the attitude of an 'esotericist'.

2.3. In response to Cratylus' esotericist attitude, Socrates proposes to become Cratylus' disciple. He emphasises that Cratylus is known to have 'looked at' those things as well as learned from others (428b2–5):

δοκεῖς γάρ μοι αὐτός τε ἐσκέφθαι τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ παρ' ἄλλων μεμαθηκέναι. ἐὰν οὖν λέγῃς τι κάλλιον, ἕνα τῶν μαθητῶν περὶ ὀρθότητος ὀνομάτων καὶ ἐμὲ γράφου.

Besides, Socrates admits he is ready to part with whatever conclusions he and Hermogenes have achieved in their joint investigation: οὐδὲν ἂν ἰσχυρισαίμην ὧν εἴρηκα, ᾗ δέ μοι ἐφαίνετο μεθ' Ἑρμογένους ἐπεσκεψάμην. That provokes a comment from Cratylus, whereby he agrees to make Socrates his disciple: Ἀλλὰ μὲν δή, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὥσπερ σὺ λέγεις, μεμέληκέν τέ μοι περὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ἴσως ἄν σε ποιησαίμην μαθητήν. φοβοῦμαι μέντοι μὴ τούτου πᾶν τοὐναντίον ᾖ (428b6–c1).[5] One is bound, however, to notice something that escapes Cratylus, namely: Socrates' request to become Cratylus' disciple is not unconditional – 'if you speak something nobler', says he. In his proposal to reverse their rōles Socrates combines irony neighbouring on sarcasm (we have only to recall the relative ages of the interlocutors – Socrates seems to be considerably older than Cratylus – in order to recreate the bizarreness of the situation) with flattery which is designed to force Cratylus out of his silence.

What has been said so far relates to two major 'reversals' of the dialogue – its inception and then the transition from Hermogenes' part to Cratylus' one. During the next stage I shall concentrate on what happens around those two pivotal points.

3. At the beginning of the previous stretch of argument I suggested that the constant emphasis on the need for a 'common' or 'shared' (κοινός) search means that the achievements of speculation must constantly be critically revised and checked against the possibility of going astray. Socrates asks Hermogenes to be that critical authority and to control him. In fact, combination of both motifs – sharedness and criti-

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[4] Cf. the much-quoted fr. 93: ὁ ἄναξ, οὗ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει, where, by general scholarly consensus, Heraclitus implicitly likens his mode of communication to the oracular prophecies of Delphic Apollo.

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[5] Cratylus' cautiousness may be explained as a formula of modesty – it is notable, that even in an attempt to be modest he assigns to himself the rōle of Achilles, and to Socrates the rôle of Aias.

cal control – strongly suggests that the dialogue as such is the primary medium wherein such a controlled speculation takes place. (It is by no means an accident, as we shall see, that the allusion to dialogue – 'questioning and answering' – and its practitioner – διαλεκτικὸς ἀνήρ – intermittently appears at 390c6–d7.) The failure, then, to maintain the reciprocity which is necessary for a dialogue to remain 'dialogic' (so as not to metamorphose into a succession of monologues) is a symptom of the failure of the 'shared search' as such, of the whole speculative enterprise.

The insistence with which Socrates repeats to Hermogenes his warnings not to be led astray by him and with which he issues reminders that they are just searching, just 'looking for' truth, indicates that some such failure is in progress. Let us proceed systematically, however.

3.1. The reciprocity of 'teaching' that is characteristic of dialectical procedure is implied in the definition of name as an 'instrument for teaching and dividing the *ousia*', which is given at 388b7–c1:

> ὀργάνῳ ὄντι τῷ ὀνόματι ὀνομάζοντες τί ποιοῦμεν; [...] Ἆρ' οὐ διδάσκομέν τι **ἀλλήλους** καὶ τὰ πράγματα διακρίνομεν ᾗ ἔχει; [...] Ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας ὥσπερ κερκὶς ὑφάσματος.

Reference to ἀλλήλους becomes more perspicuous in the light of Cratylus' reliance on learning *from names themselves* (435d4–6). Socrates is, as it were, prefiguring Cratylus' position: if Socrates' model implies that names function (and acquire their meaning) in reciprocal relationship of 'shared' reference to reality, then in Cratylus' definition the dimension of reciprocity vanishes altogether: names alone are sufficient to learn and teach the reality (cf. 4.2.). To

put it differently, in Socrates' model reality is learned in reciprocal search with the aid of words; whereas for Cratylus the relation of names to the reality and to the examiner of names is identical to the relationship between teacher, the content of his teaching and the pupil. On the other hand, Socrates' model – to extend the comparison – is more akin to the actual dialogue situation.

