

SOCRATES' METHOD OF ETYMOLOGY IN THE *CRATYLUS**

Socrates' etymologising occupies a remarkably large part of the *Cratylus*.¹ Notwithstanding its evident importance for the scenario of the dialogue, the following discussion seriously undermines the positions of etymology. In this discussion Socrates refutes Cratylus' assumptions: (1) that the correspondence of the word to object must be total in order to qualify a given word as right,² and (2) that we can investigate the things through words, i. e. etymologising can serve as the source of knowledge about *nominata*, because we obtain by this investigation a glance at the wisdom of ancient name-givers whom Cratylus states to be infallible. Socrates argues (1) that the correspondence in a weaker sense, allowing words to have conventional elements, is both unavoidable, if we assume that the image should differ from the thing it represents, and impeccable from the point of view of understanding what is meant; (2) that the opinions of name-givers can be demonstrated to be contradictory, hence we need an extra-linguistic criterion to judge whether a given word truly represents features of the *nominatum*. Therefore it is more economical to investigate things directly, without the help of etymology.

Scholars have long debated why Plato devotes such a considerable part of the dialogue to etymologising, if etymology is doomed to be rejected in its philosophical pretensions.

* The paper is dedicated to Alexander Gavrilov, in awareness both of his interest in the subject, and of his holding an opinion which differs considerably from one I try to defend in this paper. I hope that the difficulties discussed further can be interesting for him, as his position, formulated abruptly but decisively was for me a constant stimulus to rethink and modify my own. The other person I would like to mention is David Sedley. Both to his paper and to conversations with him I owe, in spite of our final disagreements, many valuable ideas, which, in the course of time, significantly changed my mind. The earlier drafts of this paper were read in the Department of Classics of the University of St Petersburg and at the Cambridge Conference on Ancient Etymology (University of Cambridge, 25–27 September, 2000). The present variant was written under the most hospitable shelter of the Center for Hellenic Studies (Washington, D. C.). I am grateful to Eleanor Dickey for enormous help with improving the English of this paper.

¹ 390 e – 428 a: 54 pages of total 86 in the OCT edition (E. A. Duke et al. [eds.], *Platonis opera* I [Oxford 1995]), if one includes the introductory discussion on the 'correctness of names' and the closing section on imitating elements; add also a "revision" of etymologies at 437 a–c.

² As follows from Socrates' previous reasoning, this Cratylus' assumption amounts to the demand that either etymological meaning of the word should be the *entirely* correct description of the *nominatum*, or, if the word is simple and cannot be decomposed in the meaningful elements, it should consist of the letters which imitate (also *entirely correctly*) the features of the *nominatum*.

Socrates' method of etymology in the *Cratylus*

The prevailing opinion until recently was that the etymologies are intended to be a parody of certain speculative thinkers or, more generally, of a tendency, to take etymology as entailing profound truth about the things, and particularly of contemporary Heracliteanism, which tended to find in etymologies a support for the belief in total flux and motion.³ It has been seldom asked what was Plato's attitude to etymology as a method of investigating the opinions of the ancient name-givers about the things, although Socrates formulates this as a primary purpose of his etymologising at 401 a.⁴ When this particular subject was occasionally tackled, the scholars, noticing the acumen of Plato's linguistic ideas, including his observations on the history of words,⁵ tended nevertheless to treat Plato's attitude either

³ A representative example of such an approach is the most detailed study of the *Cratylus*' etymologies by T. M. S. Baxter (*The Cratylus: Plato's Critique of Naming*, *Philosophia Antiqua* 58 [Leiden – New York – Köln 1992] esp. chs. IV & V; cited further as Baxter), who discusses the wide scope of probable targets among Plato's predecessors and contemporaries. The main forerunner of this line of interpretation was V. Goldschmidt (*Essai sur le Cratyle: Contribution de l'histoire de la pensée de Platon*, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, sciences hist. et philos. 279 [Paris 1940]).

⁴ As the primary purpose of the dialogue is refutation of etymology as philosophical tool, it is understandable that even the studies dedicated specially to *Cratylus*' etymologies were interested more in the ideas of Plato's contemporaries, underlying etymologies, than in the question whether Plato in fact believed that names were created in correspondence with such ideas. Thus Baxter is indecisive on the reliability of the etymological method (p. 58), and although he supposes that Plato was aware of its arbitrariness (p. 106: "etymology is so attractive precisely because it can 'prove' almost everything", cf. p. 118), he inclines to treat the question of the reliability of etymology in the eyes of the ancients as unsolvable (p. 92 n. 39).

⁵ R. Pfeiffer (*History of Classical Scholarship: From the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* [Oxford 1968] 63 n. 1) after appreciating Plato's valuable observations on sound-symbolism, changes of the initial forms of the words and their dialectal variants, as well as his hypothesis that the words without Greek etymology were borrowed from foreign languages (p. 59–65), asserted that the study of language did not correspond for Plato to the criteria of knowledge in general and that he represented Socrates' etymologies as unreliable. Without putting the question of how far Socrates' etymological methods corresponded to and differed from the prevailing standards of ancient etymology, Pfeiffer referred to general mocking atmosphere of the dialogue, and to Socrates' doubts concerning his arguments and his attempts to revise them (p. 63). Catherine Dalimier in her very useful commented translation of the dialogue (Platon, *Cratyle*, Trad. inédite, introd. et notes par C. Dalimier [Paris 1998] 38–47) defends Plato's etymologies from the usual accusations and finds much that anticipates modern linguistic approach; she does not discuss in detail what was Plato's opinion about Socrates' etymologising, but admits that he was aware of the dependence of decoding on the philosophical assumptions of etymologists (p. 39).

as disbelief in the etymologies Socrates invents or as playful combining of reliable and unreliable etymologies.⁶

Against these vague explanations David Sedley⁷ argued sharply that Plato views *all* Socrates' etymologies as correct from the *exegetical* point of view, that is as a restoration of the opinions of the name-givers about the things.⁸ Sedley further asserts that many of etymologies are also correct in Plato's view philosophically, i. e. as decoding of opinions which are correct by the criteria of Plato's own philosophy, especially in the case of the words that designate cosmological notions. The Heracliteanism of the beliefs concerning the physical world corresponds to Plato's own persuasion that the things as they are grasped by the senses lie in permanent flux, in which he followed the teacher of his youth, the Heraclitean Cratylus. With Cratylus again originated both this Heraclitean interpretation of names, which Plato continued to hold as true, and the doctrine of the names as the only source of investigating the world, which Plato abandoned for the philosophical method of Socrates. Contrary to the names of physical objects, Plato, as Sedley argues, considered the Heraclitean names for ethical and epistemo-

⁶ One of the factors that have prevented scholars from estimating Plato's attitude to etymology as linguistic method has been a belief that ancient etymologies, unlike modern ones, were judged on the originality and profundity of the decoded opinions, not on the plausibility of the linguistic analysis, cf. e. g. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* V (Cambridge 1978) 25, who, however, also believed that Plato was conscious of absurdity of Socrates' etymologising. He relied on "the consistently humorous and ironic vein in which they [etymologies] are proposed", and to the dismissal of etymology as a philosophical tool in the refutation of Cratylus. E. Heitsch ("Sprachphilosophie im Kratylus", in: E. Heitsch, *Wege zu Platon* [Göttingen 1992] 69–87, at 77 f. [originally *Hermes* 113 (1985) 44–62]) characterises the general principle of Socrates' etymologising as "die reine Willkür".

⁷ D. N. Sedley, "The Etymologies in Plato's *Cratylus*", *JHS* 118 (1998) 140–154 (cited further as Sedley).

⁸ Sedley's most notable predecessor was G. Grote, *Plato and the other Companions of Socrates* II (London ²1865) 516–529, who formulated the crucial question: if Plato ridiculed etymologies of his predecessors, "what ground have we for presuming that Plato's views on the subject were more correct?" (p. 521). For a view similar to Grote's cf. J. C. Rijlaarsdam, *Platon über die Sprache: Ein Kommentar zum Kratylus* (Utrecht – Bonn 1978) 143–145. Alexander Gavrilo noticed that it would be strange if Plato had been aware of those defects of an etymology, which only recently became clear to the modern mind ("Языкознание византийцев" ["The linguistic thought of the Byzantines"], in: *История лингвистических учений III: Средневековая Европа* [Ленинград 1985] 141). Rachel Barney sides without discussion with Grote ("Socrates Agonistes: The Case of the *Cratylus* Etymologies", *OSAPh* 16 [1998] 63–98, at p. 64 n. 4; cf. now her *Names and Nature in Plato's Cratylus* [New York – London 2001] ch. 2; I refer in what follows to her earlier paper as Barney).

logical notions as for the most part false, which is in harmony with Plato's low opinion about these branches of the Presocratic philosophy.

Without discussing the second part of Sedley's thesis, Plato's approval of the doctrines underlying a large part of etymologies,⁹ I have in view to concentrate on the topic of the exegetical reliability of etymological method as it is performed by Socrates.¹⁰ The particular passages Sedley refers to will be discussed in what follows. I begin with his more general assumptions, but before adducing those I find problematic, let me cite those I agree with.

First, I admit, together with Sedley, that Plato does not in the course of discussion take back Socrates' initial argument against Hermogenes' conventionalism, that a name is not an arbitrary sign, but a tool which has its proper function, namely to 'teach' about the thing and to distinguish one thing from another; that the name must be produced, as every tool, from the specific material to perform this function correctly, and that the creator of names should not be just anyone, but an expert in creating names (he is identified as a source of current linguistic usage, a νομοθέτης), who needs, in order to produce correct names, the supervision of an expert in using the name according to its proper function. This expert is a specialist in asking

⁹ The relevance of the doctrines underlying Socrates' etymologies for Plato's own doctrine was noticed by K. Gaiser, *Name und Sache in Platons "Kratylos"*, Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philos.-hist. Kl. Jhrg. 1974. 3. Abh. (Heidelberg 1974) [cited further as Gaiser], who discovered in etymologies the traces of the "unwritten doctrines", and further, for some specific etymologies, by F. Montasio, "Le etimologie del nome di Apollo nel *Cratilo*", *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 43 (1988) 227–259; P. Wohlfahrt, "L'etimologia del nome Hades nel *Cratilo*", *Rivista di storia della filosofia* 45 (1990) 5–35; H. Schwabl, "Athena bei Platon und in der allegorischen Tradition", in: H.-Chr. Günther, A. Rengakos (eds.), *Beiträge zur antiken Philosophie: FS für W. Kullmann* (Stuttgart 1997) 35–50. In spite of differences in approach this vein of investigation significantly modified the one-sided view of etymological section as only doxographic parodying of alien philosophic beliefs. It is not irrelevant that Socrates decodes the beliefs pointing to Plato's own doctrine. But what could prevent Plato from making Socrates find in names every kind of contemporary doctrine, if he wanted to represent etymologising in a doubtful light? One of the conclusions of Socrates' refutation of Cratylus is that the knowledge of a thing precedes the creation of its descriptive name (see 438 b 4–7, 439 a 6 – b 2). It implies that an etymologist decodes in names what he himself believes the things are, not what the name-givers thought they were.

¹⁰ In spite of observations in favour of unreliability of etymologies as viewed by Plato, dispersed in scholarly literature, the arguments were not adduced fully, to the best of my knowledge. I would note Grote's critique in D. D. Heath, "On Plato's *Cratylus*", *Journal of Philology* 17 (1888) 192–218, at 200 f., who accused him in blindness for Plato's humour. Heath himself thought that Plato could not fail to notice the absurdity of morphological analysis, which many of etymologies imply.

and answering about the things, a dialectician, Plato's ideal philosopher (385 d – 390 e).

Second, like Sedley, I find it more or less evident, that Socrates' final refutation of radical naturalism and his arguments in favour of admissibility of conventional elements (428 e – 435 c) do not amount to the conventionalism, but only mean a weaker variant of naturalism, i. e. that an etymological correspondence of the word to the features of the object is desirable, but one must not press the demand for this correspondence beyond what is reasonable. My agreement with both these assumptions means that, like Sedley, I find that Socrates' etymological enterprise is not demolished as the whole by the final discussion. But, I think, these assumptions are not sufficient for the inference of exegetical plausibility of all Socrates' etymologies in Plato's view. For one may believe both in the desirability of an etymological bond between the word and the thing, and in the existence of such correspondence in many cases in the current language, without thinking that we possess a reliable method of finding this bond beyond more or less evident cases.

Now Sedley's more problematic arguments in favour of the exegetical reliability of Socrates' etymologies are in my view as follows:

1) In other dialogues, Plato puts in Socrates' mouth etymologies, which do not differ significantly from those in the *Cratylus*. I agree that Plato did not deny etymology in general, and etymologies he adduces elsewhere prove that his criteria of sound and unsound were far from the modern ones. On the other hand, the bulk of these etymologies in the whole Platonic corpus is insignificant,¹¹ and the argument raises the question of why, if Plato believed in the reliability of etymology as a doxographic tool, he employed it so rarely. Further, there is considerable difference between the elaborate etymologies of the *Cratylus* and the by no means more sound according to modern standards, but certainly less complicated etymologising beyond this dialogue.

2) Nobody in antiquity questioned the seriousness of Socrates' etymologies, and, on the contrary, Plato was considered a founder of etymological science. This proves, I think, that Plato's formulation of the principles of etymologising was both original to him and influential on ancient thought, but it does not necessarily mean that the ancient commentators were more able to grasp his final judgement about the exegetical reliability of the etymological method than are modern ones.

3) Scientific criteria of etymology did not exist in Plato's time, an etymology having been judged on the profundity of the meaning it decoded, not by

¹¹ See examples adduced by Sedley, 141 f.

the validity of the linguistic aspect of the decoding. One cannot but appreciate in general Sedley's reminder that we must not overestimate Plato's ability to discover methodological faults of etymology that his contemporaries failed to notice. I intend, however, in what follows to discuss mainly this particular point, whether it is in fact true that Plato was blind to the defects of the etymological method, and to what extent it was possible (for Plato and others) to doubt the exegetical reliability of an etymology without being armed with the methods of modern comparative linguistics. Before discussing the evidence I would add one general remark: the repeated assertion that etymology in ancient times was not in principle judged on its linguistic reliability conflicts with the fact that the interlocutors in the *Cratylus* often find difficulties with etymologising of some words or categories of words, and Socrates has to invent new devices for decoding them. It is thus better to speak not about lack of criteria, but about their lesser strictness and their different character in comparison with the criteria of modern linguistics.

The main difficulty for answering this question lies in the character of the conclusive part of the discussion. Socrates proves, contrary to Cratylus' opinion, that things must be investigated through themselves and not through their names. Etymology is thus dismissed as a tool of philosophical investigation of things, no matter how it is reliable from the exegetical point of view. As was mentioned before, Plato used etymologies in other dialogues both before and after the *Cratylus* to support or illustrate assertions made about objects. However, such usage is limited and does not help us decide, whether Plato is confident of any etymology convenient from the point of view of decoded beliefs, or whether he uses only those etymologies that he finds plausible from the point of view of the etymological procedure underlying them. Therefore it is only from hints in etymological section and in the final part that one may hope to recognise whether Plato assigns to etymology exegetical reliability even after it is dismissed as a tool of philosophical investigation, or whether the doubts about such reliability that appear in the etymological section suggest that Plato also intended to throw doubt on the exegetical reliability of etymology.

I discuss at first the hints which are extraneous to etymologising as such. Socrates proclaims, after etymologising the first portion of the names of gods and heroes, that he intends to investigate how far the etymological wisdom that has suddenly fallen upon him from an unknown source can help prove the "correctness" of further mythological names. Hermogenes reacts (396 d 2 f.):

καὶ μὲν δὴ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀτεχνῶς γέ μοι δοκεῖς ὥσπερ οἱ ἐνθουσιῶν-
τες ἐξαίφνης χρησιμῶδεῖν.

Socrates answers:

Καὶ αἰτιῶμαί γε, ὦ Ἑρμόγενης, μάλιστα αὐτήν [sc. σοφίαν] ἀπὸ
 Εὐθύφρονος τοῦ Προσπαλτίου προσπεπωκέναι μοι· ἔωθεν γὰρ πολ-
 λὰ αὐτῷ συνῆ καὶ παρείχον τὰ ὄτα. κινδυνεύει οὖν ἐνθουσιῶν οὐ
 μόνον τὰ ὄτά μου ἐμπλήσαι τῆς δαιμονίας σοφίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς
 ψυχῆς ἐπειληφθαι.

Taking in view Plato's rationalistic outlook, reference to inspiration seems to throw doubtful light on Socrates' etymologising, representing it both as irresponsible due to external influence and unaccountable because of being founded on inspiration rather than on the rational reasoning. On the other hand, Sedley argues that Socrates is not hostile to divination, which is associated with being inspired by the god, and that in the *Phaedrus* Socrates speaks inspired, this time from the human side. He infers that "what Socrates means by inspiration [both in the *Phaedrus* and in the *Cratylus*]... is the development, by emulating successful practitioners, of a method which is intuitive rather than rule-bound".¹² As far as I can see the general picture is too contradictory to allow any definite conclusion. First, Plato never permits Socrates to report something reliable in the inspired state (the δαμόνιον is only apparently an exception, for it does not suggest to Socrates anything in the theoretical sphere).¹³ The case of the *Phaedrus* only confirms this impression: Socrates claims that he has been inspired (by poets or writers to whom he listened, 235 c–d, or by nymphs of the place in which he speaks, 238 c–d; 241 e) and afterwards disavows the content of his speech as mistaken.¹⁴

¹² Sedley, 144 f. Sedley in his later, still unpublished paper seems to take back his suggestion about inspiration as pointing to the "impressionist nature" of etymological art. He argues instead that it implies that Socrates practises a skill which he does not possess in full grade, but which, nevertheless, can be developed methodologically in a real τέχνη.

¹³ Plato, as it is well known, is prone to tell myths and fables (it is often Socrates who tells them), which throw light on important philosophical issues, without corresponding to the standards of philosophical argumentation. But for the most part these stories are represented not as inspired but as heard from somebody else, and these stories, inexact as they are from the factual point of view, are explicitly approved by Socrates as *essentially* true. He thus bears responsibility for the essence of their content (e. g. *Gorg.* 523 a 2, 524 b 1; *Phaedo* 114 d; *Symp.* 212 b; *Phaedr.* 275 b).

¹⁴ The parallel is discussed in length by Barney, 71–74, who rightly emphasizes that in both cases inspiration does not mean revelation of supernatural truth, but on the contrary deficient rational backing. She notices correctly that Socrates does not call himself inspired during his second speech, which admittedly more corresponds to Plato's own views, even if it does not achieve the level of real τέχνη. Contrary to her I see no

Second, there is no evidence that Plato admits the existence of anything like “impressionistic” art.¹⁵ Plato’s belief in divination, as far as it goes beyond conventional attitude, relies on its being the frenzy, inspired by divine source, not on its being τέχνη.¹⁶ Plato assumes the reality of religious and poetic inspiration.¹⁷ But he never mentions the possibility of learning these abilities, nor does he consider them to be τέχνοι.¹⁸ Socrates explicitly denies that ἐνθουσιάζοντες, either μάντιες or poets, are σοφοί (*Apol.* 22 b–c; *Ion* 533 e). Inspiration, as Plato believes, can be transmitted from the god through the poet to the *rhapsodos* and even to his listeners (*Ion* 535 e – 536 b), but it does not mean that one can become a poet by listening other poets or a seer by listening another seer.

Third, it is improbable that Plato seriously compares etymological wisdom with religious inspiration: he does not say that Euthyphro is inspired by the god, but that he possesses δαιμονία σοφία. Socrates, as is known, does not believe that somebody can possess divine wisdom (*Apol.* 23 a).¹⁹ It is thus plausible that Plato points out for the experienced reader of his dialogue that Socrates practises a method which has no strict rules, and is thus called ironically a divine wisdom, and that this skill cannot be taught.

There is a further, more definite hint that etymology is not reliable: Socrates intends in the ensuing passage to be purified the next day from the

reasons to suppose that in both cases Plato hints at the similarity between Socrates’ inspired state and oracular responses, and that as well as the latter ones, Socrates’ inspired speeches should receive subsequent rational interpretation.

¹⁵ It is far from certain that Plato wishes to represent Socrates in his first inspired speech in the *Phaedrus* as practicing an art, and the later attempt to sketch principles of the scientific rhetoric in this dialogue implies rather that existing rhetoric is in his view no art at all.

¹⁶ *Apol.* 22 b–c; *Ion* 534 c–d; *Meno* 99 c; *Phaedr.* 244 c; 265 b; *Tim.* 71 e, cf.: G. Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca – Cambridge 1991) 168–171. This does not preclude that Plato admitted the existence of more technical aspects in divination, but they were not what made a seer speak truth in his view.

¹⁷ See the previous note for the evidence on the former and *Apol.* 22 b–c; *Ion* 534 b–c; 542 a–b for the latter together with classical discussion by E. R. Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951) 64–101.

¹⁸ At *Phaedr.* 244 c Socrates asserts that μαντική, a καλλίστη τέχνη, was originally rightly named μανική, but this seems to be an ironical *coincidentia oppositorum*. See *Ion* 536 b–c; 542 a–b for opposition of inspiration and τέχνη.

¹⁹ It can be seen from comparison of this passage with *Apol.* 20 d–e that Socrates speaks about divine wisdom only to negate ironically the wisdom of persons in view (Vlastos, *Socrates*, 239); the idea of ὁμοίωσις θεῷ in the later dialogues (*Rep.* 613 a–b; *Theaet.* 176 a–b) does not necessarily mean, *pace* Vlastos, that Plato changed his mind in this subject.

wisdom he received through inspiration from Euthyphro by some priests or sophists (396 e 1 – 397 a 2):

δοκεῖ οὖν μοι χρῆναι οὕτωςι ἡμᾶς ποιῆσαι· τὸ μὲν τήμερον εἶναι χρήσασθαι αὐτῇ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ περὶ ὀνομάτων ἐπισκέψασθαι, αὔριον δέ, ἂν καὶ ὑμῖν συνδοκῆ, ἀποδιοπομπησόμεθ' αὐτὴν καὶ καθαρούμεθα, ἐξευρόντες ὅστις τὰ τοιαῦτα δεινὸς καθαίρειν, εἴτε τῶν ἱερέων τις εἴτε τῶν σοφιστῶν.

This passage definitely points out that Socrates' etymologising entails something wrong.²⁰ There were attempts to weaken its strength by the suggestion, that Socrates draws an analogy between his enthusiastic state and a possession by divine forces; the latter state *as such*, in spite of its character and consequences, needed, according to the prevailing beliefs, a subsequent purification. This reasoning is wrong.²¹ As far as I can see, there is no evidence that according to the Greek religious beliefs the state of possession by divinity needed by itself purification.²² Also there is no reason to suppose that Socrates means specifically the psychological aspect of his enterprise

²⁰ L. Méridier (éd.), *Platon, Œuvres complètes* V, 2^e partie (Paris 1931) 17 definitely understands the passage thus. Cf. Barney, 73: “an overflow of inspiration from Euthyphro sounds positively unhygienic”, although she does not discuss the reason for Plato's disgust.

²¹ In the most explicit form this general belief was referred to by P. Boyancé, “La ‘doctrine d’Euthyphron’ dans le *Cratyle*”, *REG* 54 (1941) 140–175, at 167: “il (i. e. the rite of purification) s’explique par la croyance, fréquente dans les cultes à possession (Dionysos, Nymphes, etc.), que l’enthousiasme est un état à la fois divin et pathologique, qui a besoin d’un remède”. Cf. G. J. de Vries, “Notes on Some Passages of the *Cratylus*”, *Mnem.* Ser. IV. 8 (1950) 290–297: “purification is needed *after contact with higher powers*, but *no less* after pollution [my italics]”; L. Moulinier, *Le pur et l’impur dans la pensée des Grecs: d’Homère à Aristote*, Études et commentaires 12 (Paris 1952) 413 f. (cf. 337 f.).

²² Boyancé (*loc. cit.*) cites to prove his claim his *Le Culte des muses chez les philosophes grecs* (Paris 1937) 64. But the only evidence adduced in this monograph is *Phaedr.* 244 d–e: the madness that appeared in some families suffering from old divine wrath, turned out to be beneficial because it revealed, by prayers and submission to gods, the purifications and secret rites which *served as release* from these sufferings. The passage indicates that Plato treats some rites of purification as frenzied possession by god: not only were the rites he has in view discovered by the “right madness”, but they must be constantly accompanied by it (this can be seen from 265 b 2–4, where Socrates enumerates the kinds of divine madness and names Dionysus as the source of the ἐπίπνοια τελεστική, see: I. M. Linforth, “Telestic madness in Plato, *Phaedrus* 244de”, *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 13 [1946] 163–172). But this reasoning has nothing to do with necessity of purification *after the state of inspiration* by the divine force: the rites purify from the pollution of crime, not from this state.

and draws an analogy between his inspiration and certain pathological states, which in some cases were considered as possessions by divine force.²³ The alternative Socrates suggests, purification either by priests or by sophists, points not to the analogy of mental diseases, but of intellectual errors.²⁴ The remark has two significant parallels in the Platonic corpus. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates asserts that the wrong understanding of the nature of love and attendant impiety on behalf of Eros, both in Lysias' speech and in his own (first) speech makes him say a palinode as a sort of purification (242 b – 243 b). As it was mentioned above, this speech of Socrates is represented as inspired. Socrates, however, states unambiguously that purification is needed due to mistakes which involved the interlocutors in impiety, not due to inspiration itself (242 c 2). The similarity between the *Cratylus* and the *Phaedrus* suggests further that inspiration, without being "sin" by itself, functions as an explanation of the defects of Socrates' reasoning, and (as mentioning of the priests in the *Cratylus* proves) that intellectual faults result *inter alia* in offending the divine sphere.²⁵

Mention of the sophists receives an explanation from the other dialogue: in the *Sophist* (230 a – 231 b) Plato represents intellectual purification, a method peculiar to "the sophistry of the noble art", as a casting off of false and pretentious knowledge.²⁶ In spite of different aspects these two kinds of

²³ R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford 1983) 221 f., adduces the passage as an example of purification, the purpose of which is to restore "the individual's normal personality" after disruptions caused by external influence. Parker surely means, as the neighbouring examples prove, the incur-sions, which were regarded as pathological and unwanted for touched persons.

²⁴ On mental disturbances as possessions see [Hipp.] *De morbo sacro* 1 and Eur. *Hipp.* 141–144. The relevant aspect of this belief is that one of the means of curing them were purifications ([Hipp.] *loc. cit.*), but the practitioners of such medicine were not usually priests.

²⁵ Nothing seems to be known about real expiatory rites for insulting a divinity by wrong statements about it, and it would be tactless to represent Socrates as impious even in the metaphoric sense. Hence I suppose that the metaphor Plato uses in the *Phaedrus* and the *Cratylus* relies on a more distant analogy between ritual unwilling faults, demanding purification in the literal sense, and intellectual mistakes concerning the nature of gods, which demand a metaphoric purification. The intellectual purification in the *Sophist* comes from another popular analogy, between medical cleansing of the body and purifying mind from wrong views.

²⁶ The purely negative character of the method practised by the "sophistry of noble lineage" in the *Sophist* is clear, regardless of whether Plato is thinking of the sophists, as G. Kerferd argued "Plato's Noble Art of Sophistry", *CIQ* N. S. 4 (1954) 84–90 (see also R. Bluck [ed.], *Plato's Sophist* [Manchester 1975] 40–46), or Socrates, as other scholars supposed (e. g. G. Vlastos, *Socratic Studies* [Cambridge 1994] 17 f.). Kerferd (p. 89) mentions the *Cratylus* passage as "purification from pretended knowledge" and sup-

purification in the *Cratylus*, the religious and the secular (which are rather complementary than alternative), imply that Socrates has in view the abandonment of etymology, not its correction.²⁷

The further question is what aspects of etymology Socrates treats here as dangerous.²⁸ Does he imply he that decoding the wrong opinions about the gods of name-givers may involve the practitioners of etymology in impiety or that decoding itself may be wrong and thus impious? There are some considerations in favour of the latter view.²⁹ First, the mention of sophists as purifiers suggests that Socrates considers him intellectually responsible for occasional mistakes. If Socrates were afraid of relating the mistaken opinions of the ancient creators of names correctly decoded by him, the mentioning of purifying by priests would be appropriate (as in the case of involuntary pollution), but not purifying by sophists. Second, before he starts etymologising divine names, Socrates lets his interlocutors know beforehand that the beliefs about the gods he decodes by etymologising belong to the name-givers, because he thinks that “we know nothing about the gods, nor about the names they call each other”, and must be satisfied with approval of the conventional names, which he personally finds fine (401 a 2–6).³⁰ There are hence some reasons to believe that necessity for purification, ironically as it should be understood, follows from Socrates’ own actions,

poses that it implies a disdain for etymologising as such, and not only for interpretations of the names of the gods.

²⁷ Pace Gaiser, 50 n. 98 (“[Plato] spielt... mit der ‘Reinigung’ auf den Dialektiker an, der fähig ist, aus dem Schwall der Etymologien die brauchbaren Erkenntnisse herauszuläutern”). Gaiser obviously has in view the figure of the paradigmatic dialectician, who was represented in the previous part of the dialogue as the supervisor of the ideal νομοθέτης. As for the underlying idea, it is more important that Socrates speaks of purification on the *next day*: he obviously has not in view his following conversation with Cratylus, which results in refuting the pretensions of etymologists to discover philosophical truth, but need not mean refuting their ability to analyse words.

²⁸ Sedley, 146 f. regards purification as a symbolic hint that etymological methodology, learnt by Plato from Cratylus, was abandoned by him later as philosophical tool in favour of Socratic dialectic. But, as I hope to show further, the wisdom of Euthyphro is referred to in the dialogue constantly as a sign of exquisite, although not reliable etymological skill, not of pretensions of etymologists to know the truth about things.

²⁹ The immediate context of this remark (Socrates etymologises divine names, and Hermogenes compares his discoveries with χρησμοδεῖν) seems to suggest that only a pretence to knowledge about the gods is dangerous. It is probable that context influences the choice of the religious metaphors Socrates uses. But as I try to prove in what follows the disbelief in etymology the metaphor hints at goes far beyond the immediate context.

³⁰ The passage reminds us that Plato did not approve of etymologising the names of the gods with pretension to know something of the nature of divine (cf. 401 d 7–8), in

that is from his etymologising, not from the opinions he restores. Presumably, Socrates implies that he might be guilty, both in an intellectual and in a religious sense, if he in the process of etymologising discovers beliefs name-givers really did not have.

Further support for the view that Socrates thinks about the exegetical faults of his enterprise is a passage in which Socrates alludes back to his remark about purification. The interlocutors are in difficulty about the etymology of the word ἄνθρωπος, and both agree that only Euthyphro's inspiration can help in this particularly difficult case (399 a 1 f). The inspiration helps in fact, and Socrates formulates the assumption which should underlie etymologising in all other difficult cases. He adduces an example of a composite name in which both the phonetic structure and the accent differ from those its components possessed. He concludes that many words suffered analogous changes over time, and it is thus necessary to free the word from these later modifications in order to discover its etymological meaning. On one hand, the device Socrates invented is characterised by him as refined, but on the other it involves him in danger of "getting already today wiser than is necessary", if he will not be cautious enough, thus alluding to his promise of purification tomorrow (καὶ κινδυνεύσω, εἰάν μὴ εὐλαβῶμαι, ἔτι τήμερον σοφώτερον τοῦ δέοντος γενέσθαι, 399 a 3–5).

In order to define what seems to Socrates dangerous in the methodological device he discovers let us look attentively at the principles he formulates. According to him, some letters have been deleted in order to modify the description of object into its designation, others have been added, and accents of syllables have been changed.³¹ The etymologising ought to take in account these distortions and to restore the initial form of word.

accordance with the typical Socratic caution on behalf of names of gods (*Phil.* 12 c 1–3), and with his general pious agnosticism, approving (or ignoring) traditional beliefs without attempts to rationalize them, see *Phaedr.* 229 c – 230 a on myths.

³¹ It is formulated also as one of the rules of the method that the words are the condensed descriptions of the nominata. From this point Socrates uses freely etymologies which expand the words in the descriptions, trying to explain as meaningful all alleged elements of the words. I would notice without detailed discussion that this type of etymologising was not widely used in the etymologies definitely attested before Plato's time and contemporary with him except the cases of more or less evident composita. Aristotle rarely uses this way of etymologising, see the list of etymologies from his treatises in: R. Eucken, "Beiträge zum Verständnis des Aristoteles", *JbbClPh* 15 (= *NJbb* 99) (1869) 243–248. Might it be that this particular kind of etymologising increased the hazardousness of Socrates' enterprise in Plato's eyes?

It is next to certain that the rules thus formulated belong to Plato himself.³² Both before and after him the art of etymology remained an applied skilled purporting to reveal as profound wisdom underlying the words as possible and had no reasons to formulate its methodological principles. We do not hear about words which could not be etymologised in principle, and very rarely about those, which represent exegetical difficulty for etymologising.³³

The principles Socrates formulates are sound and valid for many cases; they correspond to those by which modern linguistics is guided. The danger he recognises lies presumably in the lack of reliable criteria for discovering the changes the words suffered in course of time. It is understandable that while formulating the principles of the restoration of the initial form of the word Plato got suspicious about the reliability of their application in particular cases.

The further question is whether these doubts in ability to find the etymological meaning correctly influence the general, philosophical results of the dialogue. At 414 c – 415 a Socrates returns to the difficulty of restoring the initial form of words. His etymologising of the word τέχνη presumes especially significant changes, and Hermogenes reacts with a sceptical remark: καὶ μάλα γε γλίσχρῶς (414 c 3). The literal sense of these words is that Socrates' operations with this word are extremely hard. It of course does not mean that it is difficult to invent such an etymology, but that the changes of the contemporary form of the word are too forced. The remark evidently implies disbelief in such a complicated restoration. To apologise, Socrates reminds Hermogenes again about multiple changes of words in the course of time, both for ornamentation and for other reasons having nothing to do with their genuine meaning. He admits that such a premise opens an unlimited possibility for a practitioner of etymology to modify the contemporary form of the word in such a way that “it would be easy to adapt any word to any thing”.

Socrates asserts that it is necessary to be moderate in such restorations and expresses hope that Hermogenes would be a wise supervisor in this, but advises him not to be extremely exact in order not to deprive Socrates of his ability as etymologist (μή μ' ἀπογυιώσῃς μένεος [*Il.* 6, 265], 414 e 2 – 415 a 2). Plato,

³² Cf. Pfeiffer (see n. 5).

³³ The passage implies that the purpose of the device of the inspiration in the dialogue is not only to distance the historical Socrates from the enterprise he really did not engage in, but to stress the originality of Socrates' etymologising: he got from Euthyphro neither the knowledge of individual etymologies nor even a method, but only an impulse which helps to find both.

presumably deliberately, leaves the reader uncertain whether Socrates' etymologies follow this demand of moderation.³⁴ The passage signals, however, both that etymology is measured by criteria of reliability and that the application of these criteria is problematic. Moreover, there is a sign that the passage has considerable consequences and the reliability of etymologising has some significance for the philosophical results of the discussion in the dialogue. In the conversation with Cratylus Socrates turns back to Hermogenes' doubts. He persuades Cratylus that, besides the correctness (that is etymological correspondence of the word to its object, or imitative correspondence of the sounds to the qualities of the object), it is necessary to allow a conventional element in words. One of the reasons he adduces, is that the alleged correctness has in many cases enforced character, due, as the reminiscence of Hermogenes' words proves, to the arbitrariness of etymologising (435 c 4):

ἀλλὰ μὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς, τὸ τοῦ Ἑρμογένους, γλίσχυρα ἦ ἢ ὀλκὴ αὐτῆς τῆς ὁμοιότητος.³⁵

To be sure, the passage does not imply that all etymologies proposed by Socrates are wrong. It shows only that Hermogenes' doubts about the reliability of too drastic modification of the current words in order to attain a profound etymology are accepted as valid. Thus not only the dubious character of etymologies from the philosophical point of view, but also the forceful, unreliable etymologising influences the general inferences concerning the value of etymology.

It is less certain how far this general remark about the danger of unnatural etymologising is applied to Socrates' own enterprise. But the contrast between more simplistic and more speculative etymologies is drawn in many cases. Such etymologies are characterised by the adjective κομψός and its derivatives. These words do not imply by themselves any direct dis-

³⁴ Sedley, 144, thinks that they do. It depends, at least partially, on how seriously Socrates considers Hermogenes to be a person able to supervise his etymologising. On one hand, Hermogenes constantly professes his ignorance in questions of 'correctness of names' (414 e 2–3 etc.), but on the other, as is evident from the next passage I shall discuss, Socrates regards seriously Hermogenes' doubts about forced etymologies. But even if Socrates is serious, should we think about a method as reliable, when a competent person is asked not to scrutinize the results too strictly?

³⁵ The phrase does not mean: 'an attractive force of similarity' (LSJ, s. v. ὀλκή), and not 'hauling a ship up in a sticky ramp' (C. D. C. Reeve [tr.], *Plato, Cratylus* [Indianapolis – Cambridge 1998] 87, but, literally, that it would be a heavy work to try to attract the similarity in any case). Both the context and the reminiscence of Hermogenes' words prove that 'heavy' implies not the difficulty of etymologising, but its enforced character.

dain of etymologies thus characterised.³⁶ In fact κομψός can point both to the cleverness, smartness, and to the refinement, elegance of form in quite positive sense, although in both these meanings it often obtains derogatory force of over-sophistication or over-delicateness.³⁷ As Plato freely uses κομψός positively, there is no necessity to suspect, without sufficient grounds, any disapproval of persons and things the word is applied to in the *Cratylus*.³⁸ As a characteristic of creations of the name-givers it points to their learned character, i. e. to the profound, speculative meaning of the relevant words, not to their formal elegance (399 a 4; 402 d 3). This usage must be distinguished from describing as κομψός the later modifications of the initial words, purported to refine them, but obscuring their genuine meaning.³⁹ The former usage is relevant for understanding Plato's attitude to the etymological method and its limitations. Just these most profound and speculative meanings of words are attained by the most drastic alterations of the contemporary word and thus imply significant changes of its original form, as is the case in the passage with γλισχρῶς-remark of Hermogenes. The attributing of some other etymologies to the inspiration of Euthyphro has the same function: his wisdom is associated both with the speculative content of etymologies and with the overriding difficulties Socrates faces when the analysed words have no evident etymology.⁴⁰ Taken as the whole, Euthyphro's inspira-

³⁶ Pace Baxter 101 n. 77: "The use of κομψός and cognate words in the dialogue seems to be ironic".

³⁷ The positive meaning of the κομψός and its cognates is widely attested, and was noticed, e. g. by Suda, κ 2025 Adler. The development in negative direction needs no explanation. For Platonic examples see *Crat.* 429 d 7–8, where it points to unduly sophistication as opposed to Socrates' own (allegedly) simplistic approach (cf. 426 a 2), cf. *Lach.* 197 d; *Theaet.* 156 a 3. For the same negative nuances cf. Aristoph. *Eg.* 18 (κομψευριπικῶς), and Eur. *Suppl.* 426.

³⁸ Moeris, who regards the Attic κομψεία as equivalent of (all)-Hellenic πανουργία (κ 56 Hansen), makes a remark concerning Plato's usage: κομψοὺς Πλάτων οὐ τοὺς πανοῦργους, ἀλλὰ τοὺς βελτίστους (κ 2 Hansen). The observation needs a more detailed study and is not correct as a generalisation (see the examples of the negative meaning in Plato in the previous note); it probably stems from the discussions of *Rep.* 408 b, the only passage Moeris refers to. If, however, Moeris' source relied on more detailed observations, it may mean that Plato was more inclined to use κομψός *et sim.* in a negative sense to designate undue (often self-deceptive) subtlety rather than sophisticated wickedness.

³⁹ 400 b 4: κομψεύεσθαι is applied to a modification of the original form φουσέχη (which reveals the true meaning of the word in question, but is funny) into the more elegant form ψυχή. Without using the cognates of κομψός Socrates refers many times to the same idea.

⁴⁰ At 400 a 1 Socrates finds more speculative etymology by οἱ ἀμφὶ Εὐθύφρονα, who would, as he supposes, despise the much more simple, from the philosophical point

tion, which signals not only the etymologising of the names of gods (407 d 8), but in a sense the whole etymological part of the dialogue (428 c 7), is a distinguishing sign for the speculative character of many of Socrates' etymologies and for drastic exquisiteness of etymologising, rather than for the specific doctrinal content of etymologies. The etymologies thus marked are not abandoned in the course of discussion. It is important that they are distinguished from the simpler ones, and that the bold etymologising in these cases influences the general question of similarity in the final part of the dialogue. What I think Plato wants from his reader is recognition of the lack of reliable criteria in the complicated cases, and just in those when the philosophically most interesting meanings are restored. It is also possible, that κομψός, without having directly derogatory force, implies that etymologies marked in this and similar manner, being sophisticated in themselves, presuppose also the undue sophistication of the name-givers, appropriate for contemporary age but not for the age of creating language.

One additional point: the picture of wise name-givers who created the elements of language, afterwards the simple names from them and then the composed words, who possessed philosophical and scientific wisdom, anticipating the doctrines of Socrates' contemporaries, and put this wisdom in their linguistic creations, does not correspond to Plato's usual representation of the initial phase of civilisation. He constantly depicts beginnings of cultural development as an age with very modest intellectual interests.⁴¹ I suppose that the differing image in the *Cratylus* means a hypothetical drawing of inferences from the intellectualist premises of radical linguistic naturalism, which Socrates refutes in the final part of the discussion.

At the end of the etymological section Socrates remarks, looking back at the results of his inquiry (428 d): θαυμάζω καὶ αὐτὸς πάλαι τὴν ἔμμεστοῦ σοφίαν καὶ ἀπιστῶ. These words respond to Cratylus' acceptance of Socrates' reasoning on the 'rightness of the names'. As this interchange of rejoinders immediately precedes the refutation of Cratylus' radical naturalism, one gets the impression that Socrates' disbelief concerns the inferences

of view, etymology of ψυχή. At 399 a 1 and 409 d 1 Socrates appeals to his wisdom in order to find methodological devices of etymologising: in the first case, mentioned above, to introduce modifications of current word forms relying on the premise of their multiple alterations through ages, in the second case to suggest a hypothesis that the words which cannot be etymologised were borrowed from barbarian languages. The latter device is dismissed at 426 a 2 as ἐκδύσεις ... καὶ μάλα κομψαί.

⁴¹ I hope to discuss this item on another occasion, together with Aristotle's views on etymology and ancient wisdom, as revealed by it.

Cratylus might draw from etymologising. This impression seems to be wrong. The doubt cannot concern the philosophical correctness of the etymologies proposed by Socrates. Up to this point the reader is unaware of any possibility for etymologies to be incorrect, to express the essence of the nominatum incorrectly or insufficiently. The only difference between etymologies was the difference in the refinement of etymological analysis at work and in the profoundness of the suggested etymological meaning resulting from it.

It is true that refutation of Cratylus' assumptions does not include a revision of the exegetical correctness of the etymologies of the previous section in general. Plato is not attempting to prove them wrong. But there is one word, the previous etymology of which is abandoned in favour of a more plausible one: ἐπιστήμη, which was decoded in correspondence with the belief that positive notions imply motion, is now explained as proving the contrary doctrine of the importance of rest (427 a–b). It implies first that the earlier etymologising was not necessarily right, and more generally, that etymological procedure depends on the philosophical assumptions of etymologists.

More problematic are probabilistic explanations of words in the etymological section. There is at least one case when the probabilistic character of etymologising undermines its reliability. Socrates restores three possible original forms of Poseidon's name (402 d 11 – 403 a 3): it was either Ποσιδών (from δεῖν πόδα, on the word formation analogy of ποσίδεσμος), or Πολλειδών (= πολλὰ εἰδώς), or ὁ Σείων. The differences from the initial form are explained, as usual, as purely ornamental, meaningless changes. All three restored forms and the meanings they imply may reflect properly the nature of this god, but they surely could not be imposed by name-givers simultaneously.

The similar case is the name of Apollo which corresponds simultaneously to the four features of the god (404 e 8 – 405 a 3). This multiplicity of variants is typical of ancient etymology, which tries not to restore the initial form of the word, but to demonstrate the richness of its probable meanings. Socrates is in a different situation, for he represents etymologies from the beginning as the real opinions of the name-givers (401 a), which need not be necessarily correct, but ought to be at least consistent. Of course Socrates might imply that the name-givers deliberately made words that could be variously etymologised to reveal different meanings.⁴² But Socrates

⁴² As Sedley, 142. 148, supposes, comparing with the modern acronyms. But, although Socrates twice points out the possibility that the names (Apollo, 404 e 8 – 405 a 3;

has already considerably advanced in trying to restore plausible initial forms of the words and finding reasons for their historical changes. As a result he restores four alternative initial forms of the name to make the decoding of all four meanings more plausible, which made the procedure again doubtful. One possible escape for this alternative etymologising would be the idea Socrates hints at 401 b 11 – e 2: the different variants of the name of Hestia and different concomitant meanings imply that they come back to various bands of the name-givers. But Socrates does not use this *refugium* otherwise and the ending comment (401 d 6–7) points out that he does not consider it plausible.

Another places imply not doubts in etymology as such, but consciousness of the grades of its probability. The interlocutors recognise in some cases that relevant words have no etymology. It is suggested that these words have been borrowed from other languages (409 d–e; 421 c 12) or have suffered too many changes to find their original form (421 d). In the last part of the etymological section Socrates proposes the analysis of such words into elements to demonstrate that the correctness of such words can be proved. But in spite of this attempt, it is evident that the grades of probabilities of etymology were felt and could be used, when necessary, against the etymological speculations.

Thus, I see in the dialogue some indications of the critical approach to etymology and resulting doubts about the exegetical correctness of some etymologies. It was, to be sure, not pure linguistic considerations, but rather discontent with philosophical claims (expressed or implied) of practitioners of etymology, which made Plato demonstrate the unreliability of their philological methods. But how was it possible? The defenders of the seriousness of etymologies argue that there were no strict rules of etymological method in antiquity.⁴³ That is true in the sense that nobody proposed clear criteria of etymologising and did not criticise proponents of an etymology with clear alternatives to their methods at hand. But there are signs of the dissatisfaction with etymological reasoning, the only purpose of which is to find in words a profound knowledge welcome to the proponents of a certain doctrine, even at price of abolishing resemblance between etymon and derived word.

Artemis, 406 b 5–6) were given in accordance with *all* alternatively suggested etymologies, he does not try to explain how it fits alternative initial forms of the words. It is significant that Socrates is indecisive in the second case: Artemis received her name either in accordance with one of its decoded meanings or with *all* of them.

⁴³ Sedley, 142: “I do not know of any ancient writer who considered etymology to be, as a form of linguistic analysis, manifestly mistaken...”

The Academic Balbus (Cic. *N. D.* 3. 62) admits that there are names of gods for which it is impossible to find etymologies and repudiates the Stoics for the arbitrariness of their etymological method: *Nullum est nomen, quod non possis una littera explicare, unde ductum sit.*⁴⁴

Grote, although arguing that the etymologies of the *Cratylus* could not looked false to Plato, adduces Quintilianus' dictum about Aelius Stilpo and other people of the same kind (1. 6. 37): *cui non post Varronem sit venia?*⁴⁵

These general remarks belong to a significantly later age than the one Plato belonged to. But the same scepticism presumably already underlies Aristophanes' parodying etymology (*Nub.* 297):

ταὐτ' ἄρα καὶ τῶνόματα ἀλλήλοιν, “βροντῆ” καὶ “πορδῆ”, ὁμοίω.

