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PLATO: REPUBLIC 409 al-b2: AN INTERSECTION OF THEMES

— διὸ δὴ καὶ εὐθεῖας νέοι ὄντες οἱ ἐπιεικεῖς φαίνονται καὶ εὐθείατητοι ὑπὸ τῶν διόκων ἄτε σύκ ἐχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς παραδείγματα ὀμοιοπαθή τοῖς πονηροῖς.

From this last phrase (underlined) there may be unpacked the Fifth Century ideational conflict between the πάθος/μάθος theme which had been refined by the tragedians into a dialectic of self-improvement or moral improvement,1 and the Socratic position that ἀρετή is not διδακτός in the usually accepted sense. On another level there is to be seen the conflict between the psychological themes of 'antipathy' and that of 'homeopathy',2 which Plato developed from its preoccupation with mere perception into an apperceptive 'homeopathic' behaviourism. On the lowest level there is a gnomic contention between themes of the kind: παθὼν καὶ νήπιος ἐγὼν and ἡσις ἡλικια τέρπει.3

In this article I propose to consider this thematic conflict in relation to what it implies in its phrasing at 409 al-b2 for some of Plato's views at this stage of his development about the psychological posture of the human being.

The core of the conflict resides in the word ὀμοιοπαθής4 which semantically combines both the πάθος-theme which Plato rejected and the ὀμοιον-theme which he approved. The general drift of the passage is clear enough, but it involves the kind of ambiguity which emerges in the following


R. E. Cushman, Therapeia, Chapel Hill 1958, p. 58. E. Cassirer, Myth of the State, Yale 1941, pp. 6-7, quotes Kant's (K.R.V.) views about emphasis both on homogeneity and discrimination on the part of two distinct types of intellect.

3. The wide range of like-to-like proverbs is well illustrated in Leutsch-Schneidewin Paroemiographi Graeci (Diogenianus V, 16). For the proverbs which occur in Plato's dialogues, see H. Reich, Der Mimus, Berlin 1901-2, Bd. I pp. 397 ff. (where there is a discussion of Plato as an 'Ethologe'); Dörrie op. cit. pp. 312-3; H. D. Rankin, Plato and the Individual, London 1964, Ch. IV, esp. pp. 58-60, for applications of this theme in Plato's works; also C. W. Müller's comprehensive study of the theme's implication in early Greek philosophy: Gleiches zu Gleichem, Ein Prinzip Früghriechischen Denkens, Klassisch-Philologische Studien, Wiesbaden 1965, discusses Republic 409b on p. 181.

4. Timaeus 45c 7. ὀμοιοπαθής is applied to a homogeneous continuum formed by the light of day together with the πῦρ emanating from the eyes: this passage is much concerned with 'likenss' and ὀμοιον πρὸς ὀμοιον (45c 4) has considerable importance for Plato's theory of vision. Cf. Müller, op. cit. p. 63.

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representative English translations: (1) 'because they have no examples of what evil is in their souls' (Jowett); (2) 'since they do not have within themselves patterns answering to the affections of the bad' (Shorey); (3) 'because they have in themselves nothing to give them a sympathetic understanding of vice' (Lee). These illustrate the variety of poses which the problem assumes: the language of (1) suggests that the soul of the good or well-trained person cannot contain within himself instances of the reality of evil, for the phrase 'what evil is' can hardly be taken as meaning anything but the reality of evil, and this attributes considerable ontological importance to para
dedωγματα; (2) explicates the passage in such a way that it seems to rebut deliberately any explanation along the lines which we have imputed to (1); (3) is an intelligent paraphrase, avoiding the difficulties which emerge from a close translation, and giving, with a certain justice, the passage's general sense.

Though it is not the principal object of this discussion to settle the ontological status of para
dedωγματα, something must be said about it in order to illustrate the intersection of themes. It seems clear enough that the para
dedωγματα represent the contents of thought or emotion in the human beings concerned. The para
dedωγματα are negatively presented as objects which the good educands do not have 'in' themselves in the same way as the wicked (taking πονηροί as personal constructionen compendiaria): the implication being that both the good educands and the πονηροί have para
dedωγματα of some kind 'in' them. The good cannot be allowed to grasp απαρίτητα οίκετα (by personal experience) but only ἐπιστήμη the para
dedωγματα that the evil possess. It is also suggested (409 d, e) that the para
dedωγματα of the evil are not effective in enabling an evil person to associate successfully with the virtuous people: it is implied that an evil person will not be able to grasp the para
dedωγματα of virtuous people: the meaning of ἐπιστήμη παρὰ καπρόν και ἄγνοιαν ἄγιες ἡθος, ἀν οὐκ ἔχων para
dedωγμα τοῦ τοιοῦτοι puts the πονηρός in a disadvantageous position since it implies that he will not be able to comprehend (by ἐπιστήμην) what virtuous people are up to. There is an implied ontological distinction between the para
dedωγματα of the virtuous and good educand, and that of the shrewd-seeming πονηρός. There are no prima facie grounds for regarding the para
dedωγματα of either group as ἐπιστήμη. The balance of ontological as well as ethical respectability is tipped in favour of the para
dedωγματα of the virtuous; these para
dedωγματα are beyond the comprehension of the πονηρό; yet the virtuous can comprehend by ἐπιστήμη the para
dedωγματα of the evil. Objects of ἐπιστήμη are not necessarily ontologically significant in themselves, yet something of the aura of the ἐπιστήμη hovers over the

5. I have attempted to discern the ontological profile of para
dedωγμα in the Republic in an article which is to appear shortly in Eratos: 'Παρά
dειγμα and Realizability in Plato's Republic'.