3.2. Socrates' insistence on 'shared search' is countered by Hermogenes' not very outspoken, but nonetheless obstinate attempt to abandon 'search' in order to switch into the more customary mode of 'teacher-pupil' relationship. 390e6–391a3 Hermogenes complaints that although he is not able to 'oppose' (ἐναντιοῦσθαι) Socrates' dialectical arguments, it would be easier for him to 'be persuaded' (πεισθῆναι, δοκῶ μᾶλλον πείθεσθαι) if he were 'shown' (δείξειας) the correctness of names that Socrates has in mind (cf. the mention of Prodicus' ἐπίδειξις at 384b4 for an example of 'magisterial' connotations of the verb δείκνυμι and its derivatives). Socrates has to remind Hermogenes that he is not teaching, but only searching together with Hermogenes:

> Ἐγὼ μέν, ὦ μακάριε Ἑρμόγενες, οὐδεμίαν λέγω [ὀνόματος ὀρθότητα], ἀλλ' ἐπελάθου γε ὧν ὀλίγον πρότερον ἔλεγον, ὅτι οὐκ εἰδείην, ἀλλὰ σκεψοίμην μετὰ σοῦ. νῦν δὲ σκοπουμένοις ἡμῖν, ἐμοί τε καὶ σοί... (391a4–6)

3.3. Socrates finally abandons every appearance of reciprocity as he embarks upon the great etymological section of the dialogue. Significantly, his 'new beginning' is signalled by two eloquent episodes. At 391b8–11 Hermogenes inquires how he should perform his inquiry into names:

> ΕΡΜ. Πῶς οὖν χρὴ σκοπεῖν; – ΣΩ. Ὀρθοτάτη μὲν τῆς σκέψεως, ὦ ἑταῖρε, μετὰ τῶν ἐπισ-

τᾰμένων… εἰσὶ δὲ οὗτοι οἱ σοφισταί… (c3–5) λιπαρεῖν χρὴ τὸν ἀδελφὸν καὶ δεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ διδάξαι σε τὴν ὀρθότητα περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἣν ἔμαθεν παρὰ Πρωταγόρου.

The mention of sophists is unmistakably ironic. When Hermogenes with indignation rejects the proposal to learn from Protagoras, Socrates – with what seems to be no greater amount of seriousness than before – offers another possible authority on names (391c10–d1): Ἀλλ' εἰ μὴ αὖ σε ταῦτα ἀρέσκει, παρ' Ὁμήρου χρὴ μανθάνειν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ποιητῶν.

At this point Szlezak is perplexed as to why Socrates does not contradict learning from poets as he did in the *Hippias minor* 365c–d and, more significantly, in the *Protagoras* (342a ff., 347e). Szlezak argues that Plato simply presupposes his criticism that has been carried out elsewhere and that therefore learning from poets is meant as a 'revenge' on Hermogenes for his poor performance as a partner in dialectical investigation (Szlezak, *op. cit.,* p. 211). I woul like to suggest that the lack of parallelism with the *Hippias minor* and the *Protagoras* in the present context is significant, and that in making Socrates indulge in learning from poets with at least the superficial appearance of seriousness Plato tries to call into question what it means to learn from someone or something, what it means to assume some views on someone's authority – be it the authority of poets, sophists or νομοθέται. So far, this calling-into-question of authority is implicit, but the meaning of Socrates' submission to the authority of 'Homer and other poets' will become apparent in his discussion with Cratylus. Socrates' implicit warning that he can only guess what Homer means[6] and

his admonition to beware lest he misleads Hermogenes (393c8: φύλαττε γάρ με μή πη παρακρούσομαί σε) are consistent with my interpretation – they are meant to stress the questionable nature of reliance on authority in philosophical inquiry.

