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PLATO'S LAST WORD ON NATURALISM VS. CONVENTIONALISM IN THE *CRATYLUS*. I

For David Sedley

non ita certandi cupidus quam propter amorem
quod te imitari aveo…

Plato's position in the debate in the *Cratylus* about the principle of naming things remains debatable in scholarship. Is he a supporter of naturalism as the course of the discussion in the dialogue appears to show? And if he is, does he believe that the Greek language fits the principles of naturalism? Or doesn't it fit, and Plato has a project of a reform of the Greek language on naturalist principles? Or doesn't he accept either option and, being a supporter of naturalism, is he pessimistic about the existence of a natural language? Or, since Socrates reveals in the dialogue manifest difficulties about naturalism, does Plato after all endorse conventionalist claims, as some passages in the dialogue may indicate, and – even more – as a reader with a penetrating and trained eye may recognize even beyond what Socrates literally says? Or maybe Plato endorses a compromise between these two positions, represented in the dialogue by both Cratylus and Hermogenes? And finally, when one considers this continuous debate without any solution, maybe it is necessary to suppose that Plato sees little importance in the issue itself of naturalism vs. conventionalism, in comparison with the question whether the best way of enquiring about things is through their names, or if there is a direct way to do this?

The variety of possible solutions just mentioned is related not only to our understanding of the line of Socrates' argumentation in his discussion, first with Hermogenes and then with Cratylus. The position different scholars hold depends also on their understanding of the relation between Socrates' reasoning in each part of the discussion.

Let me recall the issue of Cratylus and Hermogenes in the dialogue and sketch the following debate. Cratylus claims that there are correct names "according to nature" for everything that exists, the same names for Greeks and barbarians. He distinguishes between the current names, which are appropriate to their bearers, such as Socrates' and Cratylus' names, and those that are inappropriate, like Hermogenes', but leaves obscure

what this correctness or appropriateness consists in (383 a 4 – 384 a 4). It is clear only that he believes that a name itself should reveal what object it really belongs to, and one may guess that Cratylus hints at etymological meanings of names. Cratylus' view thus has germs of what is usually called "linguistic naturalism", that is, a theory according to which there is an objective ("natural") criterion for using a name as a designation of a given object.

The opposed view of Hermogenes is on the contrary open and clear-cut:[1] there is no inherent correctness of names that would make them appropriate or inappropriate. Any arbitrarily chosen name can be assigned to any thing once language-speakers agree to employ it as the designation of this thing. The agreement is unstable, precisely because it is an arbitrary one – the language-speakers may make another agreement and change designations; new ones will function as successfully as the previous ones, as long as a new agreement will be in force (384 d 2–5). In the interim between one and another renaming, a name belongs to a thing in virtue of the custom and habit of those who made these names accustomed and who use them: οὐ γὰρ φύσει ἑκάστῳ πεφυκέναι ὄνομα οὐδὲν οὐδενί, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ καὶ ἔθει τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων (384 d 6–7). Notice that the linguistic custom established by those who made an agreement on naming a certain thing is here limited to the participants of this agreement.[2] By the same token, not all language-speakers need to be the participants of one and the same agreement. It is quite possible to make several agreements on one and the same thing, and nothing prevents anyone from calling it officially by one name and privately by another (385 a). The different

[1] Hermogenes' theory is usefully discussed and liberated *inter alia* from the undue accusations of modern scholars that he holds the "extremist" view that any person may use any name at any moment of communication, by Barney 2001, 31–41; Sedley 2003, 51–54; Ademollo 2011, 37–48.

[2] Together with Ademollo (2011, 41 f.) I take here ἐθίζω to be transitive and as having as its implied object ὄνομα, rather than people, but I disagree with his proposal that τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων refers to two categories of people, those who made the agreed-upon name habitual in their own use and those subsequent users who inherited this name. The article these participles share favors the option that it is one and the same category, those who have agreed and made the name habitual (aorist), and those who keep using this name (present). The examples Ademollo cites (42 n. 17) show that one article can unify two different categories, but this happens mostly when these categories are unified by some preceding word, which is not the case here. The renaming of slaves, which precedes the statement we discuss and which is used as an empirical basis for it, implies rather that τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων is a narrow linguistic community that both established and follows the habit.

languages and dialects of Greek testify that assigning a name to a thing depends entirely on the will of the imposers and that various names, arbitrary ones in Hermogenes' view, can be accordingly assigned to the same referents (385 c 5 – e 3).

Hermogenes' position is called conventionalism, and rightly so, because it is an example, historically the first attested one, of language philosophy according to which the assignment and using of a name is determined entirely by the will of language-speakers, their agreement or convention, and need not depend on any inherent properties of language units (words can be etymologically related to their referents, but this is irrelevant for full-fledged communication[3]). Let us, however, keep in

[3] Strictly speaking, we don't know Hermogenes' attitude toward etymology. Ademollo 2011, 42 says rightly that there is no stringent evidence to ascribe to him the view that names are only accidental strings of sounds without any etymology at all. He proposes instead that Hermogenes denies that names have "any necessarily appropriate etymological meaning". This may well be so, but we have no direct evidence that he holds such a view, either. One passage in the etymological section of the dialogue appears to be pertinent for Hermogenes' attitude (414 b 7 – 415 a 2). Here Socrates proposes a bold etymology of the word τέχνη that entails the insertion and deletion of four letters, upon which Hermogenes reacts with the word γλίσχρως, which I take to mean that Socrates' etymologizing is strained and evokes doubts (see part II for the discussion of this passage). Socrates justifies his restoration by reminding his listeners that the first names were distorted by the later users, so that in some cases it is already impossible to maintain what meaning they now have. Nevertheless, Socrates warns against arbitrary restorations of the initial form of a word and expresses his hope that Hermogenes would serve as a "wise supervisor" to keep Socrates' etymologizing in the bounds of moderation; Socrates asks him nevertheless to be not too exact, or Socrates' etymological drive may be arrested by excessive criticisms. It has been discussed how pertinent Hermogenes' criticism, Socrates' self-defence, and the latter's warning are for evaluating Plato's attitude toward Socrates' etymologizing on the whole (Ademollo 2011, 240 f.). But it has not been duly noticed that Hermogenes is represented, just in virtue of his being a confessed conventionalist (before the conversation with Socrates at least), as a critic of etymologists, who has a vigilant eye to strained and unconvincing etymologies. Socrates' reference back to Hermogenes' γλίσχρως at 435 c 4–7, in the moment he argues that claims of naturalism should be restricted, shows that he takes Hermogenes' criticism seriously and that it is pertinent for the issue of naturalism and conventionalism. Hermogenes' attitude (or that of his real prototypes) toward etymology is thus not a direct denial that words have etymology, even not that that they have an "appropriate" etymological meaning as a naturalist claims, but is rather a critical attitude toward the reliability of etymologizing. Of course, this attitude is instrumental in his rejection of naturalism, but rather by means of doubting the methods by which naturalists prove that names have an "appropriate" meaning.

mind that Hermogenes defends a specific variant of conventionalism: he does not simply say that any inherent properties of words are indifferent from the point of view of communication, but insists that they are both assigned to things and should be assigned arbitrarily. Perhaps for this reason he has nothing to say on how this agreement expands beyond those who initially made it or how it is preserved through generations.[4] In fact, within the framework of his theory in which the arbitrary name is imposed by a voluntary agreement, even made by the whole society, it would be difficult to explain what would make other persons who did not partake in this agreement adhere to the established use of the name rather than initiate a new agreement.[5]

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[4] His reference to the variety of languages (385 d 9 – e 3) may prove the contrary, namely after all that he views languages as going back ultimately to a single act of legislation that preserves its force through generations. But this reference appears as a part of an argument that any imposition of a name is valid only for those who imposed it, in which imposition by a whole people is on a par with temporal and changing imposition by individuals. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that, for Hermogenes, the differences between languages are the result of the permanent process of imposing and changing names in large communities, like in private use.

[5] Ademollo 2011, 38 rightly notices that Hermogenes concentrates one-sidedly on the agreements on the imposition of names and ignores the question how this agreement is preserved. He notices additionally that Hermogenes never considers explicitly the problem how the names were originally imposed, viz. how the initial agreement of all future language-speakers took place, and he pertinently opposes Hermogenes' view of different kinds of suppositions in classical texts on how the original establishing of linguistic and moral laws took place (39 n. 5). However, I see no foundation for Ademollo's proposal (made in analogy to Socrates' implicit agreement with Athenian laws, *Crito* 51 d – 52 b) that, for Hermogenes, the mechanism of preserving linguistic usage is an implicit agreement that takes place whenever a language speaker adheres to an established linguistic custom, and that by a similar implicit agreement the name invented arbitrarily by one speaker is gradually accepted by the other. There is no sign in the text that the idea of a person's silent agreement with an already established custom plays any role in Hermogenes' theory. That one should follow publicly the current Greek names (385 a 5–10) is a part of Socrates' argument, not Hermogenes' own view. In my view, the character of Hermogenes' theory suggests rather that in it there are no grounds for accepting any authority, and accordingly no reasons to adhere to previous agreements (see n. 3). Presumably, he has no quarrel with the view that one may adhere to the linguistic usage established by the authority of the state for the sake of convenience, but there is no basis for this in terms of his theory of arbitrary and temporally and spatially limited agreements. Lack of any idea of Hermogenes' on how names are passed on to us from our ancestors (388 d 9–11, see below n. 8) suggests rather that the horizon of his view is reduced to such limited agreements.

Socrates, who is invited to solve the issue, starts with a quick and apparently effective refutation. The preliminary discussion reveals that Hermogenes is opposed to Protagorean relativism and assumes that at least some things have their intrinsic properties, their own nature that is independent of persons who treat them. He thus has to agree that handling things in different crafts has an objective basis – the things are handled according to their nature, not according to a craftsman's will. Speaking of things and naming a thing as part of speaking is also a kind of handling things and accordingly must be as appropriate as cutting, burning, etc. them (385 e 4 a – 387 d 8).[6]

The next step of this refutation is the discussion of what the function of the name is. Relying on the same analogy with crafts, Socrates argues that the name is an "instrument" and must have its appropriate function, like a drill or κερκίς, a pin-beater, the instrument used for separating the weft and the warp in weaving, which otherwise entangle.[7] Contrary to the conventionalist doctrine that the only function of the name is to point out to an interlocutor what thing a speaker has in mind, Socrates claims that the name is an instrument by which we are teaching one another and separating things in respect of their properties, just as a pin-beater separates threads. The name is thus the instrument appropriate for teaching and separating "being" (387 d 10 – 388 b 11). This is a clue to Socrates' understanding of the function of the name, which is of course a matter of scholarly debates. However, it seems to be clear at this provisional stage that, according to Socrates, the name is inherently related to the thing it indicates, its referent: it should by itself, due to its own properties, disclose properties of this referent to the extent that we will be able to distinguish one named object from another by the true properties of these objects.

The perfect user of the name is an expert in the craft of naming things. But before identifying this expert, Socrates turns to the production of the instruments of the craft, the names. As in the other crafts, to perform his job perfectly, this person needs an instrument made by the perfect craftsman. The person of this craftsman is a mystery, but Socrates proposes that since νόμος, the "law", "from generation to generation trades us the names", the creator of the names should be one who has established this "law".

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[6] Sedley criticises the standard understanding of this argument and proposes an alternative understanding of it, which I follow (Sedley 2003, 54–58).

[7] See Ademollo 2011, 108–110 for the argument, on the whole convincing, that κερκίς is a pin-beater, not a shuttle, as usually understood, and for discussion of remaining difficulties.

Here for the first time in the dialogue, the figure of the linguistic lawgiver appears, which plays the central role in Socrates' naturalist teaching.[8] This person should be a connoisseur of the legislative craft, viz. a person which appears most rarely among the people (388 e – 389 a). Socrates maintains that one of the conventionalist theory's claims is thus refuted, namely that any ordinary person at any time has the right to arbitrarily impose and change names; he says that naming is an expert handling of things and thus is in need of craftsman's expertise in a manner similar to the handling of things by other crafts, with the difference that the expert in naming occurs most rarely among all crafts. Implicitly, due to this conclusion, the answer to the question that a conventionalist is not able to give is provided – why the language in use is one we inherit from our ancestors; it is so because of the unique authority of its creators, masters of name-giving. This does not mean that conventionalist naming does not occur (remember Hermogenes' example of naming foreign slaves), but Socrates' view throughout the whole dialogue is obviously that language on the whole is an inheritance from the remote past.

Socrates now argues that this linguistic legislator who produces a name for a thing should possess the knowledge of the Form, of the essence of the name as the appropriate tool of naming, like the craftsmen possess the generic knowledge of the tool they produce (examples from crafts). He would be also able, like the other craftsmen, to implement this generic Form in the material he uses, to acquire a species of this tool that is needed for a particular kind of work. The linguistic legislator thus implements the generic Form of the name in the phonetic material he uses, letters and syllables, in order to acquire an appropriate name for a particular thing (389 a 5 – d 8).

This argument, which maintains the priority of form over matter in every production, helps further to reject the argument based on the differences among languages that Hermogenes earlier used to prove that names are normally assigned to things arbitrarily. Socrates draws again an analogy from crafts: making different words for one and the same thing is on a par with making instruments for the same operations, like a drill for drilling. The different kinds of drills can be produced from

[8] Note that Hermogenes is represented as entirely puzzled by Socrates' asking, "What gives us the names which we use?" The reason is probably that his theory, which claims that names are nothing else than products of agreements made by ordinary people, has no answer to the questions of the mechanism that makes these agreements binding for the whole society and of the mechanism making them stable across generations (see above n. 5).

different kinds of iron, but they all remain appropriate to the degree that they all correspond to the general Form of drill. By the same token, the different names for one and the same thing in various languages remain appropriate to the respective things to the degree that the general Form of this name is implemented in varying material, i.e. different syllables (389 d – 390 a).[9]

As the final step in refuting Hermogenes, Socrates now returns to a person who uses the names made by the lawgiver. A person should be capable of judging whether a name, produced by the linguistic lawgiver, is appropriate for the thing this name should indicate. Similar to other crafts, in which a perfect user of the tool produced, i.e., the perfect representative of the craft that needs this tool, is the person who is most qualified to judge the legislator's production and is the master of correct questioning and answering, viz. the philosopher-dialectician. The dialectician, and he only, is thus able to supervise the work of a lawgiver, among both Greeks and barbarians (390 b 1 – d 7). Thus, as Socrates sums up, Cratylus appears to be right: names belong to their referents by nature and creators of names are not ordinary persons, but only those who are able to grasp the name that naturally belongs to each referent and to implement the Form of each name (universal for all) in letters and syllables.

The necessity for names to be appropriate for their referents is thus formally proved. Socrates next demonstrates what this appropriateness consists it. Starting with being puzzled about this, he soon finds a dim answer in the Homeric opposition of human and divine names – the latter being presumably more correct than the former and at least one, that of Astyanax, having an obvious etymological meaning, "a lord of a city", one

[9] It is unclear why Socrates mentions the same Form of the drill, and accordingly the same Form of the name in different materials. One possible answer is that, as in a previous portion of his reasoning, the instruments in different lands differ in their specific functions (the names would be different since the referents are not quite identical, but differ, like Indian and African elephants). Yet in that case, Socrates would speak of different sub-Forms of instruments rather than of different kinds of material, and on the contrary, he stresses that the issue is one and the same Form, and only the material, like iron, is different. Hence, Socrates has in view that for the same Form of a name that should be implemented, the same material is not available in every land; for instance, iron ore is not the same everywhere. Thus, in all probability, Socrates here anticipates his theory that the names can be analyzed into semantically meaningful letters and syllables; note that the lawgivers in different countries, even if they use the same letters to convey the same ideas, may combine them in different syllables and in different names; for details of this theory and for other interpretations, cf. Sedley 2003, 66 f.; 130 f.; Ademollo 2011, 136 f.

that is appropriate, at least *in spe*, to its bearer. Thus, the appropriateness of an etymological meaning to properties of the name's referent is what makes the name "correct". Socrates maintains at the same point that the same idea is expressed by a quite different string of sounds in the name of Hector, Astyanax's father, which allegedly derives from ἔχω and means "possessor of a city" (392 c – 393 b). He thus sets an important principle of his naturalism: one and the same referent does not necessarily have only one appropriate name (see above on the variety of languages as being compatible with naturalism).

Socrates now begins his examination of all kinds of names, from the proper names of heroes and ordinary people, through the names of gods, religious concepts, physical objects, to epistemological and ethical concepts. Most etymologies (but not all) sound fanciful to modern readers of the dialogue. Two important findings of Socrates' emerge in the course of his etymologizing. The first finding has a "linguistic" character: many contemporary names have lost their original form given to them by ancient lawgivers, because they were distorted by later users either for the sake of euphony or simply because of incompetence; etymologizing is for this reason a complicated procedure of restoring the initial form by means of inserting the lost letters and deleting the redundant ones (414 c–e). The second finding concerns the philosophical background of ancient lawgivers: it becomes apparent that they were proto-Heracliteans, who came to the view that all things are in constant flux, and they therefore brought the accompanying idea of movement into the concepts they encoded into the names they created, in that all that they consider positive was related to movement and rejected the cessation of movement (411 b – 412 d).

At last, the question emerges that appears to endanger the whole enterprise: etymologically analyzing names into their component elements inevitably leads to simple names that cannot be further analyzed and whose appropriateness for their referents is thus beyond proof. But Socrates finds a solution: the simple word, which is the "first" chronologically in name-giving, should be composed of "letters" that themselves correspond to properties of things, like "hard", "soft", "large", etc. (421 c 3 – 427 d 2).[10]

The etymological section here ends with the approval of both Hermogenes and – even more so – Cratylus, who finds himself in total

[10] See below p. 221–223 for details of this theory of Socrates' on mimetic sounds and on its relevance to the issue of naturalism and conventionalism.

agreement with Socrates' reasoning on the whole. Socrates, however, is far less certain and finds it necessary to reexamine what he said before. But he does not do so, at least not directly, and he turns instead to the refutation of Cratylus' naturalist claims, whose radicalism goes beyond the naturalism that Socrates defended. The course of this discussion and its result as concerns the issue of naturalism and conventionalism are what primarily interests me in this paper, and they will be scrutinized in what follows.

A few words on the ultimate part of the conversation with Cratylus, which I will not discuss in detail. In it, Socrates argues that Cratylus' unconditional belief in the value of names as sources of philosophical truth is untenable: first because the philosophical message of names is inconsistent – while many names for positive concepts indeed point out that the world is in permanent flux, others rather suggest that it is at rest; second because one should assume that the ancient name-givers apprehended philosophical truth before they implemented names – thus, there should be a direct way of enquiry, not through names, and a better one, because it would be an enquiry into things themselves, not their resemblances. This refutes the claims that names, as primary bearers of philosophical truth, should be accepted without examination, which of course does not deny the value for enquiry of names that are appropriate for their referents (435 d 4 – 439 b 9).

In the remainder of the dialogue, Socrates considers the last issue – granted that names on the whole point to all things being in constant motion, one comes to a lamentable view of the world in which nothing is stable and accordingly there are no objects of knowledge and no knowledge itself. But if on the contrary there *are* objects of knowledge and knowledge itself, and there are Forms like that of beautiful and good, then Heracliteanism is wrong. Although it still remains to investigate which horn of this dilemma is true, it is clear at least that one cannot rely on names to solve a question as important as this (439 b 10 – 440 e 7).

It is impossible here to go into the details of the long history of the study of the dialogue. It is sufficient to sketch the main positions and their main arguments, as well as the current results of scholarly debates. The arguments themselves will be weighed in appropriate places in this paper.

Different opinions on the subject appeared already in the 19th century. Of course, many or probably most scholars believed that Plato, in agreement with Socrates' argumentation throughout the dialogue, was on the side of naturalism, but that the last part of his discourse, directed against Cratylus, led ultimately to a compromise between radical

naturalism and radical conventionalism.[11] This position corresponds to the literal meaning of the words with which Socrates concludes his refutation of the radical version of naturalism presented by Cratylus (435 b 2 – c 2). I will return to this passage in due time.

However, not all scholars were satisfied with this simple solution. Already F. Schleiermacher maintained that it is not easy to grasp Plato's own position in the debate.[12] Later, some scholars supposed that in spite of his formal proclamation of a compromise, Plato is inclined at the end to the view that agreement is a sufficient principle and that natural resemblance is superfluous; see for instance J. Deuschle[13] and, after him, H. Steinthal.[14] Wilamowitz argued that Plato finally comes to endorse conventionalism entirely.[15]

Praechter drew the conclusion from the discussion of σκληρότης that language-speakers understood each other by means of the names that *correspond only partially to their referents* due to linguistic habit and convention and this signifies that Hermogenes was partially right although Plato remains convinced that Hermogenes' imposition of arbitrary names cannot stand as the principle of language: he solves this discrepancy by supposing that convention, which reigns the field of language, should in Plato's views not be a pure arbitrariness (in the imposition of names), but that it is necessary to distinguish the impositions which better and worse resemble their referents.[16]

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[11] This view was held by many prominent 19th-century scholars of Plato, among them Tenemann 1799, 341–342; Ast 1816, 264 ff.; Stallbaum 1835, 13; Zeller [4]1889, 632 ([1]1846), and later Friedländer 1964, 197; 328 n. 28. They understood the exact character of this compromise very diversely, of course. The earlier discussion on this subject was surveyed well by Benfey 1866, 198–208.

[12] Schleiermacher 1857, 9 f. ([1]1807).

[13] Deuschle 1852, 70; see contra Benfey 1866, 202 f. (the discussion of the key passage on σκληρότης).

[14] Steinthal 1890, I, 106 f. ([1]1863).

[15] Wilamowitz 1920, I, 289 (at the end of the dialogue, Plato supports Hermogenes' view of names as arbitrary signs that can freely change their reference; he stands for the same view in his later *Seventh Letter*, 343 b; his disappointment in etymology is reflected in the *Verachtung der Wörter* that he expresses in *Pol*. 261 e, as well as in his rejection of constant scientific terminology).

[16] Praechter 1926, 256–258. Praechter's interpretation is marred by his wrong understanding of the initial collision of the dialogue: he ascribes to Cratylus the view that language is a *Naturzeugnis* (on this confusion, which often occurs in old scholarship, see Ademollo 2011, 5–6) and thus uses the word "convention" in the broad sense of the imposition of names as opposed to their natural origin; this imposition can be either arbitrary or one that respects the name's resemblance to its

Richard Robinson was the first to argue consistently and transparently in favor of Plato's conventionalism. He claimed that Plato was committed to conventionalism, although, as he admits, there is no direct indication of such an attitude in the dialogue itself and although the theory of language developed by Socrates in the dialogue corresponds "to the letter" to naturalism from beginning to end.[17] Nevertheless, Robinson refers to indirect indications: the absence in Plato's other dialogues of any sympathy for the theory of the "correctness of names by nature"; Plato's *Seventh Letter*, on the contrary, contains a passage that points to the variability of words and expressions for the same things (343 b), which is in line with Hermogenes' views. In addition, Robinson tends to believe that all of Socrates' arguments in defense of naturalism against Hermogenes at the beginning of the dialogue contain logical errors, and errors of a kind that Plato could not fail to notice. Finally, Robinson finds an acknowledgment of Plato's commitment to conventionalism in the very part of the text that seemingly testifies that agreement serves only as an auxiliary means to understand the referents of words when the similarity of the word to the thing denoted proves insufficient (435 a–c).[18]

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referent. Praechter thus takes Socrates' argumentation as the defense of the second kind of imposition. This however begs the question: if the lack of resemblance of names opens the door to conventionalism, it can be only conventionalism that makes any resemblance superfluous. But if it is the case, how can Socrates' defense of the imposition of names that resemble their referents retain its force? In spite of Praechter's obvious mistakes, one can find here a dilemma that continues embarrassing the scholars of *Cratylus*: if most names are only imperfect resemblances of the things they indicate and understanding them is due to habit and convention, then what prevents us from taking this latter principle as the only one and from removing any desire of resemblance entirely?

[17] Robinson 1969, 118–125.

[18] It is beyond the scope of this article to examine critically all of Robinson's arguments; I focus only on his point that the defense of naturalism in Cratylus has no parallel in Plato's dialogues. Here it is worth remembering that in Plato's *Charmides*, written earlier than Cratylus, Socrates, at the end of the discussion, expresses disappointment that his interlocutors have failed to grasp the "thing" for which the "lawgiver" has established the name σωφροσύνη (175 b 2–4). This passage implies that Socrates considers this name (and apparently also other names) to have been established by the lawgiver, not through the variable agreement of native speakers, and to have a stable reference due to this establishment, which apparently took place in ancient times. This statement, despite its brevity, is close enough to the basic assumptions of Socratic naturalism in the *Cratylus* as argued in his refutation of Hermogenes. Also, the passage from the *Seventh Letter*, although its emphasis is different from that in the much earlier *Cratylus*, does not contradict the views expressed by Socrates in *Cratylus*, as I hope to show.

Malcolm Schofield's paper[19] in favor of Plato's final conventionalist position was more detailed and sophisticated. He argued briefly that the etymological section shows, first, that there is no reliable method of analyzing an actual language like Greek ("for the most part Socrates is occupied in a curious form of amusement, pursued with a good deal of frivolity and with frequent acknowledgment of the forced, arbitrary, fanciful and tendentious character of many of his derivations"), and second, that any analysis reveals not the truth of things, but only the opinions of name-givers: their belief that things are involved in constant flux (p. 63). The section on the "first names", those that cannot be analyzed into more primitive words and thus should disclose the nature of their referents by means of the sounds ("letters") and syllables they are composed of, contains the indirect retroactive criticism of the etymological section: whereas in the former Socrates largely ignored the phonetic composition of names, he now acknowledges its importance for non-primitive names as well (p. 64–65).[20]

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[19] Schofield 1982.

[20] Schofield's attempt to present the etymological section as discrediting possibilities of reliable etymological analysis, which is not of course new with him, remains debatable (see further p. 209–212). His detecting a self-criticism of the earlier etymological analysis in the section on mimetic capacities of sounds seems also problematic: evidence Schofield cites (425 a 6 – b 3, 426 a 3 – b 2, 427 c 8–9) shows only Socrates now demanding that the correctness of non-primitive names depends crucially on their resembling the capacities of primitive ones, viz. on the capacities of their phonetic resemblance; he does not demand here that the non-primitive names that could be etymologized should be reduced directly to mimetic letters. More difficult is whether there is in fact a contradiction between Socrates' "soft" naturalism, according to which one and the same referent can be indicated by several etymologically correct names that have entirely different phonetic composition (see Socrates' explanation how the differences in the words for the same things in various languages can be accounted for on naturalist principles, 389 d – 390 a, and his claim that the names in the same language, Hector and Astyanax, which have different phonetic composition, refer in equal measure to the "holder of city", 393 a–d), and the theory of imitative letters, from which the "first names" are composed. However, we need not suppose a contradiction here. The theory of imitative letters assumes that the name-givers noticed the similarity between the work of speech organs when they pronounced a certain letter and some "thing" in the world, like "sweet", "large", "crushing", etc.: the primitive names were composed of such letters unified in meaningful syllables and then in names (426 e 4 – 427 d). This theory does demand that such mimetic letters went into strictly determined combinations of syllables and further of words, see below p. 221–223 on the details of this theory (here I differ from Sedley 2003, 130 f., who objects to Schofield, supposing that for a Greek-speaker the sounds of Persian might appear so alien that they lead him to imagine quite different sound systems in which the sounds have different mimetic capacities).

And the analysis of the first names is itself put in doubt by Socrates' own remarks that it appears ridiculous to him (see 425 d 1–3; 426 b 5–6).[21] Much more detailed and important for this paper is Schofield's discussion of the final part of the dialogue, Socrates' conversation with Cratylus. Schofield argued that in this part of the dialogue, Socrates not only refutes the radical version of naturalism that Cratylus defends, but also attacks his own theory that he defended in previous passages. His discussion of a problematic word σκληρότης is the most extreme plea against naturalism in general: Cratylus' forced recognition of the need for convention in those cases when the descriptive properties of the word are insufficient to understand it questions the very principle of the word's similarity to the thing it designates (p. 77 f.).

This line of interpretation is based on the fact that many of Socrates' arguments in favor of naturalism are not sustainable for us and that the naturalist theory itself, as it appears in the dialogue, contains a number of unrealistic demands on language: words ("names" in the terminology of the dialogue) must serve as philosophically true definitions of things, which are "encoded" in their etymology; the creators of language must act under the guidance of a philosopher-dialectician; understanding the meaning of words ideally consists not in grasping their referents due to linguistic habit, but in decoding their etymology or in recognizing the symbolic meanings of the sounds ("letters" in Plato's terminology) from which the simplest words are composed. It seems unlikely that Plato could have failed to see the price to be paid for putting such a view into practice.

Clearly, this interpretation of the dialogue as a hidden defense of conventionalism is attractive because it reveals Plato's greater sobriety about the descriptive possibilities of language and thus his greater proximity to our time. However, there are serious obstacles to accepting it: first, the lack of direct evidence in the text that conventionalism ultimately prevails in Socrates' eyes makes such constructions inevitably subjective, relying on indirect indications that allow for different interpretations even among the proponents of this view. Second, there is nothing in Plato's

[21] The fact that, in spite of these remarks, Socrates goes ahead with the analysis of the words into the mimetic sounds diminishes seriously their significance: instead of putting this procedure in doubt, they rather expose it as ridiculous for non-experts but inevitable for one who investigates all consequences of the thesis that the names should resemble their referents; see already Grote 1865, 541 n. p, who pertinently compares *Rep*. 452 a–e (the proposal to educate women in gymnastics, the art of war, etc. will appear ludicrous, but one who has recognized its usefulness would not find it so).

dialogues similar to the situation when Socrates, throughout the dialogues, proves the truth of a view by means of arguments that the reader himself, without Plato's help, must ultimately recognize as untenable. Finally, it is difficult to imagine that Plato, who sought to subordinate any field of human activity that fell within the scope of his interests to the sovereign authority of knowledge operating in that field, could accept that in language the only criterion of correctness will be the agreement of ordinary people who are able to give any name to any thing.[22]

Of course, one of the reasons for believing that the end result of the dialogue is the victory of conventionalism was the etymological part of the dialogue. For a long time, the view of Socratic etymologies in the *Cratylus* as parodies directed against the search for higher wisdom in language by Plato's contemporaries prevailed almost unchallenged in scholarship. The "lack of seriousness" of the Socratic explication of how words can be likenesses of the things they designate also casts a shadow on the sincerity

[22] Ademollo 2022, 45 f., who argues that Plato is a proponent of conventionalism (see below p. 212 f.), notices this remarkable departure from his usual belief that reason is capable of comprehending any domain of reality and of dictating to it the appropriate criteria of achievement and failure. And he supposes that Plato was aware of the specific character of language as the field of subjectivity: "As Hermogenes suggests in the first pages of the dialogue, 385 e – 386 a, the subject-dependent nature of the relation between names and things is actually compatible with the subject-independent nature of things themselves. I surmise that Plato viewed this as an interesting anomaly and that this prompted him to investigate the issue as thoroughly as he could. He did so by lending the naturalist theory, to which he was instinctively attracted for entirely general reasons, the best support he could think of before eventually discarding it". All this is quite comprehensible from a psychological point of view, but it begs the question why Plato as writer behaves so misleadingly. The position Ademollo here assumes for Plato – the compatibility of arbitrary name-giving with the subject-independent nature of things – is in fact never stated in the dialogue: Socrates points out to Hermogenes the contradiction of the first view, which contradiction Hermogenes obviously was not aware of before (385 e – 386 a), and then he builds his reasoning that refutes Hermogenes' conventionalism on the premise that the objects have a subject-independent nature (reasoning about the name as an "instrument" whose properties must objectively correspond to its function, that is, to be the description of the essence of the thing to which the name is assigned, see above). Socrates thus presumes that if the latter, anti-Protagorean view, which both interlocutors share, is right, then conventionalism is arguably wrong. If we assume with Ademollo that Socrates' argument against conventionalism, which maintains his naturalist thesis, was invalid, then this does not mean that conventionalism is compatible with the subject-independent nature of things – rather it would refute the anti-Protagorean view of things, and we remain with conventionalism as founded on Protagorean relativism.

of the Socratic defense of the very naturalistic principle of likeness.[23] Moreover, in the final part of the dialogue, Socrates demonstrates to Cratylus that the etymologies of at least some words show that the creators of language were not in all cases supporters of the Heraclitean doctrine of universal changeability, but rather endorsed rest and had a negative attitude toward motion, which implies that words cannot be a source of consistent knowledge of things and that they must be known directly, not through words. Proponents of the ultimate victory of conventionalism in the dialogue see in these arguments an indirect refutation of Socrates' argument in the first part of the dialogue that names are tools that serve to instruct about the nature of the things they designate. But even those who argue in favor of naturalism as Plato's ultimate word saw in the lack of seriousness of etymologies a sign that the naturalism that wins finally does not show Socrates' exemplifications of how names "reveal" the nature of things in the etymological section.

This almost unanimous scholarly view of Socrates' etymologies has been challenged by David Sedley,[24] who made a strong case against understanding etymologizing in the dialogue as a parody and covered the criticism of prevailing practices in the treatment of language. Sedley pointed out, first, that there are etymologies similar to the *Cratylus* in other dialogues of Plato, where there is no reason to assume their polemical purpose. Moreover, Plato's alleged criticism of the exegetical reliability of etymologies would be something unique: the etymologies of the *Cratylus* do not differ from those practiced in antiquity and in modern times until the advent of comparative-historical linguistics; there are no known ancient examples of criticism of individual etymologies or methods of etymologization from the point of view of their linguistic correctness, and it is in fact difficult to imagine such criticism in the absence of secure criteria of morphological analysis.

Based on these considerations, Sedley sees the etymological part of the dialogue as a natural continuation of Socrates' argument against Hermogenes' conventionalism. The etymologies aim to show that the most important vocabulary of the Greek language was created by the ancient "lawgivers" as concise definitions of the properties of things, rather than as arbitrary designations established by agreement. The final part of the dialog, Socrates' conversation with Cratylus, contains a coherent refutation of a number of positions of radical naturalism, i.e., the requirement

[23] It is well seen that scholars who consider Plato a conventionalist in the full sense have usually referred to the "lack of seriousness" of Socratic etymologies.

[24] Sedley 1998; 2003.

that names show an absolute similarity to the things they indicate; the thesis of Cratylus that etymologization is the main method of cognition of things is further refuted by proving that the opinions about things of the ancient creators of language cannot be considered infallible. At the same time, according to Sedley, the main stance of naturalism, which Socrates defended in the first part of the dialogue (that the purpose of names is to serve as "tools" for distinguishing the essential properties of things), is neither directly nor indirectly undermined by this criticism. Similarly, the *exegetical* correctness of Socrates' etymologization, and thus his demonstration that the Greek language was created according to the principles of naturalism, is not questioned, although, as is shown in the final part of the dialogue, the very meanings of the words that the etymologization has decoded are not always successful definitions of things philosophically, since they reveal a one-sided, Heraclitean understanding of the world as being in a state of continuous and absolute change.[25]

This balanced and insightful interpretation is attractive, because it makes a strong case in favor of the unity of the dialogue, arguing that in all relevant parts of the dialogue Socrates defends naturalism – arguing in the first part for the desirability of names that are appropriate to the nature of things; demonstrating in the etymological and "mimetic" sections what this appropriateness consists in; and last, limiting the claims of radical naturalism in the conversation with Cratylus, who posited such high standards of linguistic correctness that this threatens naturalism by staying in splendid isolation without any influence on the real language.

My disagreements with David Sedley are not of primary relevance for this paper. I entirely agree with him that the etymological section is a natural development of the argument in the first part, and that it is not refuted by Socrates' arguments in his conversation with Cratylus. I am not convinced, however, that Plato considers Socrates' etymological reconstruction of the views of the ancient creators of language to be unconditionally correct. Sedley is probably right that Plato, like his contemporaries, was not armed with secure criteria to distinguish sound from unsound etymologies, from a linguistic point of view. But Socrates points out that at least one word, ἐπιστήμη, can be etymologized differently than he had suggested earlier (437 a 2–8), since it can be seen as a positive evaluation of the idea of rest rather than Heraclitean motion. This suggests that, for Plato, the results of etymologizing are not entirely reliable, not

[25] Sedley 2019 argues that some passages in the later *Sophist* also confirm Plato's commitment to linguistic naturalism.

because linguistic criteria are applied to them, but because he is aware that etymologizing is a quasi-philosophical enterprise of looking for empirical confirmation in language in favor of one or another philosophical view. In the passage already cited (414 b 10 – c 3),[26] Plato has Hermogenes react to Socrates' bold etymologizing as "strained": here we have other evidence that etymology can be criticized as unreliable, just because the restoration of the original form of the name entails too many changes and is thus not secure. This I would call a "common sense" criterion of etymological correctness.

These suspicions that Plato does not consider Socrates' etymologies entirely reliable does not undermine the whole defense of naturalism. On the contrary, the reconstruction of the past of language by etymologizing sufficiently demonstrates that most names are descriptive rather than arbitrary conventionalist designations. The accuracy and reliability of this reconstruction is less essential, since Plato is interested only to a limited extent in the views of its creators reflected in language; for him, unlike for Cratylus, their opinions, and opinions in general, cannot in themselves serve as a support in the search for truth.

Sedley's monograph, which relies primarily on Socrates' direct judgments and arguments in the dialogue, is followed by Francesco Ademollo's commentary on the dialogue, which uses a significantly different hermeneutic strategy.[27] Ademollo agrees with Sedley that Plato does not question the "exegetical" correctness of Socratic etymologies on the whole, although he doubts the seriousness of some etymologies, and he proposes that their goal is not only to restore the ideas of ancient name-givers, but also "pleasure and amusement" (p. 253). Anyway, for Plato, the presence in language of evidence that words are created as descriptions of the properties of the things they designate, as Ademollo argues, does not serve as an argument in favor of naturalism, that is in favor of "correct" descriptiveness as the norm for language. Like Robinson and Schofield, Ademollo believes that Socrates' argument against Cratylus leads to the complete victory of conventionalism and the refutation of the claims of naturalism. However, unlike these scholars, Ademollo agrees that Socrates' very statements summarizing his reasoning in this part of the dialogue (435 b 2 – c 6) point not to a refutation of naturalism, but merely to a concession that convention, along with resemblance, plays a role in designation. Ademollo therefore suggests that Socrates as a character

[26] See n. 3 above.
[27] Ademollo 2011.

in the dialogue in this part of the conversation is not yet conscious of what is clear to Plato himself and what should be clear to a competent reader. According to Ademollo, it is only in the finale, after Socrates has demonstrated that words cannot serve as a reliable source of knowledge of things, that conventionalism triumphs definitively: "for if a name may convey false information about its referent, then clearly it can only indicate its referent by convention".[28]

This hermeneutics that distinguishes Socrates' arguments and conclusions from the unspoken thoughts of Plato himself, who thereby stimulates the reader's independent philosophical search, certainly has the right to exist. At the same time, however, it is worth remembering that scholars of the dialogue do not unequivocally agree on the detection of defects in Socrates' arguments; they approach it with the full armor of modern logic and philology. We have, therefore, no certainty that Plato himself was conscious of these logical errors. Moreover, even if Plato was aware of the weakness of some of Socrates' arguments in defense of naturalism, this does not mean that he intentionally made them incorrect. He could have cited them for want of better ones because he was convinced of the truth of the theory they were defending.[29]

Recent decades show not a waning, but rather a growing debate over Plato's position on naturalism and conventionalism.[30] Alongside those who, like Sedley, see Plato as a naturalist who shares Socrates' arguments in favor of naturalism, or as a conventionalist who disagrees with these arguments (Robinson, Schofield, Ademollo),[31] there are scholars who find in Plato a more complex version of naturalism. David

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[28] Ademollo 2011, 419; 2022, 41. The discussion in the final part of the *Cratylus* is beyond the scope of this article. Here I shall confine myself to the statement that, in my opinion, this part does not shed light on the outcome of the collision between naturalism and conventionalism in the dialogue (here I agree with Schofield 2013, 491 against Ademollo).

[29] It is worth recalling here that, until the end of his life, Plato was unable to find objections to the arguments refuting his theory of Forms and their relation to sensuous things, expressed by Parmenides in a one-name dialogue and apparently belonging to Plato himself. Some of these arguments were later used by Aristotle in his criticism of Plato. But the lack of convincing counterarguments did not prevent Plato from continuing to endorse the theory of Forms in dialogues later than *Parmenides*, including his last dialogue, the *Laws*.

[30] Proponents of both opposing views are named in Silverman 1992, 25–26; more recent literature is cited by Meißner 2023.

[31] In favor of Plato's conventionalism, see also Smith 2008; 2014, 96 on the σκληρότης-argument.

Meißner develops the interpretation proposed earlier by N. Kretzmann and some other scholars: he argues that the radical theses of Cratylus in his discussion with Socrates (only the exact likenesses of the things they designate can be considered names) are a natural consequence of the hyper-naturalism that Socrates himself defended in the sections on the etymological and "mimetic" correctness of names; the refutation of these theses should demonstrate that the view that underlies the reasoning in these sections is erroneous, but the argument brought forward by Socrates in the first part in favor of naturalism that the name is a tool for designating things remains valid. I would call this the interpretation of the *Cratylus* as a plea in favor of naturalism without etymological and mimetic appropriateness.[32]

T. Baxter believes that Socrates' arguments against Cratylus prove only that the Greek language does not meet the standards of naturalism, but that an ideal language could be created by a "lawgiver" who would be guided by the precepts of a dialectical philosopher, in accordance with Socrates' reasoning in the first part of the dialogue.[33] Rachel Barney suggests that Plato was in favor of a naturalistic correspondence between word and thing, but saw the impossibility of achieving this ideal and

[32] Meißner argues (like Kretzmann and some other scholars before him), however, that the argument of names as tools defends naturalism to the degree that names are assigned to genuine classes of things and are thus appropriate for designating just these classes; but at the same time, he defends convention as a means for determining the phonetic composition of names, see Meißner 2022 forthcoming, esp. 14–18. According to Meißner, the protagonists of the dialogue fail to see that names are not identical to strings of sounds and for this reason are unable to reconcile both results of the discussion – that there is a natural correctness of names, on the one hand, and that "correct names need not be descriptions or imitations of their referents", on the other (p. 18). According to him, Plato expects that readers of the dialogue should discover this truth themselves (p. 19). I have very strong doubts that Plato steers his readers to this final conclusion, but for the purposes of this paper it is sufficient that I hope to refute one of the assumptions of this line of interpretation, namely that the discussion of σκληρότης demonstrates that, according to Plato, "correct names need not be descriptions or imitations of their referents" (see p. 3). In this, Meißner agrees with the proponents of the conventionalist reading of the dialogue.

[33] See especially Baxter 1992, 80–85, 186. Baxter's main predecessor was Theodore Benfey (Benfey 1866, 189–330); V. Goldschmidt and after him J. Derbolav were proponents of a modified version of the same understanding of the dialogue: that Plato sought to reform his own philosophical language in the spirit of naturalism, in accordance with the theoretical results of the *Cratylus* (Goldschmidt 1940; Derbolav 1972, 57). These judgments, in my opinion, still deserve attention.

therefore had to lean toward conventionalism (Platonic "pessimism").[34] Some scholars, apparently unable to give preference to the arguments of either side in this scholarly debate, argue that the naturalism/conventionalism dilemma has no solution in the dialogue and was not even relevant for Plato.[35] I cannot agree with this, since through the mouth of Socrates the text definitely expresses an attitude toward this conflict. However difficult it may be to interpret this very passage because of its lapidary nature and the difficulty of relating it to the whole discussion in the dialogue, this interpretation is necessary, and an approximation to a correct understanding is possible.

Although in order to understand the results of Socrates' reasoning in the *Cratylus* it is of course necessary to consider all parts of the dialogue, in this article I will limit myself to the conversation between Socrates and Cratylus and first of all to that part of it in which there are direct statements by Socrates (and the last of them in the dialogue) about his attitude toward naturalism and conventionalism, which is controversial

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[34] Barney 2001, 134–142.

[35] See Keller 2000, who believes that the issue of conventionalism and naturalism is of secondary importance for Plato, because he tries to demonstrate that whichever of the two views is correct, the things should be investigated directly, and not via names. But why should the importance of this stance for Plato rule out the importance for him of the subject that occupies the lion's share of the dialogue? For a more sophisticated variant of this position, see Schofield 2017, who argues (if I understand him rightly) that there is a certain discrepancy between the initial presentation of Cratylus in the dialogue as keeping silence on the true content of his doctrine (in the vein of Plato's standard picture of Heracliteans) and his cooperative attitude toward Socrates' questioning in the final part, where he becomes the bearer of important epistemological and metaphysical theories. According to Schofield, this double picture of Cratylus is a part of the authorial strategy of Plato, who wishes to transport his audience from the initial problem of the correctness of names to philosophically more important "logical, epistemological and metaphysical positions that might be taken to be implicit in linguistic naturalism" (p. 198). This broadening of the horizon of discussion in Cratylus' part of the dialogue is beyond doubt, and I entirely agree that in the final part of the discussion (after 435 c) the issue of conventionalism vs. naturalism is already not the matter of the discussion. But it is questionable whether the issue itself thus became less important. Rather, for good or bad, this issue is inherently connected with these philosophical problems, and its previously attained solution (the victory of naturalism, as I believe) is relevant for the discussion of these problems. For instance, the final part of the conversation may be taken as showing that linguistic naturalism that entails the existence of things' stable nature that is not relative to subjects (as Socrates earlier argued, 386 d 8 – e 4) does not fit well with Heraclitean flux, but rather implies permanent objects that do not change over time, that is of Forms.

among the researchers of the dialogue. The interpretation of these statements themselves is a matter for debate and is of key importance for understanding Plato's position. Yet one cannot limit oneself to the simple, albeit fair, statement that, taken by themselves, these words indicate a compromise between naturalism and conventionalism, for scholars often raised the question why this compromise does not imply a complete rejection of naturalism in favour of conventionalism. Socrates' reasoning, as I will argue, gives a clear and consistent answer to this question.

So, let us turn to the part of Socrates' argumentation against Cratylus in which the two interlocutors return to the question of the role of convention in the proper naming of things. In the previous part of the conversation, Socrates' arguments force Cratylus to soften the requirements of the correspondence of linguistic expressions to the reality they designate: Cratylus is now ready to agree that the ancient "name-givers", the creators of language, were not infallible and the words they created cannot be more or less exact likenesses of things (431 a 8 – 433 b 7); moreover, Cratylus is forced to admit that words cannot in principle be exact likenesses of things and it is necessary to consider their correspondence to things "in general terms" as the criterion of truth of words and utterances, despite the presence of superfluous elements that do not correspond to things in words and in speech as a whole (432 s 7 – 433 a 3). Such a view leaves room for the distinction between true and false words and statements, and within the true ones it allows us to distinguish between the more or less "beautiful" and the "bad", according to whether all their elements correspond to the things denoted or whether there are few such corresponding elements (433 a 4–6). At the same time, Socrates insists that excessive demands on the correspondence of words to things threaten to reject this correspondence itself as unattainable (433 a 6 – b 5).[36]

[36] More precisely, the dilemma that Socrates formulates here is as follows: Cratylus must either recognize that words and statements indicate things, as long as they convey their essential features (τύπος), even if they contain elements that are not true of those things, and that they convey them better or worse, depending on how many inappropriate elements the speech contains, or to abandon the very principle that the word is the disclosure of the properties of a thing (δήλωμα πράγματος) by means of letters and syllables. In other words, the nature of imitating things by means of letters and syllables is such that the requirement of excessive exactness in the likeness renders this very imitation impracticable. The δήλωμα in the dialogue does not necessarily imply a naturalistic designation of things by means of similar parts of language, but has a more neutral meaning, corresponding to both naturalistic and conventionalist ways of denoting things (see immediately further 433 d–e,). Ademollo 2011, 386; 2022, 36, rightly maintains that by itself δηλοῦν,

Socrates' adherence to the principle of naturalism during this part of the discussion is thus not suspect. This is not the case with the part of the discourse to which we will now turn, and in which some scholars find Socrates' rejection of naturalism. Socrates now sums up for Cratylus the result they have just achieved: a perfectly established name should consist entirely of appropriate letters, viz. the letters resembling the thing this name indicates, while a name that deviates from this ideal will largely consist of appropriate letters, but will contain inappropriate ones (433 b 8 – c 7). Up to this point, in speaking of the correspondence of letters to things, Socrates had in mind the descriptive names that resemble things via their etymological meaning: the appropriate letters were those that participated in the description to which the word under analysis can be reduced and the inappropriate letters were the parasitic ones. Now, however, he prepares his discussion of the first names, which do not have any etymology and cannot be analysed into descriptive phrases. The letters and syllables themselves should imitate physical properties of things: the variance in the grade of perfection depending on the presence in such names of inappropriate letters should be valid for such names as well, but the inappropriate letters can now not only be redundant but, as the case of σκληρότης will demonstrate, may even paralyze the mimetic capacities of names.

Cratylus unwillingly agrees that there are different grades of perfection in the resemblance of names with their referents, although complaining that he is not fond of using the name that is not perfectly created.[37] Socrates' following argument proceeds in these steps: by asking for

as well as σημαίνειν, can be used for any kind of linguistic signification. However, up to 433 d–e, where δήλωμα takes on a neutral meaning, the words δηλόω and δήλωμα, though sometimes used neutrally, are usually used in the context of mimetic signification (see, e.g., 422 d 1–3, 423 a 2, a 5). At any rate, Cratylus still ignores designation on the basis of agreement in this part of the discussion. The dilemma that Socrates offers him, with the correct choice by Cratylus, should save the naturalistic theory from attempts to reduce it to absurdity.

[37] Socrates does not answer Cratylus' objection at 433 c 8–10 directly; but in developing his argument, Socrates thrice uses the word ἀρέσκειν (433 d 1, e 2, and e 9), which echoes the wording of Cratylus' objection. His indirect response appears to be that Cratylus ought to accept this varying degree of the perfection of names, if he approves that names perform the function of indicating things and the quality of this performance depends on the perfection of their resemblance. Otherwise, if he sticks to the view that names are invariably perfect, he has no option but to approve of Hermogenes' way of indication by agreement – only this way guarantees that all names thus assigned are invariably perfect.

Cratylus' approval, he obtains (1) that the name should be δήλωμα, the indication of its referent; (2) that among the names there are ones that are composed from prior names, but also those that cannot be resolved to other names and are thus "first"; (3) that there is no better way of making the first names the indications of their referents than to make them as similar to these referents as possible; and (4) that this similarity cannot be attained in any other way than by making the constitutive elements of these "first names" as similar to these referents as possible.

The main components of this reasoning are already more or less known from Socrates' conversation with Hermogenes, but there are some points that were not emphasized before. First is Socrates' question whether Cratylus approves that the name is the δήλωμα of its referent. The question seems redundant: Cratylus' positive answer is obvious because up to this point δήλωμα and related words were used in the account of names that resemble their referents, and it meant primarily the disclosure of the referents' essential features through the etymology of names or the mimetic capacities of letters. However, having turned to the first names, Socrates asks Cratylus if there is a better way of making the "first names" the δηλώματα of their referents than by making them resemble these referents as much as possible, and he proposes the alternative – maybe Cratylus prefers Hermogenes' way of naming things: the names in this case are then a matter of agreement and they indicate (δηλοῦν) the relevant things only for those who have entered into this agreement and who know in advance the things that these words indicate (that is, they do not recognize the thing due to the descriptive properties of names, but know in advance which word is associated with which thing). The "correctness of a name" is then reduced to an agreement, and it makes no difference if the agreement would be changed and the thing now called "small" would be called "large" and vice versa (433 d 7 – e 9). Cratylus' preference of "resemblance" is quite obvious. The alternative Socrates proposes to him is, however, important because it shows that δήλωμα and δηλοῦν are now used in the broad meaning that covers both indicating things by means of names that resemble these things and by conventional names that indicate only due to agreement of language-speakers. The two opposite theories thus have one point of agreement: that names should indicate things; the conventionalist way of indicating previously simply ignored by Cratylus is now considered the worse, but comparable to the naturalist one.[38]

[38] The importance of this change of meaning of δηλοῦν and δήλωμα is rightly emphasized by Barney 2001, 119–120; Ademollo 2011, 385 ff.

This reminder to Cratylus of two conflicting positions and the redundant question of which way of indicating things he prefers reminds us once again that there is no alternative to names resembling their referents other than that names are assigned by agreement; this will be important for Socrates' further argument.

Socrates now approaches the substance of the part of his reasoning with which we are occupied. He reminds Cratylus of the mimetic capacities of letters: the letter ρ is similar to movement and motion, as well as to hardness (φορᾷ καὶ κινήσει καὶ σκληρότητι), while λ is like smoothness, softness, and other similar "things". Socrates invites Cratylus to consider the implications of this theory, which Cratylus strongly endorses, for the word σκληρότης, "hardness", which has no etymology and is accordingly one of the "first" words, whose correspondence to the things they indicate is ensured by the mimetic properties of the letters that make up such words. Socrates recalls that in the Ionian dialect of Eretria (Euboea) the Attic σκληρότης corresponds to the form σκληροτήρ (the Eretrian rotacism)[39] and asks whether ρ and σ both resemble one and the same

[39] The mss of the Cratylus are divided between two kinds of accentuation of this word, σκληροτήρ (BW, accepted by Burnet and the OCT I), no accent (T), σκληρότηρ (Par. 1808, the descendant of T, see the app. of Méridier), see Ademollo 2011, 391 n. 14, who cautiously prefers σκληρότηρ, assuming that the alternative accentuation appeared due to a false assimilation to the *nomina agentis* in -τηρ. The latter consideration is plausible, but, without being certain, I prefer to keep the accent on the ultimate syllable, just because this accentuation for the abstract nouns in -της was unusual. On the one hand, I reject, even more decisively than Ademollo, that the Eretrian dialect preserved the original accentuation of the word on the ultimate syllable, because there is no reason to think, *pace* Ademollo, that the words of this type "must have originally been accented on the last syllable". In fact, there are two Homeric examples of abstract nouns in -οτης with the accent on the ultimate syllable (ἀ(ν)δροτής, δηϊοτής) against four nouns of the same type with the accent on the penultimate, and also two Homeric words in -υτης of this type that are both oxytona – βραδυτής and ταχυτής, as well as two later Attic examples – τραχυτής and κουφοτής. Practically all these cases were discussed or mentioned by Aristarchus and other ancient grammarians, who treated them as anomalies: all nouns of this type, which becomes very productive from the fifth century BC on, are proparoxytona. It is possible that for some of these words the accent on the ultimate syllable has a historical explanation, as proposed by Wackernagel (see the recent discussion of his hypothesis in Probert 2006, 38–45), but the ancient grammarians did not find any regularity in it. The unusual σκληροτήρ is thus hardly the relict of original accentuation in Eretria, and it also could not appear, say, because of someone's theory that this accentuation has an archaic tinge. I would suppose that if it is genuine, it reflects the analogical influence of the Attic τραχυτής, connected with the semantic similarity of the two words (Plato, who himself coined many

thing and whether the word in each of its variants indicates "hardness", or whether for one of the two peoples, Athenians and Eretrians, it does not have that meaning.[40] Cratylus asserts that it has the same meaning for both peoples. And to Socrates' next question "whether they have the same meaning because ρ and σ are similar to each other or because they are not", Cratylus answers that "by virtue of their similarity". "Are they similar in every respect?", Socrates next asks. Cratylus answers that these letters are similar to each other, at least in that both equally "imitate" φορά, "movement".

The absence of Socrates' reaction to Cratylus' last answer gives scholars the opportunity to evaluate this step in the argumentation in different ways. Schofield, Sedley, and Ademollo believe that Socrates asked the question in order to force Cratylus to recognize that the ρ and σ at the end of the two variants of the word denoting movement cannot indicate "hardness", but they draw different conclusions from this. Schofield believes that Cratylus' answer refutes the theory of the symbolic meaning of the sounds altogether, since it is clear to the reader of the dialogue that the ρ in the middle of the word then also means "motion" and not "hardness".[41] Sedley suggests that the question and answer are necessary for Socrates to prevent Cratylus from adducing the Eretrian form in order to show that it is more correct than the Attic one, since it has two ρs indicating hardness that outnumber the λ that indicates softness; Cratylus now, having recognized that the ρ and σ in the final part of the word do not carry the idea of "hardness", is then forced to accept that the word in both its forms contains only one ρ indicating "hardness", the middle

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new words of this type, may have been highly sensitive to the unusual accent). Of course it is problematic in this case, granted that Plato really had it in view, how this Eretrian accentuation could appear in the Platonic manuscripts when the writing of accents became usual (some signs for accents in the time of Plato cannot be definitely ruled out, but they were used on the margins of texts to avoid ambiguities, not regularly, see Laum 1928, 105–108; after Aristophanes of Byzantium introduced the later standard system of accent marks in the early second century BC, the first papyri with accentuation appeared later in the same century, see Probert 2006, 21–22, but the regular writing of accents on every word started only in minuscule manuscripts, from the ninth century AD on, *ibid*., 48 f.). The preservation of the unusual accent of σκληροτήρ would be possible if the accentuation of this word in the Eretrian dialect was noticed by ancient grammarians and then became known to the Byzantine scholars and scribes of Plato's text (see Probert 2006, 48–50). Unusual as it might appear, this possibility cannot be definitely ruled out.

[40] I follow Ademollo 2011, 392 n. 16 in understanding this sentence.

[41] Schofield 1982, 75.

one, and one λ indicating the opposite property: the letters indicating opposite properties are thus in equal number, and the word ceases to be a semblance of hardness.[42] This however begs the question why Cratylus does not argue in answer as, according to Sedley, Socrates expected he would, namely that ρ at the end of the Eretrian form is correct, while σ is imposed wrongly and that the idea of "hardness" dominates in the genuine form. Ademollo argues against Sedley that the numerical equality of ρ and λ is not of primary importance, because it is not even mentioned in the text, but agrees that Cratylus' answer could have involved him in fatal difficulties for naturalism, if Socrates had not chosen to hit naturalism even harder with his next question.[43]

Such judgments about Socrates' question and Cratylus' answer seem to me erroneous. It must be remembered that Socrates' reasoning about the "mimetic" properties of letters is not a detailed theory, but only a sketch of one. From its exposition, it is clear only that the ancient creator of language assigned to each letter a specific symbolic function according to the specific movement that the organs of speech make when uttering it: letters symbolize different kinds of movement (or obstacles to movement) in nature, but also the properties of things by which they are able to carry out such movement. For example, the letter ρ, which when uttered least of all leaves the tongue is at rest but especially shakes it (426 e 4–5), was used in the word φορά, which symbolizes movement in general, but also in a number of words that indicate a broad variety of notions – not only specific kinds of movement, like "flowing", "trembling", and "whirling".

The underlying principle appears to be the use of a letter whose pronunciation can be associated with an intense and continuous movement, to symbolize the very idea of movement. Notice that it is sufficient to use this letter only once in a word that indicates the general idea of movement. We know the symbolic meaning of other letters that compose the word φορά: taken by themselves, these letters do not convey anything appropriate to the notion of movement. What their function is, we can only guess, but they are not necessarily redundant:[44] they may somehow

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[42] Sedley 2004, 143–144.

[43] Ademollo 2011, 393.

[44] Some of these letters can be of course semantically redundant in accordance with Socrates' general approach (393 d 3 – e 9; 432 d 11 – 433 a 2) – names inevitably resemble their referents with different degrees of appropriateness: some letters are added for convenient pronunciation (see, for instance, 426 d 1–2, in the section on mimetic properties of letters) and some are inserted falsely for this or that reason.

distinguish the word from other ones that have the same letter ρ as being the name of the generic idea of movement.

In the names that indicate various specimens of movement, the letter ρ is usually used also only once. Here we are entitled to suppose that the other letters of these words or their combinations symbolize the specific properties of the different kinds of φορά or of some derivative qualities associated with movement. In general, the creation of "first names", according to Socrates, is *the progression through letters and syllables* (427 c 6–8), from which we can conclude that the meaning of a word is determined not only by the symbolic meanings of individual letters, but also of syllables as intermediates. We have secure evidence for the symbolic meaning of a combination of several letters, according to Socrates' theory: since the pronunciation of the letter γ imposes a restriction on the free movement of the speech organ when it pronounces λ, the lawgiver used this pair of letters for words meaning "viscous", "sweet", "sticky" (γλίσχρον, γλυκύ, γλοιῶδες), i.e., corresponding to a liquid, but not freely flowing substance (427 b 4–7). Here we can see again how the basic ideas of movement and rest produce the new ideas of properties that only indirectly imply these ideas.

Yet beyond the movement itself and its specimens, ρ is used also for a group of notions that are related to movement only intermediately and more directly indicate such notions as "striking", "crushing into pieces", "breaking", "crumbling". Moreover, ρ, at first sight unexpectedly, participates also in the word that indicates the non-cinetic notion of "harshness" (τὸ τραχύ, 426 e 1, according to the majority of mss. versus τρέχειν of Q[45]). This implies that ρ, which conveys the general idea of movement and of its specimens, can also convey the derivative idea of striking and crushing, perhaps because ρ itself is associated with an intense movement. Perhaps these "harsh" actions in turn yield a step in the direction of "harshness" as a static property. Quite similarly, the letter λ, which primarily symbolizes "gliding" because the tongue glides most in pronouncing this letter, has been chosen by a lawgiver to indicate not only "gliding", but also non-kinetic properties like "smooth", "oily", "glue", i.e., the properties of objects that are especially capable of "gliding".[46]

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[45] Cf. Ademollo 2011, 307.

[46] This difference between these two kinds of symbolic meaning is rightly noticed by Ademollo 2011, 307 f., but unlike him I believe that there is no need to suppose the corruption of the text or two redactions of it.

Let us now return to our interlocutors' discussion of the word σκληρότης. Socrates, in saying, with reference to his reasoning on the symbolic meaning of letters, that τὸ ῥῶ τῇ φορᾷ καὶ κινήσει καὶ σκληρότητι προσέοικεν (434 c 1–2), is not quite accurate, since σκληρότης was not mentioned there as one of the symbolic meanings of ρ. However, Socrates' wording suggests that the idea of "hardness" is closely associated with the more general idea of movement (φορά). In fact, as we have seen, already in the exposition of mimetic abilities of letters, ρ participated not only in words that are related to movement, like "striking", "crushing", etc., but also in the word that indicates the non-kinetic notion of "harshness". It is thus quite natural that, in combination with other letters, this letter can indicate "hardness", the property primarily involved in the actions related to striking.

The purpose of Socrates' question – whether ρ and σ at the end of the Eretrian and Attic forms of the word for "hardness" are similar to each other and indicate the same for inhabitants of Eretria and Athens – thus appears to be a peaceful one. With his affirmative answer that these letters are similar to each other, not in all respects, but insofar as both indicate φορά, "movement", Cratylus draws the correct conclusion from Socrates' earlier reasoning that both ρ and σ symbolize movement, and in this they are similar to each other, although ρ symbolizes movement generally, while σ the particular kind associated with "breathing" (427 a 2–5). We do not know what semantic function the letters ρ and σ at the end of two forms of the word perform or whether they perform such a function at all. As we have seen from the exposition of Socrates' theory, one letter ρ in combination with some other letters is quite sufficient to convey a notion of movement and its derivatives, and the single ρ in the middle of σκληρότης can accordingly indicate "hardness", together with some other letters. But the final ρ in the Eretrian version and the σ in the Attic version do not contradict the notion of hardness, because they indicate "movement", from which "hardness" derives, as Cratylus rightly maintains. I believe, therefore, that Socrates' question does not purport to undermine Cratylus' naturalism (or to discredit Socrates' own theory of mimetic letters): it only emphasizes that the composition of names can be variable and that the same idea can be expressed successfully by different combinations of letters, as long as the symbolic meaning of these letters does not contradict the idea.[47]

[47] Probably just because the letters at the end do not play a semantic role in the word, Socrates uses the substantive σκληρόν (434 e 2) on a par with σκληρότης.

But then Socrates asks whether λ, which appears in both versions of the word σκληρότης, doesn't indicate something opposite to what σκληρότης indicates ("softness", "smoothness", as opposed to "hardness"). Cratylus easily finds a way out of this difficulty by recalling that Socrates himself, etymologizing words where necessary, freely added and eliminated letters, restoring the true form of the word: λ is "inserted" in the word σκληρότης incorrectly and ρ should stand in this word instead of it.[48]

Socrates is ready to concede to Cratylus that there is an erroneous letter in the word σκληρότης, but he asks: "What is it? When someone pronounces the word σκληρόν the way it is pronounced now (i.e., with λ), then don't we understand each other, and don't you know what I am talking about now [by pronouncing this word]?" Cratylus replies: "As for me, I understand the word beyond doubt because of habit" (Ἔγωγε, διά γε τὸ ἔθος, ὦ φίλτατε).

Let us dwell for a moment on the difficulty that arises here for Cratylus. Socrates puts his finger on a problem that was not in focus previously. The question how we understand names was clearly formulated by Hermogenes: for a conventionalist, the meaning of a word is established by an agreement and is known to those who participate in this agreement. But both proponents of naturalism, Cratylus and Socrates, were occupied mostly by the problem of how to demonstrate that etymological or symbolic meaning of the names in discussion is appropriate (rarer: inappropriate) for properties of their referents. It was taken for granted that the referent of any name is transparent, or, in other words, that we all know what the current meaning is of any word in our everyday communication. Socrates' question, however, implies that there is a problem here for any naturalist. If according to naturalist principles the designation of a thing is based on the resemblance of a name and its referent, and not because one knows in advance the referent of this name due to agreement, then any communication is successful because we use names that resemble their referents and our partners understand us because they recognize that this name resembles this referent. Cratylus thus faces the problem of the conflict between the elements of the name that point to opposite referents,

[48] It is not quite clear from Cratylus' reply whether he is now prepared to admit that the "lawgivers", i.e., the original creators of language, could make mistakes in accordance with his previously forced consent (431 e 6–9), or whether he, continuing to dislike this imposed position (433 c 8–10), attributes the defect of the word σκληρότης to its subsequent "spoiling" by ordinary speakers. For Socrates' further argumentation, this distinction is irrelevant: he is not interested in the origin of the linguistic "error", but in the ways of overcoming it in speech communication.

"hardness" and "softness", and is not able to solve the problem, because for him as a naturalist, resemblance is the last instance for a decision on the semantic of a name. Cratylus thus has no option but to appeal to a new authority that was not discussed before: to linguistic habit.[49]

We do not know precisely what Cratylus understands by linguistic habit, but undoubtedly this answer testifies to the difficult position in which he finds himself. Socrates' next question, "And by habit do you understand something different from agreement (Ἔθος δὲ λέγων οἴει τι διάφορον λέγειν συνθήκης;"), implies that Cratylus advanced the new concept to avoid the unpleasant answer "by agreement", which logically follows from the preceding discussion: both interlocutors recognize that there are only two ways of referring to things, either by means of words that bear a resemblance to the things being referred to, or by means of words arbitrarily assigned to things by agreement.[50]

Socrates appears surprised that Cratylus understands "linguistic habit" as something different from agreement, but, without objecting, offers his definition of "habit", which should be acceptable to Cratylus: "In speaking of habit, do you understand anything other than that when I utter a certain word I am thinking of a certain thing, and that you understand what I am thinking? (ἢ ἄλλο τι λέγεις τὸ ἔθος ἢ ὅτι ἐγώ, ὅταν τοῦτο φθέγγωμαι, διανοοῦμαι ἐκεῖνο, σὺ δὲ γιγνώσκεις ὅτι ἐκεῖνο διανοοῦμαι; οὐ τοῦτο λέγεις;)".

When Cratylus agrees with this interpretation of "linguistic habit", Socrates asks whether in this given case the indication (δήλωμα) of the thing in question is realized, granted that Cratylus understands what

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[49] The problem of names that lost their initial resemblance to their referents was touched on already during Socrates' etymologizing: the original form of some names has been so distorted by later users that it is now impossible to grasp their meaning, 414 c 4 – d 5, see n. 3 above. However, the problem here was of restoring their original form, and the obviousness of the reference of such names was taken for granted.

[50] The conventionalist implication of the concept of "habit" should be clear at first sight to Cratylus and to the readers of the dialogue: Hermogenes, expounding his theory, argued that "no word belongs to any thing by nature, but only by virtue of the law and habit of those who have instituted the habit and who use these names" (384 d 7, see above p. 197). But Socrates' discussion of the linguistic νόμος, which is transmitted from generation to generation, demonstrates that, contrary to Hermogenes, this νόμος is established by a competent lawgiver who created names that were "by nature" appropriate to the things to which he assigned them (388 d–e). Thus, ἔθος like νόμος may appear to Cratylus at this stage already quite compatible with naturalist premises (see pt. II on this point).

Socrates is thinking of when he utters the word σκληρότης. This seemingly innocent question serves as a reminder of the only two possible ways of indicating things: either through names similar to the things designated or arbitrary names established by agreement. Cratylus' affirmative answer allows Socrates to conclude immediately that indication in this case is achieved through agreement (435 a 5 – b 3):

> Ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνομοίου γε ἢ ὃ διανοούμενος φθέγγομαι, εἴπερ τὸ λάβδα ἀνόμοιόν ἐστι τῇ ἧ φῂς σὺ σκληρότητι· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχει, τί ἄλλο ἢ αὐτὸς σαυτῷ συνέθου καί σοι γίγνεται ἡ ὀρθότης τοῦ ὀνόματος συνθήκη, ἐπειδή γε δηλοῖ καὶ τὰ ὅμοια καὶ τὰ ἀνόμοια γράμματα, ἔθους τε καὶ συνθήκης τυχόντα; εἰ δ' ὅτι μάλιστα μή ἐστι τὸ ἔθος συνθήκη, οὐκ ἂν καλῶς ἔτι ἔχοι λέγειν τὴν ὁμοιότητα δήλωμα εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔθος· ἐκεῖνο γάρ, ὡς ἔοικε, καὶ ὁμοίῳ καὶ ἀνομοίῳ δηλοῖ.
>
> (a) [So indication is accomplished] by means of what is dissimilar to what I thought when I pronounced the word, since λ is dissimilar to hardness, as you yourself assert? (b) If this is the case, then what else happens than that you have agreed with yourself and the correctness of the name turns out to be agreement for you – (c) for the indication takes place by means of letters both similar (to the thing) and dissimilar, which happens to be part of the habit and the object of the agreement. (d) But if, for goodness' sake, habit is not an agreement, then it will no longer be correct to assert that indication must be made on the basis of similarity, but [it will be correct to assert that it must be made] on the basis of habit: for habit seems to indicate by means of what is similar [to things] and what is not similar.

The logic of this reasoning is, at first glance, clear: Socrates seeks to prove to Cratylus that, in cases like σκληρότης, the similarity of a name to its referent is lost, and if a name nevertheless successfully designates that referent, then this is possible only through agreement. Socrates first states (a) that the designation is accomplished by means of a name that is not similar to its referent, because it contains the letter λ, which is the opposite of "hardness". He then concludes (b) that an agreement, a linguistic convention, must then be in force, relying on the unspecified premise that designation is possible either because of the similarity of the name to its referent or because of an agreement on the meaning of the name.

Let us dwell on those aspects of Socrates' reasoning that did not receive sufficient attention from my predecessors and were, as it seems to me, not quite correctly understood by them. I mean Cratylus' appeal to ἔθος, linguistic habit (or custom, as some scholars render it). This is usually interpreted as an unsuccessful attempt on his part to avoid the

conclusion that the understanding of the meaning of the word σκληρότης is based on agreement. Socrates' argument is thought to cut short this attempt by proving that habit is nothing but agreement, and thus demonstrating that conventionalist claims are justified, with different further conclusions on the degree to which conventionalism wins in the result. There are seemingly clear indications for this in the text: Socrates expresses puzzlement that Cratylus considers habit to be something different from agreement, then quickly shows him that there *is* an agreement in the case under discussion, and then again cautions Cratylus against the claim that "habit is not agreement".

Yet in spite of this, I do not think that Socrates' purpose is to demonstrate that Cratylus' appeal to linguistic habit is only a failed attempt to escape yielding to conventionalism. First of all, Socrates cannot mean that "agreement" and "habit" are simply synonymous designations of one and the same thing. This can be seen already from Socrates' explication of what Cratylus should mean when he speaks about habit: speaking of habit, do you understand anything other than that when I utter a certain word, I think a certain thing, and that you understand what I think?[51] Obviously, this definition does not include, at least not explicitly, any notion of agreement. Only as the next step does Socrates demonstrate to Cratylus that his understanding of a name like σκληρότης entails an agreement, an agreement with himself on the meaning of this word. Formally at least, "habit" and "agreement" are not synonymous terms. Socrates rather shows that Cratylus' attempt to avoid having agreement play a role in understanding a problematic word is unsuccessful: linguistic habit as Cratylus' source of knowledge of the word's meaning is necessarily connected with agreement, because resemblance in this case does not work.[52]

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[51] Ademollo disagrees with the usual understanding of the words ἢ ἄλλο τι λέγεις τὸ ἔθος ἢ κτλ. as a definition of "habit" and suggests translating "or is the habit you're speaking of anything but the fact", since the following words are not a qualifier of the term "habit", but rather a description of what happens when habit is at work. He is right that Socrates' statement cannot be considered a precise definition of what habit is, but neither here nor hereafter is *habit* defined more precisely (see 435 a 9–10; b 2–3). Nevertheless, lacking a more precise definition, it can be a sort of provisional one; compare a similar definition via a description of a typical situation such as *Soph.* 248 c 4–5.

[52] Schofield 1982, 77 f. also supposes that habit and agreement are distinct concepts, according to Socrates; he rightly maintains that Socrates uses Cratylus' appeal to habit to show that habit entails a stronger principle than itself, but he is not right that this principle is agreement by two speakers on the meaning of the word, which Schofield calls a "convention".

Let us now look more attentively at Socrates' definition of habit itself. It is remarkably neutral. Cratylus, true, appeals to habit just because the resemblance of σκληρότης to its referent was not sufficient to recognize what this referent is. Nevertheless, Socrates' definition does not point out that habit secures communication due to Hermogenes' agreement; the communication due to habit as Socrates depicts it corresponds both to the cases where there is an intrinsic correspondence between name and thing (the names resemble their referents) and those where the connection between them is arbitrary and based only on agreement.[53]

This broad and vague understanding of habit corresponds to two further statements about habit in what follows:

> (c) for the indication takes place by means of letters both similar (to the thing) and dissimilar, which happen to be part of the habit and the object of the agreement.

I will return soon to the question how the pair "habit/agreement" should be understood here. Let us notice that habit secures communication both by similar and dissimilar parts of language.

A bit further on, Socrates, having already shown to Cratylus that habit *is* agreement, issues a caveat against any further resistance (435 a 10 – b 3):

> (d) But if, for goodness' sake, habit is not an agreement, then it will no longer be correct to assert that indication must be made on the basis of similarity, but [it will be correct to assert that it must be made] on the basis of habit: for habit seems to indicate by means of what is similar [to things] and what is not similar.

Once again, as above in the definition of it at 434 e 5–8, habit features here as a vague principle, one that combines both militating principles of indicating things, similarity of names to things, and lack of such similarity. This passage, in which Socrates seems to insist strongly on the identity of habit and agreement, shows in fact that they are different

[53] According to Sedley, Socrates' description of habit has in view only those cases in which the similarity of the name to its referent plays no role: both interlocutors know due to habit that a given name indicates a given thing, like "hardness" (Sedley 2003, 139–140 with n. 23). This however corresponds to the situation like that in the σκληρότης case, in which habit is appealed to, but not the definition of habit itself.

concepts: habit can, theoretically at least, compete both with similarity and agreement as the principle of linguistic correctness. Notice that while agreement in Hermogenes' sense simply ignores the similarity of the name to its reference, and is used by interlocutors as an alternative to resemblance, habit here features again as making use both of similar and dissimilar elements.

The significance of this passage for the outcome of the conflict between conventionalism and naturalism will be discussed further, in pt. II. For the time being, let me conclude that the proof that habit *is* an agreement should not be understood as the complete interchangeability of two notions: there are clear indications that habit is a broader notion, which, unlike agreement in Hermogenes' sense, does not rule out resemblance. If this is correct, