

Socrates' Rationality? ¹

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There has been a rather simplistic debate in Denmark recently as to whether *politics* is about arguments or feelings. This reflects a more general question of whether *behaviour* in general depends on rational considerations or feelings (gut feelings). I will examine whether Socrates is entirely rational, or whether he is also influenced by emotion.

The research has divided opinions on this. Vlastos² and Irwin³ believe that Socrates did *not* assume irrational urges or desires. Penner⁴ and Reshotko⁵ assume that Socrates *recognizes* such inclinations, but that they are too weak to influence behaviour. And Devereux⁶ argues that even strong urges cannot overwhelm *knowledge*, which is our only rescue. But Brickhouse/Smith⁷ believe that correct meaning *can* be overwhelmed by desires and feelings (in so-called 'diachronic meaning or *akrasia*').

One particular issue discussed in this research is the figure of the demon. Vlastos unsurprisingly subjects the demon to the interpretation of reason.⁸ C.D.S. Reeve believes that *religion* is generally subject to elenchus-based (i.e., reasonable) moral

¹ Socrates is here pretty much the Socrates appearing in the early Socratic aporetic dialogues (I have included *Phaedo* in this essay). In other words, Group I in Vlastos 1991: 46 f. This Socrates is Plato's reconstruction of the historical person, who is portrayed as a philosophical *project* that differs from what we find in later dialogues. Vlastos lists ten characteristic points (1991: 47-49). Against this background, it is necessary to see a *development* in authorship (see also Brandwood 1990 which is based on stylistics). The development or maturation of Platonic thought is, of course, gradual, as can be seen in *Gorgias* and *Menon* among others.

² G. Vlastos 1991: 166 and 285 f.

³ T. Irwin 1977: 78.

⁴ T. Penner, 1997: 128 og 2000: 164.

⁵ Reshotko 2006: 55; 1992: 163-66.

⁶ D. Devereux 1995: 387-8

⁷ Th. Brickhouse/Nicholas Smith, 2012: 236

⁸ 1991: 286.

norms.⁹ Brickhouse/Smith, on the other hand, believe that the *demon trumps* reason.¹⁰

I intend to argue here that Socrates is rational in that he generally relies on *elenchus* as the method of cognition, and that he does not ignore emotions but accepts rational feelings. The religious incentives, including the demon that naturally emerges in his life and on which he acts, and which could be perceived as irrational, *are* (and are *shown* to be) rationally justified. The same seems to apply to dreams, oracles, prophecies, authority, obedience and shame.

Modern (practical) rationality is typically: 1) a practical question of the *means* to achieve some purpose. It doesn't have a certain goal.¹¹ Modern practical rationality has positive connotations – it is assumed that we should all be effective and rational. 2) Therefore, it is also typically perceived as *opposing* goal-directed irrational *feelings and religious beliefs*, which should be avoided. It must be possible to give reasons.¹²

Similarly, Socrates' rationality means that irrational feelings must be avoided, and everything must be justified. Socrates follows the argument where it wants to go and complies completely with it. He strives for **consistency** in *truth* and **moral insight**, and in subsequent **behaviour**, with the focus being placed on consistency between goals and means (i.e. a question of values and how to secure them). But rationality here is related to the benefit of the individual and in general related to *values* (Wertrationalität). It is not just a question of efficiency at any price. Instead, it is a question of efficiency in achieving a *particular* goal: moral life and **happiness**. It is not a question of material goods or life and death, but of *morality* when acting.¹³ But Socrates also says, 'the good life, the beautiful life and the moral life are the same' (*Cr.* 48b7). Hence, *happiness lies in the moral life*. This is a controversial point of view that requires justification.

⁹ Reeve 1989: 68-73.

¹⁰ Brickhouse/Smith 1989: 168f, *TLS* Jan./Feb. 1990. Smith is of the opinion that religion generally 'trumps' *elenchus* 2000: 196.

¹¹ Closer analysis shows that the 'goal' (e.g. material growth) is a norm set by society (the system, the civil servants).

¹² Brown ch. I, which focuses on scientific rationality, mentions universal rules and assumptions (information). Cf. the application of the practical syllogism to a specific subject matter. Bennett indicates that the criterion for attributing rationality is the ability to make dated and universal statements (74, 86, 97). Bees are therefore not rational, as they are without language!

¹³ *Ap.* 28b5-9, cf. 28d6-19, *Cr.* 48c6-d5.

Socrates makes the following point about the good life in *Crito* (46b): 'I am not complying only now but all the time with anything else in me other than with the principle (*λόγος*) that seems to me best when I think about (*λογιζομένω*) it.' So we do not expect Socrates to act on irrational feelings, hunches and blind faith.

Occasionally, in critical situations, however, he also largely complies with his *daimonion* (the god); his entire missionary work is imposed upon him by Apollo. This raises the question of the relationship between his rationality and his religious attitude, or perhaps between reason and feeling (gut feeling!). It depends on whether the demon and mission are emotional elements in his case. It is also possible that his rationality itself holds an irrational element for us. Or perhaps Socrates' religiousness contains a very special kind of rationality.

In any case, there are two areas in which rationality plays out: at the theoretical level of opinions, and at the practical level of attitudes and actions. In the latter case, his rationality is not only about the *means* to achieve a random goal, but also about a *specific objective*.¹⁴ Socrates' life was spent on defining moral concepts in *order* to make himself and fellow citizens as good *and wise* as possible. The remedy for this was *elenchus*, critical conversation.

Socratic knowledge: Examples of rationality as truth and practical wisdom

Socratic insight (*phronesis*) relates to truth (theory) and morality (practice) (*Ap.* 29e), i.e. true morality. But human wisdom (*sophia*) is nothing,¹⁵ and Socrates is *ignorant*: he does not believe that he knows what he does not know (*Ap.* 21d). He claims that he *seeks* the truth of what morality is (*Prot.* 360 e), and that he does not *know* what that morality is (*MM.* 80c). But at the end of the day, Socrates does know something.

So, what does Socrates know?¹⁶ And how does he obtain his 'human wisdom' (*Ap.* 20de)? He knows many small things (*Eud.* 293b). For example, it is true that he has never received a fee for teaching (*Ap.* 31c), and that no-one who opposes the majority to prevent injustice will survive in politics (31e). He knows that it is wrong to implore jurors (35c). He also knows that prison and exile are evil, and, most importantly, that he has never wronged anyone (37ab). For instance, he has never agreed anything unfair with anyone else (33a). The old accusation is untrue (19d), which is demonstrated empirically. All these are simple *empirical facts*.