3.4. The latter point is emphasised even more strongly three pages further on where Socrates refers to his σοφία, 'which suddenly fell upon' him (396d1). Hermogenes describes his state as 'possessed prophecy' and stresses the 'suddenness' of Socrates' metamorphosis (396d2–3). What is important in order to understand Socrates' 'inspiration' is the fact that when someone speaks in a state of ἐνθουσιασμός it is not the person that speaks, but a god that possessed that person (*ita* Szlezak, p. 212). It is as though Socrates is distancing himself from what he speaks – it is not Socrates that speaks, but Euthyphro's Muse speaks through him. Constant reminders of his inspiration to Hermogenes (399a1, e5, 407d7, 409d2, 428c7–d2) serve the same purpose – they stress the point that Socrates is just a mouthpiece for others. Those 'others' include variety of sources, directly or periphrastically referred to by Socrates: οἱ ἀμφὶ Ὀρφέα 400c5, μετεωρολόγοι 401b8, οὗτοι καθ' Ἡράκλειτον 401d4, Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus 402b4–c1, οἱ νῦν περὶ Ὁμήρου δεινοὶ 407a9, Anaxagoras 400a9, 409a8, 413c5, οἱ Ἀναξαγόρειοι 409b6, ὅσοι ἡγοῦνται τὸ πᾶν εἶναι ἐν πορείᾳ 412d1. As if it were not enough to attract our attention to the fact that Socrates is immersed in parody of his predecessors' etymological views, Plato makes Hermogenes try to distinguish between what Socrates 'has heard from others' and what he 'improvises': Φαίνῃ μοι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ταῦτα μὲν ἀκηκοέναι του καὶ οὐκ αὐτοσχεδιάζειν (413d3–4). 'Listen, then: for maybe I shall deceive you in regard to other things as well – that I say them not having heard before', is Socrates' answer

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[6] Cf. ἢ οὐδέν σοι δοκῶ λέγειν, ἀλλὰ λανθάνω καὶ ἐμαυτὸν οἰόμενός τινος ὥσπερ ἴχνους ἐφάπτεσθαι τῆς Ὁμήρου δόξης περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος; (393b1–4).

(413d7–8). Significantly, Socrates' inspiration ceases simultaneously with the properly 'etymological' part of the dialogue (420d3[7]).

By adopting etymological 'inspiration' Socrates succeeds in 'persuading' Hermogenes – something that dialectical arguments had not manage to do (cf. 3.2.). This is stressed by reference to πιστεύειν at 399a1–3: 'It seems, you believe (πιστεύεις) Euthyphro's inspiration', and, ironically, in Socrates' response to Hermogenes assent: Ὀρθῶς γε σὺ πιστεύων.

The fact, however, that Socrates was not telling his own views, but retelling the opinions of others, does not escape Cratylus' attention – cf. 428c6–8: εἴτε παρ' Εὐθύφρονος ἐπίπνους γενόμενος, εἴτε καὶ ἄλλη τις Μοῦσα πάλαι σε ἐνοῦσα ἐλελήθει (cf. also 3.5.). Notable, however, is the ease with which Cratylus accepts the fact that Socrates is retelling others' opinions: to him every authority, every 'Muse' that confirms the theory of flux and correctness of names, is acceptable regardless of the way in which the conclusion is reached.

3.5. Within the etymological section itself there is one more hint that directly applies to Cratylus. The section about the meaning of τὸ δίκαιον (412c7–413d2) alludes to a number of distinctly Heraclitean motifs. The introduction of Anaxagoras at the end of the section (413c5) seems to be made in order to disguise this conspicuously Heraclitean passage (cf. also similar 'crypto-Heraclitean' passages in *Theaet.* 152d1–

e9, 153a5–10, c7–d5). It seems that references to "Heraclitus'" esoteric mode of speaking (cf. διαπέπυσμαι ἐν ἀπορρήτοις 413a3; δοκῶ τε ἤδη μακρότερα τοῦ προσήκοντος ἐρωτᾶν καὶ ὑπὲρ τὰ ἐσκαμμένα ἄλλεσθαι. ἱκανῶς γάρ μέ φασι πεπύσθαι 413a8–b1) may equally well be applied to Cratylus' μαντεία. Plato's intention in this passage appears to be twofold: on the one hand, drawing a highly ironic picture of Cratylus' teacher, he subtly mocks Cratylus' mode of talking – Cratylus is indeed like his master, who cannot or does not want to give a clear answer to a straightforward question, but rather prefers to speak in riddles (cf. 413b6–c1) and to issue prohibitions reminiscent of the taboos associated with mystery rites (cf. ritual connotations of τὰ ἀπόρρητα). Who knows, maybe there is nothing behind the boundaries that he does not allow anyone (e.g., Hermogenes – cf. 383a–384b) to transgress? Maybe Cratylus and his teacher just hide their lack of clear conceptions? As will become clear by the end of the dialogue, this is at least the case with Cratylus.

On the other hand, Plato may have intended to raise a more fundamental issue: what does it mean to claim to be a pupil of such a master? What can one *learn* from a master who leaves his 'interrogators' in a greater aporia than they were before (cf. 413c8–9: ἐνταῦθα δὴ ἐγώ, ὦ φίλε, πολὺ ἐν πλείονι ἀπορίᾳ εἰμὶ ἢ πρὶν ἐπιχειρῆσαι μανθάνειν περὶ τοῦ δικαίου ὅτι ποτ' ἔστιν)? This remark by Socrates does not necessarily mean censure of Heraclitus. Many of the Socratic dialogues, too, may be described as leaving the reader / interlocutor in a greater aporia than he was before. Aporia does not do any harm when it is recognised as such – in fact, it may lead to a further inquiry and deeper understanding. Aporia becomes dangerous when it is mistaken for something positive, for a bit of positive knowledge. Plato rather intends to point

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[7] Whether we accept the emendation by Stephanus, or not. It is tempting to abide by the version given in Vat. gr. 1029 (and the version from which DTWQ, as well as B, may be reasonably assumed to stem): Τέλος γὰρ ἤδη <τῷ> θεῷ 'For the inspiration is already at an end'. This would have been undoubtedly *lectio difficilior* – a suggestion supported by uncertainty of copyists over accent.

out the risks that are involved in Cratylus' pretence of being 'Heraclitean'. Does he really know what he is subscribing to? This point will be repeated with more emphasis in Socrates' concluding speech at 440c–d.

4.1. At the end of the etymological section Socrates ceases to speak with the authority of poets or to be a mouthpiece of the dubious Muse of Euthyphro. Parody of tradition, and of the magisterial rōle of tradition, is over. Immediately after Cratylus' agreeing to make Socrates his pupil (428b7), Socrates raises the question about the legitimacy of what has been achieved by his submission to the voice of the Muse, or, to be more precise, to etymologising voices in the Greek cultural tradition. The abandonment of critical control over inquiry that was taking place throughout the etymological part is brought to our attention (428d1–8):

> θαυμάζω καὶ αὐτὸς πάλαι τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ σοφίαν καὶ ἀπιστῶ. δοκεῖ οὖν μοι χρῆναι ἐπανασκέψασθαι τί καὶ λέγω. τὸ γὰρ ἐξαπατᾶσθαι αὐτὸν ὑφ' αὐτοῦ πάντων χαλεπώτατον· ὅταν γὰρ μηδὲ σμικρὸν ἀποστατῇ ἀλλ' ἀεὶ παρῇ ὁ ἐξαπατήσων, πῶς οὐ δεινόν; δεῖ δή, ὡς ἔοικε, θαμὰ μεταστρέφεσθαι ἐπὶ τὰ προειρημένα καὶ πειρᾶσθαι, τὸ ἐκείνου τοῦ ποιητοῦ, βλέπειν «ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω.»

The inversion of rōles which we noticed in connection with Socrates' 'dramatic rôle' at this stage in the dialogue is also relevant in regard to this reprise. Although Socrates formally submits to the rôle of disciple, unlike Hermogenes, he is not going to be an uncritical listener. By a subtle move he forces on Cratylus the defence of the position which Socrates himself had built, and launches an attack against it. The talk about self-deception quoted above can hardly apply to Socrates' own reasoning – he knows only too well what he is doing. Rather, the implicit target of the remark is Cratylus, who indiscriminately agrees with any conclusion provided it supports his views. The mention of Cratylus' old interest in the correctness of names includes him, as well, among the targets of Socrates' critical remark.[8]

4.2. At the beginning of his discussion with Cratylus Socrates recapitulates the most general conclusion reached in the dialectical passage in the first half of the dialogue – that the condition of the correctness of name is satisfied when name imitates the essence of the thing (cf. 423e1–5 & 424b8–10: μίμησις συλλαβαῖς τε καὶ γράμμασιν τῆς οὐσίας). Socrates reformulates his previous definition (cf. 3.1.): ὀνόματος ὀρθότης ἐστὶν αὕτη, ἥτις ἐνδείξεται οἷόν ἐστι τὸ πρᾶγμα· καὶ τοῦτο φῶμεν ἱκανῶς εἰρῆσθαι; διδασκαλίας ἄρα ἕνεκα τὰ ὀνόματα λέγεται; (428e1–5). This new formulation is ambiguous – on the one hand, it may be understood as saying that names must convey some information about things named (a minimalist position, to which Socrates elsewhere agrees). On the other hand, it may be interpreted in a stronger way – that we learn things from names (cf. 'magisterial' overtones of ἐνδείκνυμι and the inference from ἐνδείκνυμι to διδασκαλίας ἄρα ἕνεκα). Socrates reformulates his previous definition in order to accommodate fully Cratylus' view that names are the primary source of knowledge about things. The ambiguity of the new

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[8] Also in this connection one may point out the principle stated in the *Alcibiades I* (112e1–113a10): he who answers the question, and not the questioner, is the author of the answer implied therein, so that formally, according to this view, both Hermogenes, who wholeheartedly approved of Socrates' 'teaching', and Cratylus, who adopts Socrates' conclusions at 428c4–7 (ἐπιεικῶς φαίνῃ κατὰ νοῦν χρησμῳδεῖν), assume responsibility for the position that Socrates developed in dialectical collaboration with Hermogenes.

statement is stressed by Socrates' question as to whether this definition is sufficient (καὶ τοῦτο φῶμεν ἱκανῶς εἰρῆσθαι; 428e1–2). The next question put by Socrates is also a recapitulation of his previous formulation, but also slightly modified so as to be ambiguous enough to suit Cratylus' position (428e5): Διδασκαλίας ἄρα ἕνεκα τὰ ὀνόματα λέγεται; Cratylus' position, as this move implies, is an extreme conclusion drawn from sound assumptions about language. In other words, the correct assumption that names should convey *some* information about their bearers is assimilated to the extreme view that names must contain *full* information about things in order to be names at all.

I am not going to go into full details of the refutation of Cratylus. Up to 435d4 we can discern five arguments that on various grounds prove the thesis that names are of necessity imperfect or partial imitations of things. We may notice, however, the rôle of 'lawgivers' in the initial portion of that section. It is an incomplete argument (428e7–429b9) which is interrupted by Cratylus. Still, one can guess what Socrates' argument would have been: if the giving of names is a τέχνη, and provided that among all craftsmen some are better and some are worse, namegivers should not constitute an exception, and therefore an ideal correspondence between names and objects cannot be taken for granted. As it is, the argument is disrupted by Cratylus (at 429b3, 6, 9, and 11) as he objects to the proposition that either laws or names (both are the product of the work of 'lawgivers') can be given incorrectly. (The assumption that is behind this objection comes out at 438b8–c3: Cratylean extreme realism betrays traces of an archaic, 'magic' conception of language.) Nonetheless, what we have is enough to supply the missing part of the argument. Clearly Socrates intended to question the reliability of 'lawgivers' and on that

ground to discard etymology as a source of knowledge. As things stand, however, the question about the authority of lawgivers is postponed till 435d1.

4.3. Having shown that, Socrates embarks upon the argument which is one of the most, if not *the* most fundamental in the whole dialogue. Once more the question is raised: what is the function of names? What 'power', according to Socrates' expression, do names have for us, and what is their noble work? The definition that was operative from the beginning of the dialogue is repeated for the third time, this time by Cratylus: the function of names is to teach. However, a typically Cratylean modification is added: to teach in the sense that whoever knows names, also knows things (435d4–6). In the following few remarks Socrates nails down this definition precluding any possible ἔκδυσις, 'escape' on Cratylus' part: things are 'learned' (μανθάνειν), 'sought' (ζητεῖν) and 'found' (εὑρίσκειν) from names in one τρόπος – in the same sense and in the same way, and it is the best and the only way.

Socrates' refutation may be summarised in the following seven steps:

(1) Let's suppose that those who established names made a mistake in the beginning; then everyone who relies on names for a conception of reality would be deceived (436b5–11).

(2) The fact that most names point to an identical conception inherent in them has no value as a proof, since the mistake made in the beginning would be repeated in everything that follows (436b12–e1).

(3) In fact, in many cases different etymologies pointing to a different conception of reality could be produced (436e1–437c8).

(4) The prevalence of one or the other type of etymology cannot decide the issue; the question about the ultimate truth of the matter

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cannot be solved by democratic procedures (437d1–7).

(5) Before the names were given, the first lawgivers that gave them must have known things without and before names in order to give them with knowledge – how otherwise one could claim to know reality from names (437d8–438b7)?

(6) Cratylus' objection (in terms of Socrates' previous definition it would have ranked as an 'escape' from the argument) is that the truest account of the matter would be such that it was a power greater than human that gave the first names to things, and therefore they of necessity must be correct. This objection is countered with a simple and ingenious move: since a deity could not have posited contradictory names, in order to choose which of the groups is 'like the truth' we have to make a decision relying on something that is external to names, on some *entscheidende Instanz* ('deciding authority') that cannot be names and can only be knowledge of truth without and apart from names:

ὀνομάτων οὖν στασιασάντων, καὶ τῶν μὲν φασκόντων ἑαυτὰ εἶναι τὰ ὅμοια τῇ ἀληθείᾳ, τῶν δ' ἑαυτά, τίνι ἔτι διακρινοῦμεν, ἢ ἐπὶ τί ἐλθόντες; οὐ γάρ που ἐπὶ ὀνόματά γε ἕτερα ἄλλα τούτων· οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ δῆλον ὅτι ἄλλ' ἄττα ζητητέα πλὴν ὀνομάτων, ἃ ἡμῖν ἐμφανιεῖ ἄνευ ὀνομάτων ὁπότερα τούτων ἐστὶ τἀληθῆ, δείξαντα δῆλον ὅτι ἀλήθειαν τῶν ὄντων (438d2–8).

Thus knowledge of reality prior to language is required as a condition of the possibility of such a decision (438b8–e3).

(7) Finally, Socrates explains the way he understands the learning of reality in terms of the image-conception of names: if names are images of things, it would be proper (εἰκός), most just (δικαιότατον), nobler (καλλίων) and clearer (σαφέστερον) to learn reality through itself, and image – whether it is properly made or not – through reality (438e5–439b8).

4.4. We needed to go through that argument in more detail since it represents a culmination in the composition of the dialogue. What is established in the argument does not limit itself to a rejection of etymology as a way of coming to know the reality. Socrates' argument puts into question any received truth, any view that is accepted as authoritative without proper examination. Two conclusions are introduced that are valid for philosophical inquiry in general.

(a) Unreflecting, unquestioning endorsement of any views or opinions puts a philosopher at the mercy of the author of those views – if the judgement of the latter was erroneous, the philosopher will fall prey to his error. So that, in Socrates' phrase, 'Every man needs to give much consideration (πολὺν λόγον) and much reflection (πολλὴν σκέψιν) concerning the origin (ἀρχή = first principle) of every matter – whether it is laid down correctly or not. And when he has examined it sufficiently, the rest will appear to follow it' (436d4–8). It is hard to miss the implications of this position for the philosophy's relationship to philosophical and cultural traditions. Instead of appealing to those elements of cultural heritage that would help his cause and discarding others (which was the general practice not only of Cratylus, but of all the Greeks in Plato's day), Plato invites profound criticism and reflection upon the real meaning of the tradition, tracing it back to its foundations. In fact, in the figure of νομοθέτης, as it is employed in this dialogue, we may be justified in seeing one of the early attempts to conceptualise the notion of 'tradition' as such.

(b) Socrates' proposition that reality must be learnt through itself and not through its representations covers the whole field of representations that are classified as εἰκόνες ('images') or μιμήματα ('imitations'; at 430a12 name is called μίμημα τοῦ πράγματος; for name as εἰκών

cf. 431d5). This class includes not only visual representations, which in that regard are comparatively insignificant: hardly anybody is going to learn reality from pictures. More importantly, the same rule also applies to λόγοι, the meaning of which may range from 'texts' or 'discourses' to 'statements' or even 'definitions'. It is not coincidental that throughout the *Cratylus* the same conditions of truth are applied to 'names' and to λόγοι (cf. 385b2–d1, 431b1–c2). Texts or statements cannot teach us truth about things; in fact, text, being different from reality, from the things themselves, would signify not reality, but something different from it. λόγοι, being a *Doppelgänger* of reality, refer only to other λόγοι: τὸ γάρ που ἕτερον ἐκείνων [= τῶν ὄντων] καὶ ἀλλοῖον ἕτερον ἄν τι καὶ ἀλλοῖον σημαίνοι ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐκεῖνα (438e8–9). If we do not go to the things themselves and, having attained knowledge of things, check carefully what they are saying, names, as well as statements and texts, are very likely to mislead us.

These conclusions build up on Plato's criticism of poetry in the *Republic*. Moreover, instead of presupposing critique of literary exegesis as an argumentative procedure in the *Protagoras* and the *Hippias minor*, this passage in the *Cratylus* provides us with reasons why that critique must be accepted – reasons that are not so cogently stated in the aforementioned dialogues themselves. One cannot know whether a line of poetry or an impressive proverb is true unless you check it by referring to what is primary to them – to reality itself.

5. Having carried out this examination of names as tools of philosophical speculation, Socrates has performed the task that in the beginning of the dialogue he assigned to the 'dialectical man' (390c2–d7) – to be an ἐπιστάτης of the 'lawgiver', to preside over the craftsman of na-mes. Dialogue could end at that point – but there is more to it.