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παραδείγματα of both sides. For instance, it is possible that there is a verbal influence here of the view expounded in Phaedo 102b, that the εἶδον can be in or within people, 'instanced' in them, as 'uniform' is instanced in a tall man, or 'shortness' in a short man. However, the virtuous can be injured by ἐμπερία οἴκεια of either εἶδος or non-εἶδος entities, and the same is true, clearly, of the wicked. The good can be injured by the most blatant emotive mimesis, and so can the wicked. The ontological advantage implied here on behalf of the παραδείγματα of the virtuous, is not ethnically or ethologically decisive. It merely reinforces the notion of 'psychological distance' between good and evil persons.

In fact, the word ὁμοιοπαθής tends to neutralise the strictly philosophical interest of these παραδείγματα by emphasising ethos and habit, and this 'psychological distance' of the good from the wicked. It is fair to say that ὁμοιοπαθής denotes 'similarity' rather than 'identity', which would be more properly rendered by ὁμοπαθής? the ὁμοιο- form seems to be more deliberate and more divisive than the ὁμο- form; for example, in Republic 464 d 4 the identical nature of the reactions of the individual members of a group is very much to the point: πάντας εἰς τὸ δυνατὸν ὁμοπαθῆς λύπης τε καὶ ἴδεονίς εἶναι. But in 409 b possible identity of things experienced by both good and wicked would throw into relief the problem of the status of the παραδείγματα: the use of ὁμοιοπαθής here looks like a subsequent intention on the part of Plato to dissipate the ontological aura which he has adduced. The contents and process of the experience of the good are not to be either identical or similar in 'psychological process' (taking account of the -παθῆς element applied to what is strictly speaking a non-personal substantive) to the contents and process of the experiences of the wicked. On the other hand, παραδείγματα do not seem to be mere aggregations of sensa: they have an identity of their own, and are possibly some kind of conceptual rather than existential standard (they are non-εἶδος standards rather than εἶδος-standards). The application to them of a predicate like ὁμοιοπαθής suggests that they are more passive and acted upon rather than causative and agent. But their positions can hardly be defined more narrowly than this, and there is no evidence that Plato was much concerned with their

6. See Republic 561e 5 for the 'withness' of παραδείγματα in a human individual.
7. This distinction between ὁμοιοπαθής and ὁμοπαθής (and other ὁμο-/ὁμο- compounds) is not definitively observed by lexicographers. There is no doubt, however, as to which form embodies the more primitive element indicating 'sameness': ὁμος is the older, and ὁμος is derived from it on the analogy of ποις, τοις, and other words indicating the nature or kind of referend (Schwyzer Bd. I, 609 n. 5; Boisacq; Frisk, Lief, 15). No doubt Greek usage in the time of Plato is not likely to distinguish categorically between these two types of compound; however, in the passage under discussion, ὁμοιοπαθής may very well be deliberately used by Plato to imply 'psychological distance'—i.e. the good educands cannot have παραδείγματα of the same kind or nature, rather than the same παραδείγματα.
ontological status. What seemed to interest him here was their influence upon behaviour, and in 409b he expresses somewhat differently the aspect of the like/like psychology which is associated with Socratic positions in the Gorgias and in the beginning of the Republic; that doing injustice is worse than suffering it, on the grounds that a person who simply suffers injustice may simply be in collision with it: whereas in some more serious way, people 'are' what they practise and what they habitually perceive and think. Though a person who has been brought up in an environment of good, will 'suffer' in a sense as a result of apparent naïveté, when he comes in contact with evil, yet there is no reason at all to suppose, on Plato's view, that he will apprehend any more profound or beneficial lesson from his contact with evil. Unlike the tragic hero, this person does not gain in human stature because of his 'suffering'. It is merely contingent: it is not the 'penetrating' suffering that is to be found in tragedy. His soul is already formed, like that of Socrates before his jurors, and no real harm can come to the good man. The tragic hero's moral stature, on the other hand, is the product of his disastrous sufferings, in a way that Plato's good educand cannot be. For the words for 'suffering', πάθος and πάθη, bore distinct layers of meaning in Plato's time; and we can distinguish at least: (1) disastrous happening and/or resultant experience; (2) second-order experience of (1), as in a play or by sympathy; (3) mere experience or process of an unspectacular character—what the soul endures in its day-to-day life, without grandeur or self-consciousness: a 'clinical' and morally neutral meaning. In this sense it is so passive and neutral that it almost could be rendered as 'psychological process', since it participates to some degree in the scientific study of man and his actions by the Hippocrates and the philosophers. If Plato's good educands have in themselves παραδείγματα ὅμοιοπαθή τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς (say), then the πάθη which they 'suffer' and 'endure' are neutral in this sense, since even watching tragic πάθη would be unbalancing for them. The -πάθε- part of ὅμοιοπαθή refers simply to the 'psychological process' of acquiring παραδείγματα, and has little to do with anguish. Learning by immediate experience of great anguish in the sense

9. Apol. 41e: this utterance (leaving aside the question of its historicity) is tantamount to a denial of the tragic idea; Socrates, unlike Oedipus, does not complain about what has befallen him; suffering does not alter him, and he seems to be quite unaware of the irony of his fate, and to have no sense of nemesis. See M. C. Swaby, Comic Laughter, A Philosophical Essay, Yale 1961, pp. 50–51.
10. Stephanus, Astius, Bonitz, s.vv. πάθος, πάθη, πάθημα. The words' area of meaning extended itself first to psychological event, and then to any kind of change (Plato, Tim. 42a)—the latter is a frequent meaning in Aristotle, cf. Hippocrates περὶ ἄρχαις ἱατρικῆς 2; ἐπιστήμα 2.2.24. It is of interest to the present discussion that πάθος and πάθημα are used as correlative notions of πάθημα by Plato: Phaedo 79d; Republic 437b, Soph. 248d, Legg. 894c (of Aeschylus, Agamemnon 833). Cf. Dörrie p. 333.
exemplified by Aeschylus and especially by Sophocles (in Trachiniae 141 ff.) is rejected. But Greeks by and large believed strongly in the πάθος/μάθος axis,11 and Plato’s choice of words, in a brilliant compressed paradox, engages the persuasive power of this belief on the side of his own views while he is in the very act of rejecting it.

Finally, there is possibly in this passage of the Republic an allusion to a view Gorgias expressed in his Helen,12 which is contradicted by Plato many times by his theory of mimesis. If there is such an allusion, it represents one more rejection on Plato’s part of the tragic concept. The passage of Gorgias to which reference may be intended is that which deals with the effects of poetry (D.K. B.11, p. 290, 9) τὴν ποίησιν ἀπασαν καὶ νομίζω καὶ ὄνομαξω λόγον ἔχοντα μέτρον ἡ τοὺς ἀκούοντας εἰσήλθε καὶ φρίκη περίφομος καὶ ἔλεος πολύδικρος καὶ πόθος φιλοπαθής, ἐπ’ ἄλλοτριόν τε πραγμάτων καὶ σωμάτων εὐθυγραμματείας καὶ δυστραγαλείας ἢ τὸ πάθημα διά τῶν λόγων ἐπιθετέν ἡ ψυχή. Here again, in the case of πάθημα, we have the second-order meaning of psychological process (as distinct from disastrous incident); and of this process ποίησις is the causative agent. The πάθημα is, furthermore, ἢ τὸν, and on this account probably regarded by Gorgias as something pertaining to the individual, and by Plato as something fluid and disruptive of the proper balance of the ψυχή. It is the ἢ τὸν, the random and personal, that works against Plato’s views, and the ὄμοιον which consolidates society in approved patterns of action and feeling. Similarly, Gorgias’ emphasis upon ἀπαθή and its beneficial effects upon both ‘deceiver’ and ‘deceived’ runs contrary to Plato’s sternly alethological preoccupations. It may be that in calling his educands ἐνεξαπάτητοι (which they only apparently are), he alludes to this theory of ἀπαθή. At all events, the multifarious dispositions of the ψυχή which are implied by the effects of ποίησις in Gorgias’ statement are unlikely to find favour with Plato. A quick check of adjectives describing dispositions in Plato’s works (the φιλό-kind), shows a majority like φιλόδομος rather than φιλόσοφος. Dispositions which were ἢ τὸν suggested an intractable variety, whereas what Plato sought was a reasoned conformity.

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11. Dörrie passim.

12. The date of the Helen is not to be ascertained with certainty, but it was probably written and published in the last quarter of the Fifth Century (R.E., Münscher); DK. 11, p. 288. ἢ τὸν is contrasted with ἄλλοτριόν: the soul suffers its own, particular πάθημα. Cf. Dörrie p. 331, referring to ‘Helen’ DK. B11, p. 292, 12, where λόγος (Gorgias’ version) is regarded as a medicine or a drug with distinct physiological effects—a notion which perhaps reinforces Plato’s caution about the ‘λόγος’ to which educands may be exposed.
Acta Classica is published annually by the Classical Association of South Africa. The journal has been in production since 1958. It is listed on both the ISI and the SAPSE list of approved publications.

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