¹⁴ See Arist. *EE* ii, 11: *arete* leads to and justifies the target (*eudaimonia*) (cf. *EN* 1144a 7-9: *arete* ensures that the target is correct, while reason takes care of the way there). But the goal (e.g. self-expression or pleasure) is not solely determined by feeling. Reason should accept it (*EN* 1139a 25 f.). Reason determines how *eudaimonia* and the human good should be understood. In Socrates' case, it is clearly reason that determines the objective of not harming others. This goal is justified by a view of man that perceives the human soul as the real self, as a moral entity (*Cr.* 47a-49e).

¹⁵ *Ap.* 23b, cf. *Phdr.* 278d, *Crat.* 400d, 425c.

¹⁶ See e.g. Vlastos 1991: 238 n.9.

But there are **deeper insights** that have been reached through reasoning (*elenchus*). He generally asserts *truth* and *justice* in his apology.¹⁷ In other words, theoretical and practical rationality.

Thus, Socrates does not believe in myths about the gods, such as the myth that Zeus behaved violently and that there is animosity between the gods (*Euthyph.* 5e f.). On the contrary, the gods are wise (*Ap.* 23a) and good (*Ap.* 21b), and they take care of good people (*Ap.* 41d, *Euthyph.* 15a).¹⁸ For Socrates knows that it is not permissible for a better man to be harmed by an inferior, that a good man cannot be harmed in life or death (*Ap.* 30d, 41cd). And most importantly, he also knows that it is harmful (cf. *G.* 475) and shameful (αἰσχρόν) to do wrong. It is never right to damage (ἀδικεῖν) other people (*Cr.* 49b-d, cf. *Rep.* 335 e). Morality is enough for *eudaimonia*. One should therefore not care about material goods, but about *wisdom and truth*, making one's soul as *good* as possible (29e).

He proves Meletos wrong (24c), and he proves that the interlocutors are not wise (23ab). Socrates does not believe that he himself knows what he does not know (21b, d), because he *proves* that the oracle is right that he is wisest by just that (22a). In other words, his conduct in relation to Apollo is rational.

Understanding all this requires *insight*. With sufficient *knowledge*, one will not do wrong to others, thereby avoiding harming oneself as well as avoiding collective shame. Hence, morality is knowledge (*phronesis* *M.* 88cd, *Prot.* 356 f.). Therefore, it is important to be as wise as possible (*Eud.* 282a, 283a). Moral insight is the only good – it is what makes us happy (*Eud.* 292b).

Both *happiness* and morality therefore require **insight**, and this insight is gained through elenctic conversation. One purpose of such conversations is to create *consistency* in the interlocutor's concepts. Not least between his goals and means. This is *the means* to gain **knowledge** (*episteme*) that can distinguish good from evil (*Prot.* 352c). A form of meta-knowledge regarding personal benefit (*La.* 196a, see 199d). But what kind of knowledge is this, and what is a human being, and what benefits us as human beings?

The so-called Socratic **paradoxes** may help us to gain clarity in this respect. These Socratic paradoxes are: everyone seeks the good (for themselves) (*Prot.* 358d,

¹⁷ *Ap.* 17c, 18a, 20d, 22b, 24ab, 28a, d, 32a, 33c.

¹⁸ Xen. *Mem.* I 4, gives Socratic analogy arguments for divine wisdom and care. See Socrates' own care for his fellow citizens (*Euthyph.* 3d).

M.78a, G. 468b, 499e), morality is knowledge¹⁹/immorality is ignorance,²⁰ *akrasia* is impossible (no-one acts wrongly voluntarily) (*Prot.* 358c)²¹, virtues are one (*Prot.* 349), and morality is happiness (*Rep.* I, 353d-354a). These paradoxes are proved by *elenchus*.²²

The paradoxes are intertwined. The link between insight and moral paradoxes makes it easier to understand that immorality is involuntary. **Everyone seeks their own good**²³, and **morality is knowledge**²⁴ about what is really good and beneficial (not just *techne*, know-how),²⁵ so **immorality is ignorance**, and consequently no-one is **immoral on purpose** (moral paradox, *Prot.*)(cf. *Eud.* 282a). There is also, as we have seen, a supporting argument here: *immorality harms the immoral (directly G. 474b-475c,*²⁶ cf. *Cr.* 47d, and *indirectly Ap.* 25e), which means that immorality is unintentional, an expression of ignorance.

Formally, Socratic knowledge is referred to as *episteme* (knowledge), *sophia* (theoretical insight), *phronesis* (practical knowledge) and *techne* (know-how). These concepts can be used for this knowledge within a few lines (*Prot.* 352cd), but they are not synonymous, and there is a difference, among other things, in the ontology of this knowledge: is it a *disposition (hexis)* or an *ability (dynamis M. 77b, H. Min.*

¹⁹ Knowledge is *episteme* (*Prot.* 350, 359c f. G. 491b f., 495c f.), insight is *sophia*, and practical knowledge is *phronesis* (*Eud.* 281b, d) or craft, *techne* (*Prot.* 356d, 357b). *The Menon* argument is: morality is good, all good is embraced by knowledge ∴ morality is knowledge (*M.* 87d). And slightly expanded: morality does well and is therefore beneficial, the beneficial depends on knowledge ∴ morality is knowledge (*M.* 87d-88d). Very briefly: if morality is beneficial, then it must be a kind of *phronesis* (*M.* 88d2-3, 89a).

²⁰ This is an intellectualized view of immorality, leaving out emotions.

²¹ No-one *wants* to choose what one *thinks* is bad (*kaka, ponera* 353c) rather than the good (*agatha*) (*Prot.* 358cd).

²² For example, *Prot.* 352e-358d: the contradictory cannot be claimed along with other opinions.

²³ *Prot.* 358d, G. 468b7-8, 499e8-9, M. 78b1-2. Vlastos 1991: 148-154. See Aristotle, *EN* iii,4.

²⁴ See n. 19. C.C.W. Taylor sees an inconsistency in Socrates' ethics: morality is both knowledge of the good for the agent and the *good itself*, i.e. morality becomes both *instrumental for* and *part of* happiness. If morality is knowledge of the good, and the good is knowledge, then the latter form of knowledge must, according to Taylor, be different from the former (64f). *But* we should distinguish between possessed knowledge (ability) and active knowledge. The latter is happiness too. Morality is thus both possessed knowledge and practised knowledge. See Vlastos' 'Happiness and Virtue in Socrates' Moral Theory' (1991: ch. 8), according to which morality can be desired both for the sake of *eudaimonia* and for its own sake, cf. G. 468c2-5, *Rep.* ii, 357b-358a, Arist. *EN* 1144a1-6.