5.1. What follows is an argument *ad hominem*. At 439c1–6 Socrates adopts the view that the first givers of names *might* have held a view that reality is in flux – but if this is actually not the case and we believe them, we are likely to be drawn into the vertigo that has sucked them in. I shall not go into details of Socrates' famous 'dream' – it suffices to say that invocation of 'beauty itself' and 'good itself', as well as of a 'form of knowledge' is meant to stress the absurdity of Cratylus' idea, and not to persuade or refute him. In the final perspective, it is a matter of choice – but the choice must be based on one's own reflection, it cannot be learned either from Heraclitus, from name givers – or, for that matter, from Socrates himself. (Plato remains faithful to the principle that the rules established within a discourse must apply to that discourse itself: in the dialogue which is devoted to the dilemmas of teaching Socrates does not authoritatively teach.) What Plato's Socrates is saying is that even if reality is, in some sense, a universal flux, it does not look like one, and certainly names least of all can provide us with the knowledge of truth: 'Whether these things are so, or as those around Heraclitus and many others say, is far from easy to ascertain, but neither is it fitting for a man in his mind to be a servant of names, having committed to names himself and his soul, and, having given credence (πεπιστευκότα) to names and to those that established them, to be confident as if he knew something...' (440c1–6). Final decision, however, must be with the philosopher himself, based on his own, 'authentic' reflection, his own 'looking', verified in (dialectical) 'sharing' with others, and not 'easily received' from any authority: 'Maybe it is so, Cratylus, maybe not. Therefore you need to look (σκοπεῖσθαι) well and like a man, and not to

accept (ἀποδέχεσθαι) easily – for you are still young and have age at your disposal – and when you have looked, if you find, to share (μεταδιδόναι) with me' (440d3–7). The imperative μὴ ῥᾳδίως ἀποδέχεσθαι echoes Cratylus' phrase at 427e5 'Do you think it is easy to learn and teach any thing, let alone such as seems to be among the greatest?', as well as Socrates' proverb at 384b1: 'Noble things are difficult when it comes to learning'. ἀποδέχεσθαι, which is contrasted with σκοπεῖσθαι, is an equivalent of μανθάνειν: these things must be 'looked at', but not 'taken over' easily.

5.2. Cratylus' answer is a disguised refusal to revise his position:

> Ἀλλὰ ποιήσω ταῦτα. εὖ μέντοι ἴσθι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅτι οὐδὲ νυνὶ ἀσκέπτως ἔχω, ἀλλά μοι σκοπουμένῳ καὶ πράγματα ἔχοντι πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐκείνως φαίνεται ἔχειν ὡς Ἡράκλειτος λέγει (440d8–e2).

He does not listen to Socrates' arguments. He does not understand the only lesson that was given – the lesson about the dangers of discipleship. Cratylus does not even care to assert: 'It seems to me that reality is in flux'; his reply to Socrates is: 'It seems to me that it is much more so as Heraclitus says'. At that point Socrates loses his temper: Εἰς αὖθις τοίνυν με, ὦ ἑταῖρε, διδάξεις, ἐπειδὰν ἥκῃς... (440e3–4). Noteworthy is the transition from 'sharing' (μεταδιδόναι) to 'teaching' (διδάσκειν): Socrates finally despairs of being able to 'share' thoughts and findings with Cratylus, to share in the same philosophical quest; the best he can expect is to be 'taught' once more by that 'slave of names' who 'is confident as if he knew something' (440c5–6). The theme of shared λόγος that was initiated by Hermogenes in the very first sentence of the dialogue is consummated. Cratylus fails to share the λόγος – 'discourse', 'discussion', 'dialo-

gue' (insofar as it is 'shared' λόγος), and also 'reason' (in the Heraclitean, as well as in the later philosophical sense) – with Socrates.

Cratylus, however, does not seem to have noticed anything – in his valedictory phrase he sounds like a supervisor giving directions to his pupil: 'But you also should keep trying to think these matters over again' (440e6–7). The irony of the reversed rōles extends to the very end of the dialogue.

6.1. There was a tendency in Antiquity to read the dialogue as an account of an encounter between Plato's teachers – in fact, it is on the basis of the *Cratylus* that Diogenes Laertius (III 5–6) makes even Hermogenes Plato's teacher (whereas the fact that Cratylus taught Plato, or at least influenced Plato's views, is mentioned by Aristotle (*Met*. A 6. 987a32)). Thus, assuming the ancient tradition of reading the *Cratylus*, and having in mind the recurrent theme of teaching / discipleship in the dialogue itself, it is tempting to read the dialogue, and especially the second part of it, as Plato's letter to his one-time teacher, Cratylus. It is clear that Plato is writing from the perspective that gives him access to the further evolution of Cratylus' views. Plato's Cratylus holds an extreme realistic view of language and is committed to universal flux. 'Classic' Cratylus, as he is represented by Aristotle (*Met*. Γ 5. 1010a7), still teaches about universal flux and even dismisses Heraclitus as not radical enough in that regard – indeed, Cratylus' flux is so radical that he even abandons language altogether. This discrepancy between testimonies is usually explained by the assumption that they refer to different stages in Cratylus' development. On such reading, the word τελευταῖον in Aristotle's account would indicate that this is the final stage of Cratylus' development – from radical realism to complete disa-

vowal of language. Plato's account, then, depicts Cratylus at his middle point, in a crossing between two irreconcilable positions: belief in language, the possibility of which requires stable essences, and belief in universal flux that denies such essences. In his dialogue Plato retraces, as it were, Cratylus' career in order to recapitulate his teacher's philosophical failure. Moreover, Socrates' phrase at 439d8–11: ἆρ' οὖν οἷόν τε προσειπεῖν αὐτὸ ὀρθῶς, εἰ ἀεὶ ὑπεξέρχεται, πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι ἐκεῖνό ἐστιν, ἔπειτα ὅτι τοιοῦτον, ἢ ἀνάγκη ἅμα ἡμῶν λεγόντων ἄλλο αὐτὸ εὐθὺς γίγνεσθαι καὶ ὑπεξιέναι καὶ μηκέτι οὕτως ἔχειν; – acquires its full force when it is read in view of Aristotle's testimony about Cratylus, as a *vaticinium ex eventu* of Cratylus' last stage.[9]

6.2. The preceding discussion was intended to elucidate the pattern of covert dialectic, centred around the ambiguities of teaching and le-

arning, as well as the attempt at distinguishing between 'teacher-pupil' relationship and genuinely philosophical search within Plato's dialogue. The theme of discipleship, however, that emerges as a result of our analysis of the *Cratylus*, calls for a further investigation in a wider perspective of Plato's thought. Read in the context of Peter Brunt's statement: 'For Plato pupil (*mathētēs*) designated one who received instruction from a sophist [...], whereas the study of philosophy was probably conceived by Plato, as by Aristotle [...] and in Theophrastus' will [...] as a common enterprise'[10], the dialectic of teaching and learning in Plato's *Cratylus* may provide new insights into the ways 'teaching' and 'learning', and the acquisition of philosophy, as well as the question of authority in philosophy in general, were conceived in Plato's *Corpus* and in the Platonic Academy, and into the linguistic usage that went with those conceptions.

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[9] This conclusion has also been adopted, with some modifications, by David Sedley – see D. Sedley, *Plato's Cratylus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 19 & n. 46.

[10] 'Plato's Academy and Politics', in: P. A. Brunt, *Studies in Greek History and Thought*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 284 n. 7.

MOKINYSTĖS TEMA PLATONO *KRATILE*

Mantas Adomėnas

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojama vieną keisčiausių Platono dialogų struktūrinančių ir jam papildomą interpretacinę dimensiją suteikiančių paslėptų nuorodų dialektika. Pirminę, paviršinę dialogo temą – etimologijos tikslumo ir žodžių reikšmės problemas – ji nagrinėja platesniame „mokymo(si)" ir autoriteto ribų filosofijoje teminiame kontekste. Per subtilias autorines nuorodas kiekvienas dialogo personažas – Sokratas, Hermogenas ir Kratilas – atskleidžiami savo savitame santykyje su filosofine tiesa ir jos paieškomis. Platonas kritikuoja tuometinės Graikijos kultūroje labiausiai paplitusį bei tradicijoje įsigalėjusį „mokinystės" modelį, autoritetu grindžiamą mokytojo ir mokinio santykį, siekdamas pakeisti jį „bendro ieškojimo" santykiu, kritišku dialoge besiskleidžiančiu filosofinio ieškojimo procesu. Platono dialogo analizė, besiremianti *explication du texte* metodu, išryškina šias dialogą struktūrinančias temas, interpretuodama kūrinį kaip filosofinį Platono „laišką" savo jaunystės mokytojui Kratilui.

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