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**ERISTIC, ANTILOGY, AND THE EQUAL DISPOSITION OF MEN AND
WOMEN (PLATO, *RESP.* 5, 453B-454C) ***

INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* seeks to uncover the workings of apparent deductive reasoning, and is thereby largely devoted to the caricature of dialectic that the ancients called *eristic* (ἐριστική), the art of quarrelling. Unlike antilogy (ἀντιλογία), which refers to a type of argumentation where two arguments are pitted against each other in a contradictory manner, eristic takes on in Aristotle an exclusively pejorative meaning, as is made clear, for example, by this passage from *Soph. El.*: ‘For just as unfairness in a contest is a definite type of fault, and is a kind of foul fighting, so the art of contentious reasoning is foul fighting in disputation.’¹

If we are to believe Kerferd's influential work, *The Sophistic Movement*, the situation is hardly different in the works of Aristotle's teacher. Going against a long tradition tending to treat eristic and antilogic as more or less equivalent, Kerferd maintained that even though

* Earlier drafts of this paper were read at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, and the University of Copenhagen. I wish to thank the audience of each of these events for their feedback and the anonymous referee for *CQ* for helpful comments. My utmost gratitude goes to Rachel Barney who read the penultimate draft of this paper, and to David Sedley who discussed its main claims with me and read its final version with his usual generosity and sagacity.

1 *Soph. El.* 171b22-24: ὡσπερ γὰρ ἡ ἐν ἀγῶνι ἀδικία εἶδος τι ἔχει καὶ ἔστιν ἀδικομαχία τις, οὕτως ἐν ἀντιλογίᾳ ἀδικομαχία ἡ ἐριστική ἐστιν (trans. Pickard-Cambridge, rev. Barnes).

Plato uses these two terms in order to refer to the same procedure or to the same people, they never have the same meaning, for they are not distinguished from dialectic in the same way.² Eristic, Kerferd claims, is condemned by Plato, but not antilogic, which he may consider a possible method of argumentation, or even a possible step on the road to dialectic. *Eristic* is therefore a term that Plato, like Aristotle after him, uses to describe a perversion of dialectic, not a method of argumentation, while *antilogic* could refer to a specific form of argumentation,³ the ancestor of what was later known as the *disputatio in utramque partem*.

Can this important distinction identified by Kerferd in Plato's treatment of eristic and antilogy stand up to an examination of the few passages from the Platonic dialogues where eristic and antilogy are mentioned together? While Plato uses the vocabulary of *contradiction* (ἀντιλέγειν, ἀντιλογία, ἐναντία λέγειν, ἐναντίωσις) relatively frequently, his use of the vocabulary of eristic is quite rare.⁴ So there are merely three passages where these two terms (or terms related to them) are used in conjunction: 1) the *Euthydemus* as a whole – although this dialogue only mentions eristic once, when Socrates notes that the two brothers, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, have recently been trained in the art of quarreling: *Euthd.* 272b10; 2) the fifth definition of the sophist proposed by the Visitor in the *Sophist* (225a-226a), which connects eristic to antilogy, understood as the art of private adversarial disputation, by making the former a species of the latter; 3) lastly, a short passage in the fifth

2 G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, 1981), 62.

3 Kerferd (n. 2), 65: 'in itself it (antilogy) is for Plato simply a technique, neither good nor bad.'

4 The passages where the word ἐριστικός occurs are: *Euthyd.* 272b10, *Lys.* 211b8, *Men.* 75c9, 80e2, 81d6, *Phlb.* 17a4, *Resp.* 454a5 (ἐρίζειν) a8 (ἐριδι) 454b5, 499a7 (499a8: ἔριτιν), *Soph.* 225c9, e1 (ἐρίδων), d1, 226a2, 231e2.

book of the *Republic* (453b-454c) where eristic and antilogy occur in a somewhat surprising context. It is this last passage that I have chosen to examine in detail in this paper.

There are two reasons for this choice. First, in comparison with the two other passages mentioned above, the *Republic* passage has been insufficiently studied and its importance undervalued.⁵ Second, the analysis of this passage – such at least is one of my main claims – not only sheds light on how Plato conceives the relationship between eristic and antilogy, and their difference from dialectic, but helps understand why the contrast between these

⁵ Kerferd (n. 2), ch. 6, does not say much about this passage, and neither does the otherwise useful paper by A. Nehamas, ‘Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato’s Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry,’ *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 7, 1, 3-16. In his very detailed commentary of Book 5 (*Plato. Republic 5*, Introduction, translation and commentary by S. H. [Warminster, 1993], 146-55), S. Halliwell contents himself with noting that ‘the contrast between Socratic dialectic, and the contentious style [...] of those who aim merely to win the argument, is a recurrent one,’ and that ‘the function of the contrast here [...] is a Socratic *self*-reminder to avoid a shallow style of disputation’ (148). The lack of scholarly interest in this *Republic* passage on eristic and antilogy stands in sharp contrast with the exegetical scrutiny devoted to a later passage from Book 7 (537d-539d) where Socrates offers a criticism of the “current” practice of refutation by showing its negative effects on the youth. On this last passage, see the two recent studies by L.-A. Dorion, ‘La critique de l’*elenchos* socratique dans la *République* (VII 537 d-539 a),’ in J.-B. Gourinat et J. Lemaire (eds.), *Logique et dialectique dans l’Antiquité* (Paris, 2016) 43-66 (who mentions and discusses the different interpretations available), and C. Shields, ‘The Young Dogs of Eristic: Dialectic and Eristic in the Early Academy,’ in S. Weisser and N. Thaler (eds.), *Strategies of Polemics in Greek and Roman Philosophy* (Leiden-Boston, 2016) 31-54.

argumentative modes is a crucial issue in the broader context of the long central digression launched by Book 5 of the *Republic*.

After locating *Resp.* 5, 453b-454c in the wider context of the ‘triple wave’ (τρικυμιά) literary motif, Section 1 concentrates on the terminological and argumentative peculiarities of the passage, and raises the central question addressed in this paper: why does Socrates refer to antilogy and eristic in the very context of the first wave concerned with the issue of the equal disposition of men and women? Section 2 considers a possible answer to this question by examining the evidence available on the relation between the *Republic* and Protagoras, and the possible Protagorean background of *Resp.* 5, 453b-454c. This examination turns out to be inconclusive. Section 3 then attempts to restore the original polemical context of the passage by considering some textual evidence on the Socratic discussion of the virtue of men and women.

1. ANALYSIS OF *REPUBLIC* 5. 453B-454C

The first wave: the equal aptitude of men and women to guard the city

Our *Republic* passage occurs at the beginning of the long central digression that makes up Books 5 to 7 of the *Republic*. These books form a sequence at the very heart of the dialogue, unified by a philosophical question that links them to each other, and to the overall argument of the *Republic*. In the beginning of Book 5, at 449a-451b, Socrates is about to launch the argument that will take up most of Books 8 and 9. But his interlocutors interrupt him, for they intend to force him to explain how the common possession of women and children, which he alluded to a few pages earlier (in Book 4, 423e-424a), would be set up in practice.

“You’re lucky”, I said, “that it isn’t you that has to try to explain it, because there’s a lot that’s hard to believe (πολλὰς γὰρ ἀπιστίας ἔχει), even more than with what we were talking about before. Not only might one not believe my proposals possible (ὡς δυνατά); even if they were entirely possible, there’ll still be doubts as to whether they’re for the best (καὶ εἰ ὅτι μάλιστα γένοιτο, ὡς ἄριστ’ ἂν εἴη ταῦτα). That’s why one hesitates to get involved with it all, in case it looks like mere wishful thinking (εὐχὴ), my dear friends.” (*Resp.* 5, 450c6-d2, trans. Rowe)⁶

One finds in this passage the two questions that unify the whole of the argument to come: are Socrates’ proposals *desirable*? are they *practicable*? These questions indeed give rise to the famous literary motif that unifies in turn the whole of Book 5 and a large part of Book 6: the triple wave (τρικυμία).⁷ Each of the three waves represents the violent reaction of popular opinion that is prompted by the three radical political changes, which, Socrates argues, are conditions of possibility of *Kallipolis*. Because these three conditions are so contrary to popular opinion, each of them needs to be proved both desirable (which is considered easy by Socrates) and practicable (which he recognizes as fairly complicated). The distinct use Socrates makes of this metaphor of the triple wave therefore helps him emphasise that he and his interlocutors are not only lost at sea with the arguments, but that they need to swim against the tide⁸

6 All translations of the *Republic* are borrowed from C. Rowe: Plato, *The Republic*, introduction, translation and notes (London, 2012), with occasional slight modifications.

7 On which see D. Sedley, ‘Plato’s tsunami,’ *Hyperboreus*, 11, 2, 2005, 205-14, who provides fascinating ancient evidence on the triple wave motif.

8 On Socrates’ being lost at sea with the argument, note the beginning of the passage considered in this paper, which prepares the introduction of the triple wave motif: “I saw

The passage examined in this paper focuses on the first of Socrates' three proposals: the equal education of men and women because of their equal aptitude to be guards of the city. Just as for the other two proposals, it is the question of practicability that is problematic and requires a more detailed examination, as Plato makes clear by having Socrates devote four Stephanus pages (452e-456c) to whether his first measure is *possible*, but only a single page to whether it is *desirable* (456c-457c).⁹ This uneven treatment is explained at bottom by the resistance of opinion that Socrates brings up on several occasions by mentioning the ridicule that his proposals will surely arouse. The crashing force of each wave of the τρικυμία is designed to illustrate the strength of δόξα, against which Socrates opposes his arguments. The first condition for achieving the ideal city – the equal education of men and women – indeed runs the risk of looking ridiculous because the proposed measures are so contrary to custom and current practice. This is exactly the reaction Socrates describes when he announces that henceforth he will be exploring the ‘female drama’ (451c2: τὸ γυναικεῖον [δρᾶμα]), after having explored the male drama in Book 3. This reference to the ‘female drama’ as well as the repeated mentions at 452a-e of the adjective γελοῖον, and the allusion

these difficulties coming some time ago, Glaucon,” I said, “and lots of others just as terrible; that’s why I was so hesitant all along to involve myself in all of this, trying to legislate for the getting and bringing up of women and children.” - “Zeus!” he said. “It doesn’t look a simple subject – not simple at all.” - “No indeed,” I said. “But the truth is that it’s the same: you fall in, you have to swim, whether it’s a little diving-pool (εἰς κολυμβήθραν μικράν) or the middle of the biggest sea (ἅντε εἰς τὸ μέγιστον πέλαγος μέσον).” - “Yes, absolutely.” - “So should we start swimming, and try to save ourselves from the argument we’ve got ourselves into? We’ll have to hope for a dolphin to pick us up, or some other unlikely form of rescue.” - “It seems so.” (Resp. 5, 453c10-e1).

⁹ See the analytical summary of the argument appended to this paper.

to ‘the jibes the wags would make’ (452b7: τὰ τῶν χαριέντων σκώμματα) have often been interpreted as barely veiled allusions to Aristophanes’ *Assemblywomen*.¹⁰ I will refrain from reopening this debate.¹¹ What I consider to be more important here is that, in order to question the true viability of the first condition of the ideal city, Socrates insists that one should solely consider the force of arguments, while dismissing the evidence of the senses and, more generally, of opinion, which jokers use in order to jeer and mock.¹²

Nature and competence: the objection and Socrates’ response

Once Socrates states his first proposal, he examines its feasibility, reformulating the question thus at 453a: is female human nature capable of sharing *all* the tasks of male

10 See e.g. M. F. Burnyeat, ‘Utopia and Fantasy: The Practicability of Plato’ *Ideally Just City*,’ in J. Hopkins and A. Savide (eds.), *Psychoanalysis, Mind, and Art* (Oxford, 1992), 175-87; repr. in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato, 2. Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, (Oxford, 2000) 297-308, at 302-6.

11 A good overview of the 18th and 19th centuries scholarship on this question can be found in J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato*, edited with critical notes, commentary and appendices, with a new introduction by D. A. Rees, 2 vols, (Cambridge, 1963²), vol. 1, 345-55. For a more recent discussion, see the Appendix in Halliwell (n. 5).

12 Cf. 452d4-5 where Socrates mentions the physical exercises that male and female guards will undergo together: ‘I imagine that when they did start the practice, and found it better to strip for all such things than to cover up, its ridiculousness in their eyes melted away as their arguments proved it best (τὸ ἐν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς δὴ γελοῖον ἐξερρῦη ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις μηνυθέντος ἀρίστου).’

human nature, *none* of these tasks, or at least *some* of them, including the art of war that the guards are trained to master?

Answering this question brings about an objection, which, in turn, leads Socrates to mention eristic and antilogy. Socrates and his interlocutors have indeed so far supported the validity of the principle of specialization, stipulating that it is in keeping with nature that each individual perform a task in accordance with his nature.¹³ Yet, according to Socrates, the nature of women differs from the nature of men. It is therefore contrary to nature to assign them the same tasks. Glaucon is unable to respond to this objection, and asks Socrates, who had formulated it, to defend the ‘argument on our side’ (453c8: τὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν λόγον).

Socrates’ answer consists in demonstrating that, despite the obvious biological characteristics differentiating men and women,¹⁴ these differences are not pertinent to the administration of the city and in no way affect the ability of women to be guards. More precisely still, Socrates develops an argument in two distinct steps.¹⁵ The first (453e-455a) is broad in scope and comes down to demonstrating the necessity of distinguishing between ‘identical nature and different nature, in the absolute sense’ (454c8: πάντως τὴν αὐτὴν καὶ τὴν ἑτέραν φύσιν) and ‘that form of differentiation and assimilation that concerns the performance of the tasks in question’ (454c9-d1: ἐκεῖνο τὸ εἶδος τῆς ἀλλοιώσεώς τε καὶ

13 Cf. 453b3-5: ‘Didn’t you yourselves agree, when you started founding this city of yours, that every single individual must fulfil the single function that belongs to them by nature?’ (αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς κατοικίσεως, ἦν ψικίζετε πόλιν ὡμολογεῖτε δεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἕκαστον ἓνα ἐν τὸ αὐτοῦ πράττειν).

14 See 454d10-e1: ‘they turn out to differ just in the respect that the female gives birth while the male mounts the female (τὸ μὲν θῆλυ τίκτειν, τὸ δὲ ἄρρεν ὀχεύειν).’

15 See the analytical summary appended to this paper.

ὁμοιώσεως [...] τὸ πρὸς αὐτὰ τεῖνον τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα). The second step of the argument (455a-456c) consists in asking if there are tasks relative to the administration of the city and peculiar to women. Socrates begins by recalling what it means to be naturally well-suited for something and shows that no task relative to the administration of the city falls to a woman simply because she is a woman, but only because she is capable of performing it.¹⁶

Such is the content of Socrates' argument in response to the objection he says was made to him. Let us now consider the very form and precise wording of this objection.

Eristic, Antilogic, Dialectic

At 453e, Socrates reformulates the objection his first measure was confronted with, and then offers the following comment.

“Come on, then,” I said, “and let’s see if we can somehow find a way out. Here goes. We agree that different natures must be assigned different pursuits, and that a man’s nature and a woman’s are different; now we’re saying that these two different natures must share the same pursuits. That’s what we’re accused of?”

16 As S. Halliwell (n. 5), at 146, rightly notes, ‘it is around this passage [i.e. 454a-456c] that the keenest modern debate about Plato’s credentials as a “feminist” has revolved.’ I shall not consider this debate, on which much ink has already been spilt, but see the important contributions of e.g. J. Annas, ‘Plato’s *Republic* and Feminism,’ *Philosophy*, 51, 197, 1976, 307-21, G. Vlastos, ‘Was Plato a Feminist?’, repr. in Vlastos, *Studies in Greek Philosophy II*, ed. D. W. Graham (Princeton, 1995), 133-43, and C. C. W. Taylor, ‘The Role of Women in Plato’s *Republic*,’ in R. Kamtekar (ed.), *Virtue and Happiness: Essays in Honour of Julia Annas* (Oxford, 2012), 75-86.

“Exactly that.”

“What a noble power it is, Glaucon,” I said, “that antilogic has!”

“How so?”

“Because a lot of people seem to me to fall into it unintentionally, and think they’re having a discussion when they’re really only point-scoring. It’s because they lack the ability to analyse what’s being said by distinguishing different kinds of thing; they set their sights on contradicting what’s been said, in a purely verbal way, thus engaging in competition with one another rather than in dialectic.”

“Yes, that certainly does happen to many people,’ he said, ‘but surely your description doesn’t apply to us, and what we’re doing now?’”

“Yes, it certainly does,” I said, ‘the first part, at any rate – we really are in danger of engaging in antilogic, unintentionally.’”

“How?”

“We’re overly keen to score a point by insisting on the idea that the same nature¹⁷ should *not* be assigned to the same pursuits, on a purely verbal basis, without having paused even for a moment to think about what kind of difference and sameness in nature we had in mind when we proposed to assign different pursuits to a nature that was different, and the same ones to one that was the same – difference and sameness with reference to what?” (*Resp.* 5, 453e2-454b9)

17 The text of 454b4 has often been emended by editors (e.g. Burnet reads τὸ <μῆ> τῆν αὐτῆν φύσιν...). See the helpful discussion in S. R. Slings, *Critical Notes on Plato’s Politeia* (Leiden-Boston, 2005), 81-2, who convincingly argues in favour of the reading of the mss.

The sudden appearance of technical terminology is a distinctive feature of this passage. For one cannot fail to notice the massive presence of the vocabulary of antilogy,¹⁸ nor the mentions of eristic,¹⁹ and even less so the presence of certain technical terms specific to dialectic which occur for the first time in the *Republic*.²⁰ Note also, in the lines preceding this passage, the frequent mentions of controversy (ἀμφισβήτησις)²¹ whose relationship with antilogy is illuminated by a passage from the *Sophist* (225a-226a) where ἀμφισβήτησις is defined as a species of the art of combat (μαχητική) that uses arguments, as opposed to one that uses the body (called βιαστική). The genus of ἀμφισβητική is in turn split in two: on the one hand, we have δικανική, the macrological art of public controversy, and on the other, ἀντιλογική, or antilogic, the art of private controversy through questions and answers.

The terminological peculiarity of the passage echoes its distinct argumentative mode. Instead of dealing directly with the difficulty in question, Socrates proceeds by way of questions and answers, by putting himself in the shoes of his anonymous detractors. He thus asks Glaucon: “So,” I said, “do you want us to have the dispute among ourselves, on behalf of the other side (βούλει οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἡμεῖς πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄλλων ἀμφισβητήσωμεν), so that their claims won't be left undefended against our assault? (ἵνα μὴ

18 See 453c3-4: τάναντία ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς λέγετε, 454a1-2: ἡ δύναμις τῆς ἀντιλογικῆς τέχνης, 454a7-8: τοῦ λεχθέντος τὴν ἐναντίωσιν, 454b2: ἀντιλογίας. See also 454e6: τὸν τὰ ἐναντία λέγοντα, 455a9: τοῦ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀντιλέγοντος.

19 See 454a5: ἐρίζειν, 454a8: ἔριδι, 454b5: ἐριστικῶς.

20 See 454a5: διαλέγεσθαι, 454a6: τὸ [...] δύνασθαι κατ' εἶδη διαιρούμενοι, 454a8: διαλέκτω, 454b7: εἶδος τὸ τῆς ἐτέρας τε καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως, 454b8: ὠριζόμεθα.

21 See 452e5: ἀμφισβήτησιν, e6: ἀμφισβητήσαι, 453a8: ἀμφισβητήσωμεν, b3: ἀμφισβητεῖν.

ἔρημα τὰ τοῦ ἑτέρου λόγου πολιορκῆται;)” (453a7-9). This makes clear that it is not only the terms Socrates uses,²² but also the means of examination itself, which refer to a particular discursive practice that would be difficult, in view of this textual evidence, not to identify with antilogy, whose particular power Socrates ironically, but quite naturally, salutes at 454a1-2.

As noted in the beginning of this paper, this passage from *Republic 5* is, without a doubt, one of the most detailed Platonic passages on the relationship between antilogy and eristic. This is not to deny that this passage also recalls elements present in other dialogues, such as, for example, the opposition between dialogue and disputation (*Men.* 75c-e, *Phil.* 17a), or the idea that dialectic is interested in real distinctions, and eristic in words only. Yet, one of the specific interests of this passage, for present purposes, is that it seems to treat antilogy and eristic in exactly the same disparaging way. For it turns out that the power specific to the art of antilogy is merely to give those who devote themselves to it the *appearance* of discussing something, although they are in reality only quarrelling. According to Socrates, the reason why this situation occurs frequently is that most people are unable to meet the standards of real discussion: few are indeed able to acquire the dialectician’s skills, which, notably, consist in dividing according to the true nature of things (454a6: τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι κατ’ εἶδη διαιρούμενοι) and many are those who seek contradiction merely on the verbal level (a7-8: κατ’ αὐτὸ τὸ ὄνομα διώκειν τοῦ λεχθέντος τὴν ἐναντίωσιν). According to Socrates, who voices here the views of his opponent, trying and making his interlocutor contradict himself by focusing on words only is exactly what his detractor is doing. For he contents himself with objecting that it had been accepted that the *same* nature must have the *same* task, without ever seeking to distinguish which similarities and differences are pertinent with respect to the question being examined.

²² Note the bellicose vocabulary at 453a9: πολιορκῆται.

At the end of the passage, Socrates recognizes that by being his opponent's spokesperson, he has been indulging in antilogy (454b2: ἀντιλογία). This as well as the overtly critical tone of the passage makes it very hard to believe that antilogy is here considered a specific method of argumentation that dialectic could resort to if needed: in this passage, antilogy and eristic are treated as inextricably linked and both condemned with the same vigour.²³ In that respect, Kerferd's argument according to which Plato considers antilogy and eristic very differently – the former as a kind of value-neutral technique and the latter as irremediably corrupt – does not account for the letter of this *Republic* 5 passage.

It is now high time to raise the most difficult question: why does Socrates proceed in this manner? Why such a technical digression on everything that pits antilogy and eristic against dialectic, at this exact moment of the dialogue, where the question of the equal aptitude of men and women to be guards of the city is addressed? This question appears all the more puzzling in that it is fairly obvious that Socrates could have moved faster and more straightforwardly. First, the objection raised by the anonymous objector is not a very strong one, for nothing in the preceding pages of the *Republic* excludes the possibility that women be guards. Quite the contrary: since the construction of the ideal city has been launched, the natural differences that were considered relevant to the present enquiry have been merely those that distinguish each of the three functional groups from the two others. It is therefore unlikely that Socrates, despite what his opponent asserts at 453c, has literally contradicted

23 This does not mean, however, that antilogy and eristic should be understood as conceptually identical. As the *Sophist* (225b-d) clearly shows, antilogy is conceptually distinct from eristic, and broader in scope, since it also includes the controversies concerned with contractual matters. Yet I think this *Republic* 5 passage is strong evidence that despite their difference Plato considers they often coincide in practice. I am grateful to Rachel Barney for pressing me on this and for sharing her own thoughts on the matter.

himself. Second, it is worth noting that the analogy with watch dogs, which Socrates returns to at 451d, would by itself constitute a sufficient indication that women could be guards, for the fact that female dogs give birth to puppies does not prevent them from guarding the flock as well as their fellow male dogs. Yet, Socrates does not summon this analogy a second time. Against all expectations, he prefers to give voice to an opponent, whom he will show to be seeking controversy, and not the truth. Why such a surprising move?

2. PROTAGORAS AND THE *REPUBLIC*

In all likelihood, Plato's decision to bring up the opposition between dialectic, on the one hand, and antilogy and eristic, on the other, while addressing the question of the different natures of men and women, indicates a polemical context. Several targets have been proposed in the scholarly literature to account for Socrates' abrupt introduction of eristic and antilogy in this passage. James Adam, for instance, writes: 'Here Plato probably has in view some of the "Sophists" [...] as well as the Megarian school, whose well-known puzzles [...] are excellent examples of verbal fallacies.'²⁴ Adam rightly emphasises the reference Socrates makes to eristic and antilogy (which he understands in a very broad sense, covering the argumentative practice of the Megarian Socratic school as well as that of the Sophists), but unfortunately says nothing of the particular context where this reference is made. In this section, I wish to examine the evidence available on another, allegedly more promising target, namely Protagoras. For the sophist of Abdera is not only credited with the discovery of antilogical (and perhaps even eristic) arguments: he is also sometimes thought to have shown that there are always two sides to every question by using contrasting customs from different cultures. In his lost work, the *Antilogies*, Protagoras may then have used the kind of

²⁴ Adam (n. 11), 285.

material that is found, for example, in the anonymous *Dissoi Logoi* where notably the varying roles of men and women in different cities or nations illustrate the relativity of cultural practices.²⁵ Is the appeal to a Protagorean background sufficient to explain why Socrates, when he addresses the issue of the equal disposition of men and women, refers to antilogy and eristic?

Consider first Diogenes Laertius' testimony on Protagoras and antilogical argument.

'He was the first person to say that, concerning every subject, there are two arguments opposed to one another, and this is also the way he formulated questions, which he was the first person to do in this way.' (DL 9.51 = DK 80 B6a = D26 Laks-Most : καὶ πρῶτος ἔφη δύο λόγους εἶναι περὶ παντὸς πράγματος ἀντικειμένους ἀλλήλοις· οἷς καὶ συνηρώτα, πρῶτος τοῦτο πράξας)

Several lines after this passage, in the catalogue of Protagoras' works, Diogenes Laertius also mentions the *Antilogika*, in two books. Interestingly, even though the exact content and structure of this work remains mysterious,²⁶ the other two passages in Diogenes Laertius'

²⁵ Cf *Dissoi Logoi*, 2, 2-18. See T. M. Robinson, *Contrasting arguments. An edition of the Dissoi Logoi* (Salem, 1984²).

²⁶ Among the several hypotheses available in the vast scholarship on Protagoras, perhaps the most influential is Mario Untersteiner's, according to which the items in Protagoras' list of works mentioned by DL 9.55 constitute the parts of these *Opposing arguments* (*Antilogies*), which it is possible to reconstruct in outline thanks to Plato's testimony in the *Sophist* (232b-e). See M. Untersteiner, *Les sophistes*, trad. française par A. Tordesillas (Paris, 1999²), vol. I, 30-35.

Lives that mention Protagoras' *Antilogika* refer to yet another text, none other than Plato's *Republic*, whose borrowing from Protagoras is said to be quite considerable:

‘[...] the *Republic*, which, Aristoxenus says, was almost entirely written in Protagoras' *Opposing Arguments...*’ (DL 3.38 = R1a Laks-Most: [...] ἦν Πολιτείαν Ἀριστόξενός φησι [Wehrli II, fg. 67] πᾶσαν σχεδὸν ἐν τοῖς Πρωταγόρου γεγράφθαι Ἀντιλογικοῖς.)

[...] which [scil. the *Republic*], Favorinus says in the second book of his *Miscellaneous History*, is found almost as a whole in Protagoras, in his *Opposing Arguments*. (DL 3.57 = R1b Laks-Most : [...] ἦν καὶ εὕρισκεσθαι σχεδὸν ὅλην παρὰ Πρωταγόρα ἐν τοῖς Ἀντιλογικοῖς φησι Φαβωρίνος ἐν Παντοδαπῆς ἱστορίας δευτέρῳ.)

The second passage shows that Diogenes Laertius or his source found this information in Favorinus. It is likely that Favorinus himself found it in Aristoxenus' *Life of Plato*. Caution is called for, however, in gauging the degree of historical accuracy in such an accusation, which we know to have been common among ancient authors.²⁷ It is clear that Aristoxenus, if he is indeed the source of this anecdote, intended to diminish Plato's merits, and that one must therefore take this information with a grain of salt. However, does the fact that Favorinus – whom one knows not to have been driven by a simplistic form of anti-Platonism – repeats this anecdote not indicate that there is more to it than mere calumny?

The primary interest of this anecdote is to establish a direct link between the *Republic* and the renowned sophist of Abdera. Socrates makes an explicit mention of Protagoras only

²⁷ For a good survey of the accusations of plagiarism against Plato in Antiquity, see L. Brisson, ‘Les accusations de plagiat lancées contre Platon,’ in M. Dixsaut (ed.), *Contre Platon*, Tome I: *Le platonisme dévoilé* (Paris, 2007²), 339-56.

once in the dialogue, alongside Prodicus,²⁸ but it is relatively well-documented that Protagoras played an important role in the early reflections on *politeia* which form the background of Plato's own endeavour on the subject.²⁹ Indeed, Diogenes Laertius reports Heraclides of Pontus' account in his treatise *On Laws*,³⁰ according to which the laws of the Panhellenic colony of Thourioi founded c. 433 on the Tarentine Gulf, were established by Protagoras.³¹ In addition, the list of Protagoras' works in Diogenes Laertius includes a *Περὶ πολιτείας* (9.55), of which we unfortunately know nothing.

Another interest of the anecdote Diogenes found in Favorinus lies in the fact that it is not the *Περὶ πολιτείας* that Aristoxenus mentions but Protagoras' *Antilogies*.³² How is one to understand this curious reference? It has been argued that Aristoxenus mentions Protagoras' *Antilogies* because he considers Protagoras to be the source of the communist feminist utopia one finds in Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen* and which Plato implicitly refers to in

28 *Resp.* 10, 600c6. There is an interesting scholium to this passage which reads: '[...] he [scil. Protagoras] was the first person to invent eristic discourses' (Schol. ad *Resp.* 600c1 Greene = D16 Laks-Most: καὶ πρῶτος λόγους ἐριστικοὺς εὔρεν).

29 See S. Menn, 'On Plato's Πολιτεία,' in J.J. Cleary and G.M. Gurtler (eds), *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, XXI (Leiden-Boston, 2005), 1-55, at 7-14.

30 DL 9.50 = Heraclides Ponticus, fr. 150 Wehrli.

31 For arguments in favour of the historical authenticity of this testimony, see J. Muir, 'Protagoras and Education at Thourioi,' *JHS* *Greece & Rome*, 29, 1, 1982, 17-24.

32 According to Menn (n. 29), 14, this suggests that the *Περὶ πολιτείας* was part of the *Antilogies* and included arguments *pro et contra* each constitution. See also Untersteiner (n. 26), 32.

Book 5 of the *Republic*.³³ So when Aristoxenus claims that ‘nearly all’ of the *Republic* could already be found in the *Antilogies*, he is thinking of one of the most distinctive features of the dialogue, the community of wives and children.

‘The *Antilogica* was probably a series of “twin arguments” (*dissoi logoi*), as such exercises were called, demonstrating that there are two sides to every question. Many later examples of this sort of thing have come down to us. Often they make use of the contrasting customs of various nations, especially their sexual customs, to illustrate the relativity of all beliefs and values. Did Protagoras use such material also? In one of these exercises, did he introduce the example of barbarian sexual communism to suggest that some barbarians had found a better way than Greeks to achieve concord? Though Protagoras could probably have produced arguments for any form of constitution, he is portrayed by Plato as a friend of democracy, and therefore this egalitarian example may have appealed to him. If so, then Protagoras himself could have been the source of Herodotus' unexpected belief that certain barbarians on the northern steppes were advanced political philosophers. And perhaps this is why Aristoxenus could claim that Plato had plagiarized the best-known idea in his *Republic*, communism in goods and women, from Protagoras' *Antilogica*.’³⁴

Is it possible to claim, even as cautiously as Dawson does in this passage, that Aristoxenus is thinking of the common ownership of goods, women, and children described in Book 5 of the *Republic* when he says that the *Republic* is ‘almost entirely’ (DL 3.38: *πᾶσαν σχεδόν*,

33 See Menn (n. 29), 14, n. 20.

34 D. Dawson, *Cities of the Gods. Communist utopias in Greek thought* (Oxford-New York, 1992), 20-21. See also (cited by Dawson) H. D. Rankin, *Sophists, Socratics and Cynics* (London, 1983) 86, 173-4 and 222.

3.57: σχεδὸν ὅλην) in the *Antilogies*?³⁵ This has indeed the advantage of having Protagoras belong to the line of utopian thinkers that interest Dawson. Yet, the argument that makes Protagoras a utopian thinker ahead of his time is somewhat problematic, for had Protagoras been such a thinker, it is unlikely that Aristotle would have failed to mention him at the beginning of Book 2 of his *Politics*.³⁶

Alternative accounts of Aristoxenus' remark are available, but it would be out of place to review them all in this paper, all the more so because Italo Lana, in his 1950 monograph on Protagoras, had already examined the most salient of them, before proposing his own.³⁷ There is yet another account that is considered neither by Lana nor by the authors he cites: Aristoxenus may have simply indicated, with an obvious disparagement of Plato's philosophical creativity, that the *Republic* as a whole, like Protagoras' *Antilogies*, consists in several series of opposing arguments on justice.³⁸ This view has notably the merit of doing a slightly better job in explaining Aristoxenus' curious quantitative remark that the *Republic* is 'almost entirely' in the *Antilogies*.

35 See however Dawson (n. 34), 54, n. 15: 'the frequency with which Roman writers mention it suggests that in antiquity, as today, communism was to the average reader the best-known feature of Plato's *Republic*; and this does much to explain the *schodon holen*.'

36 As well noted by Menn (n. 29), 14, n. 20.

37 I. Lana, *Protagora* (Torino, 1950), 11-13, examines the hypotheses proposed by Mullach, H. Gomperz, Th. Gomperz, and Levi, and argues (p. 22), on his part, that the *Antilogies* included the refutation of the Thrasymachean doctrine of justice, which is also found in the first book of the *Republic*, hence Aristoxenus' accusation that Plato plagiarized Protagoras.