²⁵ J. Gould 7. *Contra* Vlastos 1973: 204-217, especially 206f.

²⁶ See Vlastos' discussion 1991: 139-148. He considers the argument to be false even though this fact has not been recognized.

375de)? Or has it developed from an *urge* or *desire*? How is it acquired (learned, practised), maintained and lost?²⁷

Such different conceptions of Socratic knowledge reveal how deep and unique this knowledge is. In *Protagoras*, moral knowledge is identified with measurement technique (*Prot.* 356b-357e, *metretike techne* 356d, *episteme* 357ab). But it also involves theoretical knowledge and insight (*Prot.* 360e f., 361c). It is also conceived as knowledge of (and equal to) mental health (*Cr.* 46). Hence, it is an art of life, i.e. practical ability and knowledge. It is useful knowledge that can make correct use of other things, e.g., wealth or talent (*Eud.* 288d ff.). It is suggested that it is generally about being able to distinguish between good and bad (*Prot.* 352c).²⁸ And this clearly involves more than know-how. It requires moral insight. This is a very special kind of knowledge that cannot easily be taught, and that has few (if any) teachers. However, this does not preclude both parties from learning through conversation.

The good

It is still unclear *what* the *good* (morality) is. We do not learn much more about *what* the good (morality) or knowledge is by being informed that **the good (*arete*) is knowledge**. However, the two concepts are narrowed down because they are linked: **the good (morality) is practical knowledge**.

The further determination of the content of morality must take place in special studies of specific moral concepts: justice, piety, wisdom, courage and self-rule. And friendship. Unfortunately, these studies end in *aporia*. For example, a definition of self-knowledge (morality) as knowledge of knowledge and non-knowledge (meta-knowledge of a technical nature) is still not knowledge about the *good* (utility) (*Ch.* 172c-175a), even though a number of options are rejected during the conversations. There is, of course, a difference in the *specific subject* of knowledge, e.g., between self-restraint and courage.

However, it appears that the relevant general knowledge must be knowledge of the *goal* and *purpose*: the good. And it is also clear that justice (i.e. the good, *Cr.* 48b) consists in *not harming others*. It also appears that all the good is *useful*. This seems

²⁷Can virtue be taught? (*Prot.* 319b, 326e-327e, *M.* 87bc, 89c f., 96c, 99ab, *Eud.* 282c (Socratic doubt), *Prot.* 357e f. (ordinary view). Are there teachers of virtue? No? (*Prot.* 327e, *M.* 89d f, 96c, 98e). So maybe virtue is not knowledge after all? (*M.* 98e-99b). Morality should be learnable if it is knowledge (*Prot.* 361ab, *M.* 87c-89c), but there are apparently no teachers, and therefore it cannot be knowledge (*M.* 89d, 98d-99a). Morality apparently comes as a gift from the gods, unless there is a statesman who manages to make another into a statesman (*M.* 99e f.)! Could it be Socrates, the only real statesman (*G.* 521d)? He teaches through conversation, not by lecturing (*Ap.* 33ab, cf.). Otherwise, Socrates' mission was in vain. The irony is that Socrates does not know what morality is (*M.* 80c)! However, that does not preclude both parties from learning from conversation.

²⁸ *Pol.* 283d-285c: the measuring art is partly relative and partly in relation to an absolute *norm*. The latter is involved in all creative arts and in dialectic and the determination of the good (*auto t'akribes* 284d).

to be a common opinion (*endoxon*).²⁹ And since moral knowledge is the only good (*M.* 87d, *Eud.* 292b), morality is **useful**, and therefore one should be moral. It is rational to be moral. But how on earth is morality useful? Well, it benefits the soul, just as good food benefits the body. Morality is mental health (*Cr.* 46). Does this mean that morality is an individualistic project? Not for Socrates, who had a mission to improve his compatriots and a preoccupation with not harming anyone.

In other words, it is useful and rational to be moral and to avoid immorality. **Immorality is actually harmful** to oneself (*G.* 475c, *M.* 77e f, *Cr.* 47e, 49b).³⁰ Therefore, immorality is unintentional, as no-one would voluntarily harm themselves (*Prot.* 358cd). To that extent, Socrates advocates a utility morality (*Ap.* 22e). But it is based on a long-term assessment, and it involves knowledge of our real needs.³¹ Morality is itself useful and is an end in itself. So it is not about external material advantages.³²

Modern philosophers have believed that statements and opinions about the moral good and the bad are expressions of wishful thinking and feelings, and are therefore outside what can be known. However, for Socrates, the good, the goal of our actions, *happiness*, is given and obvious, just as it was for Greek thinkers in general. The details of happiness are debatable. It is therefore *not* outside what can be known or a matter of taste. Socrates *argues* that *short-term* pleasure or power is *not* the way to happiness: it leads to unhappiness. The *general* opinion of happiness is irrational because it can have fatal consequences. Happiness (*eu prattein, eudaimonia*) and the good life consists in the **usefulness** of man, i.e. the fulfilment of his/her mental or spiritual needs. Including a moral life. So, there is a generally unacknowledged need to be moral! And this is where short-term enjoyment and power (politics) fall through.

The *Protagoras* may be understood as showing that the *moral and good life* for Socrates is a **pleasant life**.³³ In the sense of a mentally fulfilling life. Morality is, therefore, in a very unKantian way, satisfying! In *Protagoras*, moral knowledge produces the pleasant life (cf. the measuring art of *Pol.* 283d-285c). The Socratic moral

²⁹ It was common to identify the good with the useful (*Prot.* 358b, *M.* 87e, *Rep.* 379b, 354a, 457b, 505a, *Thet.* 177d). See Xen. *Mem.* iv.6.8 et seq. and iii.8.5-7.

³⁰ People who are harmed become inferior people, more unjust (*Rep.* 335c), which can harm oneself (*Ap.* 25e). Conversely, the good cannot be harmed (*Ap.* 41cd, 30d).

³¹ Knowledge of what is best for the acting person lacks content for Taylor and says nothing about a moral life (60). But the moral life for Socrates is, after all, exactly the same as the beneficial and perhaps also pleasant life (*Cr.* 48b4-10, *Prot.* 359e). See H.A. Prichard 1912/1949: 'Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?'

³² In *Rep.* ii 357d f. morality is regarded as good both in itself and in its external consequences. This is a Platonic development. Socrates, however, has an eye on the fact that his own moral insight has implications for the mental health of his fellow citizens (*Ap.* 31de). It is indeed his mission.

³³ The brave seek out the beautiful (moral), the good and therefore the pleasant (*Prot.* 360a).

knowledge is *strong* (*Prot.* 352cd). It must therefore be assumed that it involves a strong *rational desire* for a good, i.e. pleasant, life.³⁴ One might as well ask how such hedonism relates to Socrates' mission to make fellow citizens as good and wise as possible (*Ap.* 36c) so that they do not harm each other. They should not be preoccupied with wealth, riches and honour, but should concentrate on insight (*phronesis*) and truth and improve their souls as much as possible (*Ap.* 29e). The answer is that Socrates (if we are right) advocates *intelligent hedonism*, i.e. a *long-term* hedonism that chooses precisely the aforementioned short-term physical life goals and focuses on the enduring joys of the measuring art and the *insight* into truth (among other things, self-knowledge). And the truth in this context means what *really* benefits man. It is also worth considering the utility of the aforementioned popular life goals: wealth, reputation and honour (power) (*Ap.* 30b). This is set in the paedagogical context of the Socratic *Umwertung aller Werte*: morality has the greatest use because from morality stems everything else. It is responsible for other goods, and ultimately

³⁴ Enjoyment is good (*Prot.* 354c, 358b) and even identical to the good (351e, 354c, 355a) for the 'many', and for Socrates (360a2-3, see 351c4, 353e5-354a1. Cf. Taylor 1976: 208-210, 174-176, Gosling and Taylor 1982: ch. 2-3, spec. 67 (the good is long-term), Denyer 2008: 186f and Adam and Adam 1905: xxvi-xxx). The fact that Socrates shares hedonism with the crowd is revealed by his noting that 'the answer' to the crowd (the hedonistic analysis of weakness of will) is *true* (358a), that the hedonistic calculus is 'the rescue of our lives' (356e, 357a), and finally that everyone agrees that *all* actions aimed at a pleasant and painless life are honourable, i.e. good and useful (358b). Socrates, however, is not a vulgar hedonist, like Aristippus (Diog. Laert. ii 86-92), preferring a life that maximizes pleasure. This means that lower pleasures are weeded out by his hedonistic calculus because they have painful consequences (*Xen. Mem.* e.g. IV.5.9-10, II.1.18-19).

So what is the status of knowledge (which is otherwise the *only* good *M.* 87d, *Eud.* 292b)? In *Euthydemus*, the identification of morality with statesmanship is dropped and replaced by the royal art, which is used to *produce* something useful and good: knowledge of itself (*Eud.* 292d, 291b-292e, cf. *Ch.* 167a ff. on *self-knowledge*). Protagoras' relativism cannot include the good and the useful, which require expert *knowledge*. This applies, *inter alia*, to health and disease (*Tht.* 171e), agriculture, gymnastics, music and food production. The useful is also the aim of legislation, which, after all, applies to the future (*Tht.* 177-179c). According to *Rep.* 353d, it is the function of the soul to 'provide, control and consider' and simply 'live'. This is evidence that reason has a *desire* for the soul to be well (*eu prattein*).

The attack on enjoyment in *Gorgias* has posed a problem. But Gosling/Taylor believe that this applies to *immediate* enjoyment, not long-term enjoyment in *Protagoras*, and that the alleged conflict with *Protagoras* is illusory (1982: 70-77). In addition, Irwin (1977: ch. 4, 103 ff.) defends Socratic hedonism, though he sees problems (1979: 202-208). *Contra* Guthrie IV 231-3, and Vlastos 1991: 205, 300-302; non-utilitarian moral philosophy 6-7, 214; *morality* is the goal (*Ap.* 28b, d, *Cr.* 48cd). See also the later Stoic view of Socrates as anti-Epicurean (Long 1988: 150-71). But see above and previous note: 'We admitted that all beautiful (καλὰς) actions are *useful* (ἀγαθὰς)' (*Prot.* 359e). And even wrong-doing is *harmful* to the wrong-doer (*Cr.* 49b).

for happiness (*M.* 87e-89e).³⁵ Morality is happiness and is therefore the goal (*Ap.* 28b, d, *Cr.* 48cd). Hence, 'utilitarianism' is not an adequate characterization of this position.

Irrational emotions and urges (anger, fear, pain, desire, *eros*, shame and obedience)

The Socratic moral knowledge is strong (*Prot.* 352cd) and a force (*Eud.* 292de). It is not a slave of passions, as is the general opinion (*Prot.* 352b; cf. Hume *T.* 2.3.3). It must be assumed that this is because it implies a rational desire for the good/benefit of the individual.³⁶ Certain feelings are therefore necessary for human morality. Are there not also irrational feelings and desires at stake that may need to be checked? Socrates is, admittedly, using rational conversations and arguments to make his conversation partners see the good and do it, but he also appeals to his demon, to God, to dreams and oracles, to unwritten laws, to shame, fear and obedience.³⁷ If knowledge is sufficient to be moral (morality is knowledge), then it must relate to the aforementioned things and urges. I will focus on these below.

Here it is necessary to add a few words about the much-debated weak-will phenomenon, the well-known fact that reason is overwhelmed by irrational forces (*akrasia*). Here, Socrates' moral intellectualism (morality is knowledge) or rationalism (*Prot.* 352a-357e) is challenged. But he simply denies the appearance of *akrasia*. It is in fact *amathia*, lack of knowledge/ignorance (357de). He argues this paradox: 'Everyone wants the good (for themselves)', 'no-one is seeking what one thinks is bad' (*Prot.* 358b-d).³⁸

³⁵ Morality is beneficial and the beneficial is wisdom (always leading to happiness) ∴ morality is totally or partially wisdom (*M.* 88e f.).

³⁶ *Prot.* 358d, *G.* 468b7-8, 499e8-9, *M.* 78b1-2. So moral knowledge cannot be misused. Cf. *Rep.* i 335c14-d2 for a more formalistic argument.

³⁷ Here I disregard all the irrational, sophistic tricks that Socrates uses or is accused of using. See my *Human Wisdom* 61. They are not evidence of his own irrationality, on the contrary in fact.