It is directed primarily, to be sure, against attempts to find philosophical wisdom in words, but using as the means for parody the absurdity of their linguistic aspect. Many of Plato's etymologies seem to betray a similar approach.

These passages, as well as Plato's remarks, do not signal the appearance of more sound criteria of etymological analysis. Rather they reflect a common-sense attitude against etymology. In our time as well, among the people who are not acquainted with comparative linguistics, we can find scepticism about etymologies that are sound from the point of view of scholars but distant from the actual form of the word and its current semantics. And on the contrary, non-linguists often bring together words in accordance with a surface similarity of phonetics and sense. It is reasonable to suppose that in ancient times too it was possible to use these common-sense criteria against too bold etymologies.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ A. S. Pease (ed.), *M. Tulli Ciceronis De natura deorum libri III: Libri II et III* (Darmstadt 1968 = 1958) 1137, *ad loc.*: “of which you could not explain the derivation by means of one letter”. The commentators usually compare the passage with the famous dictum of Voltaire: “L'étymologie est une science où les voyelles ne font rien et les consonnes font peu de chose”. It is, however, significant that Voltaire himself possessed not more scientifically sound criteria of etymologisation than the classical authors I cite had.

⁴⁵ Grote (above n. 8) 528 n. a.

⁴⁶ Grote (p. 519 f.) adduces Schleiermacher and Stallbaum as the notable representatives of the opinion that Plato treats etymology ironically. But Grote also cites Stallbaum, who referred to J. J. Garnier (1729–1835?) and W. G. Tennemann (1761–1814) as first, who suspected Plato's irony. It means that some scholars were perceptive to Plato's irony about etymology before the appearance of the modern scientific approach in linguistics.

Socrates' method of etymology in the *Cratylus*

The etymological part of the *Cratylus*, as I understand it, has not one single, but various purposes. Socrates' discussion is directed against the extremes of both conventionalism and naturalism, which results in admitting that naturalism is desirable and conventionalism is unavoidable. The etymological section complements this theoretical inference with a similar conclusion about the analysis of the current language: on the whole etymology confirms that the words are descriptions of the things, but there is a considerable doubtful residuum in etymology, which prevents the too insistent search of etymology in every case.

But above these general purposes there are clear indications of Plato's interest in etymology as such, both in the process of explaining single words and in investigating the principles of etymology as a discipline. Probably, this interest of a purely philological kind together with suspicion of its philosophical pretensions made Plato so specifically (but as we have seen not exceptionally) sharp-eyed about the exegetical defects of the etymological art. The keenness of Plato can be seen from his attempts to reflect on the methodological premises of etymology, to refine the method, and to find the explicit grounds for restoring the initial form of the word. As I tried to prove, the final verdict of Plato is that etymology, refined and supplied as it by clearer methodical rules, still falls short of the standard of reliability. It does not mean that etymologising cannot in principle attain the beliefs of name-givers. There are clear examples of indisputable etymologies. Rather Plato sees no possibility of stating infallibly in which of the difficult cases the results of etymologising are reliable and in which they are not reliable. The value of the etymological section is thus of a *bona fide* attempt with a negative result, a sort of *a fortiori* refutation: the etymological method, even improved in comparison with its usual level, can neither become a reliable tool of research into ancient beliefs, nor a reliable method of investigation of the truth about things themselves.

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В первой части платоновского “Кратила” Сократ занят опровержением языкового конвенционализма, который защищает Гермоген, и доказывает, что слово не есть произвольное обозначение, но “орудие”, предназначенное для отделения одной вещи от другой, и потому должно изготавливаться из материала, соответствующего обозначаемому предмету. Под этим соответстви-

ем или “правильностью имен” подразумевается способность слова быть точным описанием свойств предмета, если оно надлежащим образом этимологизировано. В срединной части диалога Сократ, демонстрируя, в чем состоит “правильность имен”, этимологизирует сперва имена богов, затем обозначения физических понятий и, наконец, понятий, относящихся к этической и эпистемологической сфере; многие из этимологий подразумевают, что создатели языка придерживались гераклитовского учения о всеобщем потоке и движении. Наконец, в беседе с Кратилом Сократ опровергает положения радикального натурализма, который, казалось, одержал победу в предшествующей части, и доказывает, что точное этимологическое соответствие слова обозначаемой вещи не только недостижимо, но и необязательно, а также что использование этимологии как способа постижения философской мудрости о вещах, которую запечатлели в именах их мудрые создатели, невозможно ввиду противоречий, обнаруживаемых в философских принципах их воззрений – одни из имен, будучи этимологизированными, свидетельствуют, что положительным состоянием является покой, другие же, напротив, движение.

Поскольку заключительная часть дискуссии показывает, что Платон не признает за этимологией способности найти истину о вещах, возникает вопрос, почему этимологизации отводится столь значительное место в диалоге. Признавая, что Платон не переходит на позиции конвенционализма в конце диалога, но лишь склоняется к более умеренной форме натурализма, автор статьи полемизирует, тем не менее, с исследователями (Дж. Грот, в последнее время Д. Седли), полагавшими, что сократовские этимологии безусловно достоверны в глазах Платона в экзегетическом плане – как восстановление первоначальной формы слов и воззрений создателей языка, отразившихся в словах.

В противовес этой точке зрения автор пытается показать, что Платон рассматривает искусство этимолога как не соответствующее критериям, предъявляемым к τέχνη. Упоминание о мудрости Евтифрона, влиянием которой Сократ объясняет свое этимологическое вдохновение, показывает, что подобному искусству нельзя обучиться, а намерение Сократа очистить себя от этой мудрости на следующий день подразумевает, что этимологией не следует заниматься систематически. Как показывает развитие этого мотива в диалоге, сомнения относятся именно к экзегетическому аспекту этимологии. Экскурс об исторических изменениях слов и о необходимости для этимолога их учитывать, не только показывает проницательность Платона как историка языка, но и наиболее близок по своим общим принципам к современному научному подходу. Парадоксальным образом именно эти соображения сопряжены у Платона с сомнением в надежности этимологического метода: очевидно, он не верит в возможность проследить историю изменения первоначальной формы слов, что подрывает достоверность этимологизации в проблематичных случаях. Не случайно этимологии, характеризуемые прилагательным κοινός, предполагают как

Socrates' method of etymology in the *Cratylus*

радикальность реконструкции, так и спекулятивность реконструируемых значений и оказываются в особой степени рискованными с точки зрения достоверности.

Автор приходит к выводу, что, не обладая надежными научными критериями, Платон применяет к этимологии обыденные критерии достоверности, как это нередко случалось и в древности, и в Новое время. Не отвергая этимологию в целом, Платон стремится поставить под сомнение надежность ее методов за пределами более или менее очевидных случаев и подготавливает опровержение философских претензий этимологов в заключительной части.