38 See Mi-Kyoung Lee, *Epistemology after Protagoras. Responses to Relativism in Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus* (Oxford, 2005), 26.

The *Republic*, or at least significant parts of it, could indeed be understood as using a broader antilogical approach, inasmuch as it has Socrates answer successively a series of argument against justice and the just life: first, Thrasymachus' arguments against justice conceived as a good that one must choose for oneself, and then the additional arguments of Glaucon and Adeimantus, when they act as devil's advocates in Book 2. Following the same path, consider how Adeimantus presents his own contribution to the challenge issued to Socrates by his half-brother.

“You’re talking nonsense,” he said. “Anyway, I’ve got some new points; hear me out. What I’m thinking is that we need to rehearse the arguments opposing (τοὺς ἐναντίους λόγους) the ones “our friend here” put – arguments praising justice and denigrating injustice; that is, if we’re to get clearer about what I think Glaucon wants to say.” (*Resp.* 2, 362e1-4)

According to Adeimantus himself, one should examine the ἐναντίοι λόγοι, the arguments that are contrary to Glaucon's because they praise justice and criticize injustice, while Glaucon's arguments do the opposite.³⁹ This examination will make clear that the traditional arguments in favour of justice (including reward) as well as the common opinions expressed on the subject are not sufficient to defend the choice of living a life of justice, and that, as such, the defenders of justice do not have better arguments than its denigrators. The structure of Glaucon and Adeimantus' examination could therefore be understood as corresponding broadly to an antilogy, where arguments in favour of an unjust and a just life are defended in succession.

39 See 358d3-4: ‘That’s why I’m going to talk forcefully in praise of the unjust life (διὸ κατατείνας ἐρῶ τὸν ἄδικον βίον ἐπαινῶν).’

Yet, while it might be claimed that the *Republic* approaches justice and the just life in books 1-2 by examining successively opposed arguments on the subject, some defending the life of justice, others criticising it, this approach is not sufficient to count against the very critical view of antilogy defended by Socrates at *Resp.* 453e-454b, which we have no reason to doubt was Plato's own. What's more, Socrates, as early as Book 1, explicitly turns his back on the antilogical approach. Before examining Thrasymachus' argument that the life of the unjust is superior to the life of the just, he points out that, rather than fighting Thrasymachus 'argument against argument' (348a8: λόγον παρὰ λόγον) and having to call on judges to decide the case, it is better to investigate the question 'by seeking agreement with each other' (348b3: ἀνομολογούμενοι πρὸς ἀλλήλους). It is hard not to understand this passage as contrasting constructive dialogue and philosophical inquiry with the sterile opposition of arguments characteristic of antilogy.

Another, perhaps simpler hypothesis to account for the possible relationship between the *Antilogies* and the *Republic* might finally be to suggest that Protagoras' *Antilogies* certainly included arguments in favour of and against justice and that Plato could not but take them into consideration in the *Republic*. Attractive as it may seem, this view is merely speculative. In addition, for the present purpose, it does not in the least help shed light on why Socrates mentions eristic, antilogy, and dialectic while addressing the issue of male and female virtue. Admittedly, Diogenes Laertius does not only mention the *Antilogies* but also an *Art of Eristic* in the (very likely incomplete) list in which he reports Protagoras' works.⁴⁰ But neither in Diogenes Laertius nor in anything that has come down to us by and on Protagoras does one find an allusion to the difference in nature between men and woman. On the contrary, it could even be argued, albeit speculatively, that Protagoras' Great Speech in the *Protagoras* refers to political virtue as belonging to women as well as men (*Prt.* 325a)

⁴⁰ On this work, see Untersteiner (n. 26), 31.

and that Protagoras thus stands on Socrates' side, despite their major disagreement on the nature of political virtue.

I therefore venture to think that one should seek elsewhere the polemical reasons that prompted Plato to mention antilogy and eristic in this precise context.

3. THE POLEMICAL CONTEXT: THE SOCRATIC DISCUSSION ON THE VIRTUE OF MEN AND WOMEN

The similarity between *Republic* 5, 453b-454c and other passages in the Platonic dialogues has already been noted. Among these parallel passages stands *Meno* 75d-e, where one finds a clear opposition between two modes of discussion, one typical of eristic, and the other of dialectic.

After several unsuccessful attempts to define moral excellence, Socrates tries and give Meno a model of definition and proposes the following definition of shape (σχῆμα): shape, he claims, is that which always accompanies colour. *Obscurum per obscurius*, Meno replies in substance, castigating Socrates' naiveté in using in his definition a term ('colour') that his interlocutor could very well be ignorant of. This is Socrates' reaction to Meno's rebuttal:

'[...] if my questioner was one of those clever and disputatious debaters (τῶν σοφῶν τις [...] καὶ ἐριστικῶν τε καὶ ἀγωνιστικῶν), I would say to him: "I have given my answer; if it is wrong, it is your job to refute it." (σὸν ἔργον λαμβάνειν λόγον καὶ ἐλέγχειν) Then, if they are friends as you and I are, and want to discuss with each other (ἀλλήλοις διαλέγεσθαι), they must answer in a manner more gentle and more proper to discussion (δεῖ δὴ πραότερόν πως καὶ διαλεκτικώτερον ἀποκρίνεσθαι). By this I mean that the answers must not only be true (τὸ διαλεκτικώτερον μὴ μόνον τἀληθῆ ἀποκρίνεσθαι), but in terms admittedly known to the

one questioned (ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἐκείνων ὧν ἂν προσομολογῆ εἰδέναι ὁ ἐρωτώμενος).' (*Men.* 75c5-d7, trans. Grube, slightly modified)

Just like in the *Republic* 5 passage examined in this paper, quarrelsome refutation is pitted against the art of discussion, that is dialectic. The two passages offer the same contrast between hostile debate and the desire to win the argument by all possible argumentative means, on the one hand, and a friendly climate and the commitment to truth, on the other hand.

The contexts of the two passages are also very similar. Socrates' methodological lesson to the young Thessalian arose from the difficulties posed by his first answer to the question what moral excellence is. In this first answer (*Men.* 71d-72a), a self-assured Meno repeats lessons he has learned from Gorgias, and argues that men and women, children and old men, free men and slaves have each a specific form of moral excellence. For a man, it is of course 'being able to manage public affairs and in so doing, to benefit his friends and harm his enemies' (*Men.* 71e3-4: ἰκανὸν εἶναι τὰ τῆς πόλεως πράττειν, καὶ πράττοντα τοὺς μὲν φίλους εὖ ποιεῖν, τοὺς δ' ἐχθροὺς κακῶς), while the moral excellence specific to a woman is to 'manage her home well, preserve its possessions, and be submissive to her husband' (*Men.* 71e6-7: τὴν οἰκίαν εὖ οἰκεῖν, σώζουσάν τε τὰ ἔνδον καὶ κατήκοον οὔσαν τοῦ ἀνδρός).

Although Meno attributes such a conception of virtue to Gorgias,⁴¹ it was doubtlessly a popular and widely shared idea, for it presupposes, first, the classic distinction between the "public" and typically masculine sphere of the *polis* and the "private" sphere of the *oikos*, the women's domain, and second, the traditional idea of women's unconditional, natural

41 *Men.* 71c-d.

obedience to men.⁴² Yet the fact that sophists such as Gorgias could accept, even encourage such a conception of men's ἀρετή is not surprising, as it justifies the importance of learning rhetoric for the political careers of wealthy young men, and therefore emphasizes the importance and usefulness of the sophists' teachings.⁴³

In a passage from his *Politics* 1.13, inspired by the beginning of *Meno*, Aristotle sheds light on the discussion between Socrates and Meno, showing that it is but one aspect of a much wider debate:

‘It is evident, then, that all those mentioned [*scil.* ruler, ruled, master, slave, husband, wife, child] have virtue of character, and that temperance, courage, and justice of a man are not the same as those of a woman, as Socrates supposed:^[1] the one courage is that of a ruler, the

42 For the traditional view of feminine virtue, see e.g. Pericles' mention of the γυναικεία ἀρετή in his Funeral Oration (Thuc. 2.45.2): ‘If I am to speak also of womanly virtues, referring to those of you who will henceforth be in widowhood, I will sum up all in a brief admonition: Great is your glory if you fall not below the standard which nature has set for your sex, and great also is hers of whom there is least talk among men whether in praise or in blame’ (trans. Smith). Virginia Woolf comments: ‘the chief glory of a woman is not to be talked of, said Pericles, himself a much-talked-of man’ (*A Room of One's Own* [1929] ed. by D. Bradshaw and S. N. Clarke [Oxford, 2015], 37). The two passages are quoted by N. Loraux, ‘Aspasie, l'étrangère, l'intellectuelle,’ *Clio. Histoire, femmes et société [en ligne]*, mis en ligne le 19 juin 2006, consulté le 11 octobre 2018. URL : <<http://journals.openedition.org/cliio/132> ; DOI : 10.4000/cliio.132>.

43 See R.S. Bluck, *Plato's Meno*, ed. with an introduction, commentary and an appendix, (Cambridge, 1961), 217-8.

other that of an assistant, and similarly in the case of the other virtues too.’ (Aristotle, *Politics* 1.13, 1260a20-24, trans. Reeve)

In the lines immediately following this passage, Aristotle does not hesitate to take Gorgias’ side, claiming that ‘it is far better to enumerate the virtues, as Gorgias does, than to define them in this way [that is, as Socrates does]’ (*Pol.* 1.13, 1260a27-28: πολὺ γὰρ ἄμεινον λέγουσιν οἱ ἐξαριθμοῦντες τὰς ἀρετάς, ὥσπερ Γοργίας, τῶν οὕτως ὀριζομένων).

It is then safe to assume that the beginning of the *Meno* and this passage from Aristotle’s *Politics* echo a debate whose Socratic background should not be overlooked. In all likelihood, the aforementioned passage from the *Politics* is heavily dependent upon the *Meno*. Yet, the *Meno* is far from being the only passage in Socratic literature that mentions this issue. Other testimonies are available from other Socratics, such as, for example, Xenophon who in his *Symposium* has Socrates say that ‘women’s nature is not found to be in any way inferior to men’s, but lacks strength and vigour’ (*Symp.* 2.9, 3-5: ἡ γυναικεία φύσις οὐδὲν χείρων τῆς τοῦ ἀνδρὸς οὔσα τυγχάνει, ῥώμης δὲ καὶ ἰσχύος δεῖται). Diogenes Laertius also reports the comments of Antisthenes, Socrates’ loyal student: ‘to man and woman, the same virtue’ (DL, 6.12.8: ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετὴ).⁴⁴ To these

44 Mention should also be made of two dialogues by Aeschines of Sphettus. The evidence on the *Axiochos* is too scanty to be conclusive, but on some reading of fr. 13 Dittmar (= VI A 57 SSR), it is not impossible to claim that Aeschines defended some version of the thesis that women are not inferior to men. The evidence on Aeschines’ *Aspasia* on the same matter is more substantial: see e.g. fr. 17 Dittmar (= VI A 62 SSR) where Socrates is said to encourage Callias to make his son a pupil of Aspasia. On Aeschines, see the recent edition of the testimonies by F. Pentassuglio, *Eschine di Sfetto*.

testimonies should be added the much later evidence found in Aspasius' commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Dwelling on the difficulties raised by Aristotle's discussion of friendship between unequals at *NE* 1158b11, Aspasius writes: 'But some deny that there is one virtue for a father and another for a son, or one for a husband and another for a wife' (*in Nic. Eth.*, 176, 30-177, 2 Heylbut, trans. Konstan: οὐ φασι δὴ τινες ἄλλην ἀρετὴν εἶναι πατρὸς καὶ ἄλλην υἱοῦ οὐδὲ ἄλλην ἀνδρὸς γυναικὸς δὲ ἑτέραν). Aspasius then focuses on the case of husband and wife, adding that those who hold the view that there is the same virtue for husband and wife are 'above all the Socratics' (177, 3: μάλιστα οἱ Σωκρατικοί). It is of course hard to tell who exactly Aspasius has in mind: he could be alluding specifically to Antisthenes,⁴⁵ or to a much wider circle including Plato, Xenophon, Antisthenes, and others (hence the plural Σωκρατικοί). Interestingly, the argument Aspasius reports as being that of the Socratics amounts to showing that concerning each and every virtue husband and wife are in the same ethical situation, and that therefore there is no reason why a man should be just or temperate, but a woman not. Although they share the same conclusion, this argument clearly differs from the arguments put forward by Socrates in the *Meno* (72c-73d), where it is shown that there should be one single definition of virtue accounting for all instances of virtue (male, female, etc.), or from the argument in the *Republic* 5 passage examined in this paper, which hinges on the likeness in φύσις between men and women. This indicates that although the thesis according to which the virtue of men and women is identical seems to have been widely shared in Socratic circles, different arguments were still

Tutte le testimonianze (Turnhout, 2017), esp. p. 119-66 (which are dedicated to the *Axiochos* and *Aspasia*).

45 As suggested by J. Barnes, 'An introduction to Aspasius,' in A. Alberti and R. W. Sharples (eds.), *Aspasius: the earliest extant commentary on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berlin-New York, 1999), 28-30.

opposed to the alternative, ‘differentialist’ conception of virtue accepted by the Sophists (and by Aristotle).

It is this very discussion, and not Protagoras’ *Antilogies*, or for all we know, some discussion from the Megarian Socratic school, that makes up the background of *Republic* 5, 453b-454c. Without this specific background in mind, Socrates’ otherwise curious mention of eristic and antilogy remains at best mysterious and at worse unjustified. Once this Socratic background is restored, the mention of eristic and antilogy becomes, I think, much more natural.

CONCLUSION: POWER VERSUS POWER

Restoring the Socratic background of *Resp.* 5, 453b-454c, however, only partly explains why Plato, in the overall context of the central digression of the *Republic*, thinks he needs to devote so much effort to contrasting Socrates’ view on this issue with the Sophistic approach illustrated by Gorgias.

I noted previously that one distinctive feature of *Resp.* 5, 453b-454c is to stage the first appearance of dialectic in the dialogue. I should now add that this is no timid or trivial appearance, for it cannot be denied that Socrates mentions here certain essential attributes of the dialectician in terms that are the exact same ones as those used to characterize dialectic in Book 7 of the *Republic* and other dialogues.⁴⁶ The opposition of the two verbs *διαλέγεσθαι* and *ἐρίζειν* that structures the whole of 454a-b indicates that Socrates’ goal is

46 Compare *Resp.* 454a6 (τὸ [...] δύνασθαι κατ’ εἶδη διαιρούμενοι) with e.g. *Phdr.* 273e1-2 (κατ’ εἶδη τε διαιρεῖσθαι τὰ ὄντα), *Soph.* 253d1 (τὸ κατὰ γένη διαιρεῖσθαι), and *Plt.* 285a4-5 (κατ’ εἶδη ...διαιρουμένους).

indeed to set power against power: the power of antilogy, which is explicitly mentioned, against that other power due to appear with the Divided Line in *Resp.* 6, the power of διαλέγεσθαι.⁴⁷

A distinctive effect of this very power of dialectic is elucidated when Socrates opposes dialectical reasoning to antilogy and eristic. Dialectical reasoning indeed prompts the respondent (and the reader) to examine the divisions he thinks familiar and takes for granted because they are the standard divisions carried by δόξα. For only those divisions which stand up to a truly dialectical examination are worth accepting as firm and valuable. In *Resp.* 5, 453b-454c, Socrates' anonymous interlocutors are led by custom and habit to consider that the man-woman division is not only biologically relevant (which is true, according to *Plt.* 262d), but also *politically* relevant, because the virtues of men and women differ in that respect. But dialectical reasoning shows that nothing is further from the truth, for the only understanding of φύσις that is valid regarding the management of the city is the one that makes a thing or a being's nature its capability (or skill) in performing a task.

It might be objected that such a reading confers too much weight upon this passage. Yet one should bear in mind that Socrates' first measure, which deals with the common possession of women and children, is just as much as his second conditional on another proposal, namely that it is possible for philosopher-dialecticians to be kings or kings philosophers. Now, this third condition itself depends on the success of an ambitious and crucial undertaking that Socrates begins at the end of Book 5 when he paints the portrait of the philosopher's specific nature, as an antithesis of the φιλόδοξος. In this respect, I propose that *Resp.* 5, 453b-454c on antilogy and eristic be read as the first milestone in this radical

47 See 511b4: τῆ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμει, 511c5: τῆς τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι ἐπιστήμης, 532a6: τῷ διαλέγεσθαι, 532d8: τῆς τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμεως, 533a8: ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις, 537d5: τῆ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμει.

enterprise of redefining φιλοσοφία (and the philosopher) as equivalent to dialectic (and the dialectician).⁴⁸ This undertaking notably consists in fighting against the image of the philosopher fostered by popular opinion, an image that makes him an eristic, a contradictor, and perhaps even a professional sophist, by offering a very different picture, that of a disinterested truth-loving human being who is keen to engage in discussion and avoid mere quarrels. That is fundamentally why, I take it, Socrates, in this strange passage from Book 5, with respect to a question that does not seem to require it, borrows at length the methodology, and speaks the language, of quarrelsome antilogic.

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Appendix: analytical summary of the argument in *Resp. 5*, 451c-457c

1. Argument (451b-452e): The same education and tasks should be given to male and female guards. Two questions will be examined.

2. The first question (452e-456c): Is this practicable? (452e5: εἰ δυνατόν ἢ οὐ)

2.1. Detailed reformulation (453a): Is female human nature able to share *all* the tasks of male nature, *none* of them, or *some* of them (and in particular the art of war that concerns the guards)?

⁴⁸ For more details on this issue and how it is connected to Plato's view of the practicability of the ideal city, see D. El Murr, 'Plato and Utopia: Philosophy, Power, and Practicability in Plato's *Republic*,' in P. Destrée, J. Opsomer, and G. Roskam, *Ancient Utopias*, forthcoming.

2.2. Objection (453a-c): Socrates and Glaucon provide the objection to their argument: this measure contradicts the principle of specialization, which is coextensive with justice.

- ‘Didn’t you yourselves agree, when you started founding this city of yours, that every single individual must fulfil the single function that belongs to them by nature?’ (453b4-5: αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς κατοικίσεως, ἢν ὠκίζετε πόλιν ὠμολογεῖτε δεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἕκαστον ἓνα ἐν τὸ αὐτοῦ πράττειν).

- ‘Well, can there fail to be a world of difference between a woman’s nature and a man’s?’ (453b7-8: Ἔστιν οὖν ὅπως οὐ πάμπολου διαφέρει γυνὴ ἀνδρὸς τὴν φύσιν;)

- ‘Shouldn’t the function we assign to them also be different, then – the one that accords with their nature?’ (453b10-c1: Οὐκοῦν ἄλλο καὶ ἔργον ἑκατέρῳ προσήκει προστάττειν τὸ κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν;)

2.3. (453c-e) Socrates had foreseen such objections, and this explains his past reluctance to examine the means of establishing the community of guards in detail (see 449b-450b, and 424a). It is necessary to respond to this argument and swim through to reach the shore.

2.4. Response (453e-456c)

2.4.1. Summary of the objection (453e)

2.4.2. Antilogic, eristic, and dialectic (454a-b)

2.4.3. Absolute and relative identity and difference (454c-e)

2.4.4. Reformulation of the problem (454e-456b): ‘for which craft, or which pursuit, among all those that go to make up a city’ (455a1-2: πρὸς τίνα τέχνην ἢ τί ἐπιτήδευμα τῶν περὶ πόλεως κατασκευῆν) are the natures of men and women different? Answer: It is in accordance with nature that there is no

occupation peculiar to men or women *relative* to the administration of the city.

2.4.5. Conclusion (456b-c): It is valid to infer possibility from accordance with nature. Answer to the first question: the measure is practicable.

3. The second question (456c-457c): Is it desirable? (456c9: Ὅτι δὲ δὴ βέλτιστα, τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο δεῖ διομολογηθῆναι;)