³⁸ Prudential paradox, as referred to in Arist. *EN* 1145b25-31: 'no-one acts deliberately (ὑπολαμβάνοντα) against the best.' Does this mean the *phenomenal* good (Santas) or the *real* (Vlastos, Penner/Rowe)? 'No-one is voluntarily looking for the bad or what you think is bad, nor is it in human nature to want to look for what you think is bad rather than good' (*Prot.* 358cd). We pursue the good in our actions (*G.* 468b). The tyrant does not want to kill as such but kills in the belief that it will be advantageous to him, but it turns out that it is actually harmful. (*G. ibid.* d). Everyone wants the good. For those who want the bad either think that it benefits or know that it is bad. But the former do not know that the bad is bad, and therefore do not want this but what they thought was good. The latter know they're hurting themselves. But they also know that injury means unhappiness, which no-one wants, and therefore they cannot wish *for* the bad! (*M.* 77c-78b). Both *G.* and *M.* are therefore arguing that we do not want the bad, neither phenomenal nor real. It would be based on misunderstanding of our real desires. Εὐδαιμονία is the real good and advantageous (*Eud.* 278e-279a, 280b). Psychological selfishness does not preclude altruism, cf. Socrates' mission (*Ap.*), or Socrates as a politician (*G.* 521d,

Does this mean that there are absolutely no rational *feelings* that work against reason? Feelings such as pain, fear, anger, evil and *urges* that do *not* aim for the good (e.g. striving for power, passion and short-term desire)? Or *opinions*, attitudes and actions based on faith, authority or arbitrary choice? The subject was debated way back in antiquity. Here are some of the views that have been expressed:

Xenophon reports that *enkrateia* is the basis of virtues (*Mem.* i 5.4), and that no distinction is made between *sophia* and *sophrosyne* (*Mem.* iii 9.4. and iv 5.11. Cf. *Prot.* 358c2-3). Aristotle agrees: according to Socrates³⁹, *arete* makes *logos* correct, rather than being the intention and the end (i.e. morality is then about means, rational considerations, rather than the target). But in Aristotle's view that is the task of *sophrosyne* (self-mastery) rather than *arete*. And it suggests a lack of distinction between *enkrateia* (*sophrosyne*) and *arete* (*EE* 1227b12-19).⁴⁰ These sources therefore regard Socratic morality as *emotional regulation*.⁴¹

In *the Great Moral*, however, the view is more *rationalistic*: Socrates places the virtues solely in the rational part of the soul (for Aristotle, the virtues are only 'with reason'). The author does not imply that Socrates *disregarded* non-rational wishes. But Socrates turned the virtues into *epistemai* involving *logos* situated in the rational part of the soul. So, by turning the virtues into *epistemai*, he removes/overlooks (*anairei*), the soul's irrational part, and thereby *pathos* and *ethos* (*MM* 1182a17-23).

However, there seems to be a consensus that whether there are non-rational desires or not, knowledge is *strong enough* to secure the rationality of emotional life in general. In *Prot.* 352-8, knowledge and reason are conceived as the strongest and thus as powerful motivators.⁴²

cf. *M.* 99e-100a), and not least the tenet of the Socratic ethics: do not harm others. Irwin 1977: 254-286 has a longer conceptual analysis of the relationship between selfishness and altruism.

³⁹ It is likely to be alluded to, among other things, in Socrates.

⁴⁰ For Aristotle morality is not identical to self-mastery, it is *inter alia* joy in doing the right thing (*EN* 1151b34-1152a3).

⁴¹ But see Xen. *Mem.* 3.9.5 and 4.6.6.

⁴² Dan Devereux (2012: 217) surprisingly believes that diachronic opinion *akrasia* is compatible with *Protagoras* 354-358. But it is Aristotle who dissolves the paradox: according to Socrates, *akrasia* does not exist: no-one acts against what is *considered* (ὕπολαμβάνοντα) best. That would be due to ignorance. *But*, says Aristotle, a weak-spirited person did not *previously* think he should act like that (*EN* 1145b25-31). Hence, diachronic **opinion** *akrasia* appears possible for 'some' (*ibid.* 1145b33) and for Aristotle.

Possible irrational motivators in Socratic psychology?

1) The God. *Ap.* 30a, 30e, 33c, 38a, 42a, *Cr.* 48a, 54e.

Socrates is destined by Apollo to be a missionary among the Athenians, this is his 'worship' (*Ap.* 22a, 23b, 28e, 30a, e, 33c). Socrates interprets the oracle answer that no-one is wiser than him as an invitation to examine the *meaning* (21b, e) and show that it is irrefutable (22a), and that it means that he was shown to be wisest because he considered his wisdom worthless (23b). This applies particularly to his *conversations* and study of himself and others (28e, 38a), which are imposed *on* him by the God through oracles, dreams⁴³ etc. (*Ap.* 33c).

Is the God a threat to rationality here? Not when we understand that *elenchus* here is rooted in the oracle of God, that is, that the rational here is motivated and has its *source* in the religious. For Socrates, the rational conversation appears to be *of divine origin*, i.e. the deity is wise and a *prerequisite* for the rational.⁴⁴ There is no greater good than conversations about morality (38a).

In *Crito*, we must abide by the *one*, if there is one who has knowledge of these things [acts that are just and unjust, shameful (αἰσχρῶν) and beautiful, good and bad], and for whom we are afraid and ashamed (αἰσχύνεσθαι) (47cd). Who is it? It is 'the one who knows justice and injustice, the one or the *truth itself*' (48a). Is Socrates talking about the god? Given that Socrates trusts the God (*Ap.* 29d), who is wise (*Ap.* 23a) and who has ordered him to live as a philosopher (*Ap.* 23ab, 28e), the idea is tempting. And when he includes a remark that 'if someone has knowledge', his aim is to suggest that this is not to be found among humans. God alone knows the fate of Socrates (*Ap.* 42a), and he leads Socrates on his way (*Cr.* 54e).

But the Holy⁴⁵ is loved by all gods because it is sacred, and the sacred is not sacred because it is loved by the gods (*Euthyph.* 10d f.). In other words, there are some *values above the gods*, who must therefore respect these values, e.g., justice (*Euthyph.* 8de). The God is therefore both wise and just. For example, it is not 'legal' for him to lie (*Ap.* 21b).⁴⁶ Hence, belief in a rational and moral god cannot be irrational for Socrates.

⁴³ *Cr.* 44a6 ff., *Phd.* 60e2ff.

⁴⁴ It cannot therefore be said, conversely, that the concept of God has its origin in *elenchus* (reason). The position of reason is different in Christianity, where reason and faith are *opposed*. In Aquinas, faith and reason, or religion and philosophy, are *complementary* – and in Pascal the heart, *l'esprit de finesse*, has its reasons, which (geometric) reason does not know.

⁴⁵ The holy or sacred is the part of the just that cares for the gods (*Euthyph.* 12e).

⁴⁶ Brickhouse/Smith (2000: 80f.) believe that Socrates more or less took over traditional religion, as in Xenophon. *Contra* Vlastos (1991: 166), who rightly believes that Socrates here is guilty of the heterodox rationalization of Greek religion. The gods are wise, and since wisdom is moral wisdom, the gods are moral. New gods! (*Euthyph.* 5a-c, 6a). The gods are not, as in traditional mythology, in-

There is also another argument for the rationality of faith in God. Not obeying someone who is *better* (god or human) is both harmful (κακόν) and shameful (αἰσχρόν) (*Ap.* 29b). But if it is harmful and shameful *not* to obey God, then it is rational to obey God.

Summing up, morality is ultimately sanctioned *not* by the gods but by something that stands above the gods. This is the 'truth', the objectified ideal of reason. The reason that knows justice and to which Socrates is closest among men. Not to harm others and (therefore) not to lie are truths that are in practice justified by *self-knowledge*: violation thereof results in damage to the self (*Cr.* 47de). This is confirmed by the demon.

2) The Demon. *Ap.* 31cd, 40a-c, 41d.

The demon is a *prophetic* (μαντική) force (?), from the little demon (40a) who opposes Socrates if he will act inappropriately (μὴ ὀρθῶς) or harmfully (μὴ ἀγαθόν) for himself (*Ap.* 40a-c).⁴⁷ Is it the *God* who has, after all, spoken prophetically (μαντεία 22a)? It is at least something *divine* or *demonic* (a voice?) (31cd), even a sign from the *God* (40b, cf. *Cr.* 54e), which is frequent (40c). And *Euthyphro* links the charge of innovation in the religion with the divine sign (*Euthyph.* 3b, cf. *Xen. Ap.* 12), which is perhaps what Meletos did too (*Ap.* 31d). To that extent, it is possible to perceive the demon as a manifestation of the God in Socrates. Cf. *Crito*, where it is said that the God leads him (54e). The demon, however, was exclusively *apotreptic* (31cd),⁴⁸ *in contrast* to the mission command (as Socrates sees it) from the God of Delphi (*Ap.* 23b, 28e, 29d-30b, 33bc). In Socrates' interpretation, the oracle is *protreptic*.

volved in internal strife (*Euthyph.* 5e f.). Socrates is not particularly interested in mythology (*Euthyph.* 6a, *Phdr.* 229 f.). In *the Ap.* Socrates is agnostic about what happens after death. But in *Crito* there is the prospect of a verdict in the underworld (54BC). And in *Phaedo*, he insists that the gods are our benefactors (62b), and that he comes to gods who are very good masters, and that it will be better for the good than the wicked (63c). Interestingly, both *Apology* and *Crito* end by referring to the god who *knows* the fate of Socrates and *leads* him on his way. Plato (*Ap.* 31cd, *Euthyph.* 3b) and Xenophon (*Ap.* 12) do not refer to Socrates' theology but to the 'divine sign' as a stumbling block. But this is doubtful. The voice cannot be the basis for the accusation, as Socrates himself refers to it in his defence for not participating in politics (*Ap.* 31c6 et seq.) (See Burnet 15 f., 127f.).

⁴⁷ Burnet (17, 127 f., 165 f.) argues that it is not morally meant, but is solely about consequences, has nothing to do with the mission and therefore does not correspond to conscience. The question, however, is whether the distinction between morality and the consequences of the action can be maintained. Socrates always has morality in mind, and the avoidance of, for example, a political life has assured him that he can continue to benefit his fellow citizens (*Ap.* 31e). Similarly, the absent warning against Socrates' course to death has resulted in him possibly benefiting the residents of Hades (*Ap.* 41b)! The argument in *Crito* against escape from prison (promise breaking) and a certain death is entirely moral.

⁴⁸ But Xenophon *Mem.* 1.1.4 and *Theages* suggest a positive *daimonion*.

So, is the demon in conflict with Socrates' rule of always only obeying the best argument (*logos*, *Cr.* 46b)?⁴⁹ The answer is No. First, the demon's divine nature vouches for rationality. Secondly, you can see the demon's warning, for example, not to become a politician (*Ap.* 31d) as a *rational* intuition in the style of Aristotle's *phronesis*, with the *nous* (intuition) that handles the application of moral norms.⁵⁰ Finally, Socrates has learned that warnings from the demon have caused him to avoid harming himself (*Ap.* 40a-c). Therefore, it is rational to obey the demon, even if it does not explain why the warning is given.⁵¹

As for the demon, it is striking that while Socrates is agnostic about what happens after death (*Ap.* 29ab, 37b) before the verdict, *after* the verdict he is pretty sure that death *can* be a good thing, and that those who assume it is an evil are definitely wrong, and the *proof* is that the usual sign does *not* stop him (*Ap.* 40bc).⁵² Is it then rational to believe even in the *absence* of demonic warning? Yes, because it *usually* comes when he is acting inappropriately. This is an empirical argument. An *a priori* argument follows: that death is *either* dreamless sleep *or* an improved version of current life, if you're going to believe mythology (40c-41c). Both alternatives are positive and give us good rational (argued) *hope*, as well as constituting confirmation that the absence of the demon's warning is rational.

The demon does not need *interpretation* like other manifestations of the divine, such as oracles, dreams and prophecies. Thus, *elenchus* is used in the interpretation of Apollo's oracle response. However, there is a peculiar parallel between the sign or voice and *elenchus*. They are both '*divine*' (*elenchus* used in the service of god!). And both *the elenchus* and the demon are *negative*. But the demon can provide knowledge that the *elenchus* cannot: about the dangers of a political life and about the afterlife. However, as I have said, this does not mean that its rationality is challenged.

⁴⁹ Burnet (16f.) is categorical: the *daimonion* is part of the *irrational*, which does not allow itself to be rationalized. It's just *apotreptic*. However, this seems premature and overlooks, *inter alia*, the fact of rational intuition.

⁵⁰ *EN* 1141a 7f., 1142a 23-30, 1143a 32-1143b 5. It has been argued that rational intuition is not necessarily *negative* (Brickhouse/Smith 2005: 45). But in Socrates' case, it is an intuition that inhibits and slows him down and corrects his deliberately rational plans. A practical syllogism could be: '(1) politics must in some cases be avoided, (2) Socrates faces such a case ∴ Socrates avoids politics.' (2) is seen intuitively.

⁵¹ Brickhouse/Smith 2005: 58-52.

⁵² Reeve 1989: 70.

3) Oracles, dreams and prophecies. *Ap.* 33c, 39c, 44a, 50a, *Ch.* 173a, *Phd.* 60c, e.

Socrates knows that through *oracles and dreams* and other divine intervention he is required to be a missionary (*Ap.* 33c, see the oracle of god *Ap.* 21e, 22a). How does this order relate to reason? Is it an outsider, or is it sanctioned by reason?⁵³ Socrates at any rate tests the oracle of god rationally. And oracles borrow authority from the god, who is rational.

What cognitive status do dreams and prophets have? In prison, Socrates is haunted by the dream of a beautiful woman clad in white who says he will come to the 'fertile Phthia on the third day' (*Cr.* 44a), i.e. come 'home' (like Achilles, *Il.* 9.363). 'Home' is understood to be Orphic (!), like a *post-mortem existence*. The dream here is like a prophecy. And the personified laws come to (*epistantes*) Socrates *as in* a sight or dream (*Cr.* 50a).⁵⁴ Incidentally, Socrates calls his intuitions dreams (*Ch.* 173a) or prophecies (*ibid.* 169b). They give him positive information: he has *the same dream* several times in different versions, asking him to practise *μουσική*. He *assumes* that he is required to write poetry, resulting in an anthem to Apollo and a versification of Aesopus' fables (*Phd.* 60c-61b). Hence, dreams may need *rational interpretation*.

In addition, as we have seen, Socrates himself has a *prophetic* ability (*Ap.* 40a), which is the sign of god (40b) that opposes inappropriate behaviour. Moreover, he himself, close to death, can *prophesy* that his prosecutors will be punished and tested for their way of life (*Ap.* 39c). The demon has been understood as the intervention of reason.⁵⁵ But Socrates acknowledges that there are sources of insight other than rational knowledge, e.g., seers and prophets are without knowledge and beside themselves (*Ap.* 22c, *Ion* 534c, *M.* 99cd). This could mean that Socrates, when he prophesizes, does not have rational knowledge, and that the demon, insofar as it prophesizes, does not exhibit rational knowledge. However, this potential dualistic epistemology is disregarded by Vlastos, who claims that the true meaning of these statements requires the interpretation of critical *reason*.⁵⁶ But while this solution may be true of dreams, poetic utterances, other prophecies and oracle responses, it does not fit with Socrates' treatment of the prophetic warnings of the demon, which are taken at face *value*.⁵⁷ Therefore, it is tempting to solve this problem as we did above in connection with the gods: the demon is the 'sign of god,' and since the gods are rational

⁵³ Brickhouse/Smith 2005: 58, see 1989: 87-100. *Contra* Reeve 1989: 70. Socrates obeys divine orders and warnings on the basis of the elenchically established divine goodness.

⁵⁴ Burnet 200.

⁵⁵ Nussbaum, quoted by Reeve in Smith/Woodruff 2000: 32 f. See also Gallop (1997: xxiii), who interprets the demon as Socrates' natural intelligence.

⁵⁶ Vlastos 1991: 170f. 57.

⁵⁷ Reeve 1989: 69.

and 'better', it is rational to trust them and their prophecies. On the other hand, dreams are *only rational in retrospect*.

4) Democracy and the unwritten laws. *Ap.* 41d, 30d.

A good person is untouchable: it is not 'legal' according to the unwritten laws (*them-iton*) that he/she should be harmed by an inferior (30d). This means that good character cannot be harmed by an inferior. 'The majority' cannot make the good stupid and thus bad! (*Cr.* 44d). Generally, a *good man* cannot be harmed either alive or in death, because he is provided for by the gods (*Ap.* 41cd). To Socrates, the unwritten laws are therefore *moral*. But it is also 'illegal' for God to lie. This means, as we have seen, that there are *moral laws* that even the gods obey.

In *Apology* and *Crito*, Socrates must choose between the political values of the *state* and *justice*, i.e. unwritten moral-religious values. See Sophocles' *Antigone*, where Antigone defies the state's ban on burying her brother Polyneikes, who is accused of treason. She follows an unwritten law that the dead must be buried. It costs her her life (by suicide). In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Agamemnon reverses the state's interests over the consideration of the family, but he pays with his life.

Socrates' attitude to democracy is conditional: he abides by laws and does not escape from prison after the death sentence. He has a tacit agreement with the state (*Cr.* 50c, 51e, 52e). But at the same time, he will not abide by an unjust order (for example an order to be a henchman for a criminal junta), or a request to cease philosophizing (*Ap.*). His *rationality* and *ethical-religious conscience* trump his democratic duty if the latter would be unjust. It is a conflict of two types of moral principles: obedience to the state on the one hand, and keeping promises (e.g. political agreement) and the unwritten norm of not harming others and the moral/religious mission (divine injunction) on the other. Democratic duty is based on an *agreement* (not between citizens, but between the individual and the state), but it must be fair. The guarantee of justice is here the god or rather the norms behind it (*Cr.* 47d-48a). To compromise here will basically be harmful to yourself and the *citizens*. It is not about living, but about living well, i.e. honourably and justly (*Cr.* 48b). Injustice is in every way harmful and shameful for the unjust (*Cr.* 49b). This is the rationale of the underlying norms, and they are therefore also observed by the rational gods.⁵⁸ So it is rational to be just and moral.

In other words, Socrates is *rational* here. He is a democrat insofar as he respects laws and regulations to the extent that they are fair. And to the extent that Apollo stands for justice, it is also rational to be religious. Socrates rationalizes the gods by making them moral. We have seen above that the gods love piety because it is piety, and that piety is not piety because the gods love it (*Euthyphro* 10a). In other words, morality is above the gods. Following the morality respected by the gods is rational. It is a morality related to the vision that the soul and its health are more important

⁵⁸ Vlastos 1991: 162. Cf. Reeve 1989: 70.

than the body and its health. Hence, it is rational to follow the unwritten laws because they are moral. Breaking them is harmful to mental health.

5) Obedience, shame, and fear (reputation). *Ap.* 28b-d, 29b, e, 34e, 35a, *Cr.* 47d, 49b.

Socrates asks Meletus if he really thinks that he, Socrates, is not aware that one harms oneself when one makes others bad. They will, in turn, *harm* oneself. This is an *external*, easily graspable rational reason to behave properly. But Socrates has a deeper knowledge that doing wrong (ἀδικεῖν) and not obeying one that is better than you (god or human) is both *harmful* and *shameful* for the perpetrator (*Cr.* 49b, cf. *Ap.* 29b). There are two points here: 1) injustice *itself* harms others as well as the one who is unjust, and it is related to the view of man: the soul is a moral entity, defined by its character, which cannot bear to do wrong; and 2) injustice is *shameful*. This is realized by everyone, even Polus in *Gorgias*. Cf. *Ap.* 28d: one must stay where it is 'best', or where one has been placed with no regard for anything but the *shameful*, and cf. 29b: it is *shameful* not to obey one's superior, god or human.

Shame is a kind of fear (*Euthyph.* 12c). And Socrates respects heroic morality and *fears* cowardice and shame, for example, about fleeing from battle as a hoplite (*Ap.* 28c). Therefore, he cannot desist from his mission either because this would be tantamount to disobeying the god (37e). In general, Socrates is indifferent to public opinion (*Cr.* 44cd, 47a), but he is aware of his legacy (*Ap.* 34e) and there is a respect for heroic values (Achilleus *ibid.* 28c). He will follow his own conviction *or*, where appropriate, a superior, e.g., god (*Ap.* 28de) and avoid cowardice. Moreover, to bring his wife and children to court and ask for pity would be womanish (*ibid.* 35b) and would bring *shame* on the city (*ibid.* 35a) as well as himself (*ibid.* 34e). It is rational, then, to follow public morality, since otherwise there will be intolerable consequences. Not for his physical life, but for his mental well-being (sense of shame).⁵⁹ This applies in particular to the extent that unwritten, objective norms lie behind public morality (e.g. the binding obligation of a promise on the state and its officials).

For what Socrates really *fears* and *is ashamed* of is the one, if he exists, who knows what justice and injustice are (*Cr.* 47d). And this one is truth itself (48a, cf. *Ap.* 39b). Socrates does not claim that there *is* an expert in morality but pretends that the truth is a person. Of course, he does not question the truth himself, i.e., the objective moral norms that he has dealt with throughout his life. These standards must be followed, as disobedience will *harm* the individual. He has demonstrated this dialectically. The soul, which is the real self, is damaged by immoral behaviour (*Cr.* 47cd). Therefore, to the extent that Socrates fears and is ashamed of these norms, he exhibits rational behaviour. It is a rational fear and shame. And to the extent that these

⁵⁹ Socrates' conventional attitude to the morality of his time is similar to his conventional cult (*Eud.* 302b-303a, cf. *Ap.* 35d, *Phd.* 61b, 118a, *Sym.* 176a. Xenophon gives a picture of a harmless follower of the cult, *Ap.* 11-12, *Mem.* I.i.2, I.ii.64). However, this cult is matched and contradicted by a rational theology.

norms (the truth) lie behind public morality, the fear of public morality is rational too.

Conclusion

Socrates is a rationalist in both the theoretical and practical fields: he seeks consistency in the *views* on moral issues, both his own and those of his fellow citizens. And since moral opinions are crucial to *behaviour*, he is also a rationalist in this area. He seeks understanding and durable definitions of moral key concepts. And thus, he seeks the most effective (rational) means to benefit the individual and thus achieve the happiness sought by all. The goal for him is the *moral life*, which is also the *happy life* (*eudaimonia*). Hence, it is misleading to perceive Socrates as a consequential moralist, to see morality as just a means to happiness. Morality is happiness.⁶⁰ And morality means not harming others. Morality is negatively worded, as are eight of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament. Socrates had a mission to impart the same insights to others.

He is familiar with irrational *feelings and urges* (anger, fear, desire, pain, *eros*) and *obedience* to god, his demon, dreams, oracles, etc. and obedience to civil servants. But the irrational emotions are neutralized or mastered by a highly rational desire for the true good, a long-term pleasant life.

Obedience to God, demon, oracles, dreams, prophecies and civil society is indirectly rational, to the extent that it mirrors an objective morality which is known by rational means.

Obedience to Apollo is dependent on membership of the Athenian *polis* and its heroic values, and on the rational conviction that moral gods provide for the moral man, and ultimately on respect for and love of truth, to be reached by rational means.

Obedience to the demon is primarily dependent on its divinity and its ability to guide us away from dangers.

Obedience to dreams, oracles, etc. is, again, partly dependent on society, and partly on personal positive experience, but ultimately dependent on their divinity.

Finally, obedience to civil society and the state is rationally justified. Civil society is ideally 'better' (*Ap.* 29b) morally speaking than its subordinate, and should therefore be obeyed; and the state should be obeyed because the citizens are bound by a

⁶⁰ Morality is knowledge of happiness, which is morality. Morality1 is knowledge of morality2. We do not have two moralities here, but morality1 is possessed morality, while morality2 is morality1 put into practice.

promise of loyalty that, moreover, gives them the benefit of the state. But civil disobedience is required if the state violates moral principles (unwritten laws) that also form the background here.

Socrates sympathizes with heroic values and avoids, among other things, cowardice, ultimately out of respect for basic ethical values. Again, rational behaviour.

In short, Socrates is rational in thought and behaviour, goals and means, and he is not compromised by irrational impulses in his self-declared rationality. For Socrates, rationality is justice (morality).

Abbreviations**Plato:**

| | |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| <i>Ap.</i> | <i>Apology</i> |
| <i>Ch.</i> | <i>Charmides</i> |
| <i>Crat.</i> | <i>Cratylus</i> |
| <i>Cr.</i> | <i>Crito</i> |
| <i>Eud.</i> | <i>Euthydemus</i> |
| <i>Euthyph.</i> | <i>Euthyphro</i> |
| <i>G.</i> | <i>Gorgias</i> |
| <i>H.Min.</i> | <i>Hippias Minor</i> |
| <i>H.Maj.</i> | <i>Hippias Major</i> |
| <i>La.</i> | <i>Laches</i> |
| <i>Ly.</i> | <i>Lysis</i> |
| <i>M.</i> | <i>Meno</i> |
| <i>Phd.</i> | <i>Phaedo</i> |
| <i>Phdr.</i> | <i>Phaedrus</i> |
| <i>Pol.</i> | <i>Politicus</i> |
| <i>Prot.</i> | <i>Protagoras</i> |
| <i>Rep.</i> | <i>Republic</i> |
| <i>Tht.</i> | <i>Theaetetus</i> |

Aristoteles:

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| <i>EN</i> | <i>Ethica Nicomachea</i> |
| <i>EE</i> | <i>Ethica Eudemia</i> |
| <i>MM</i> | <i>Magna Moralia</i> |

Xenophon:

| | |
|-------------|--------------------|
| <i>Ap.</i> | <i>Apology</i> |
| <i>Mem.</i> | <i>Memorabilia</i> |

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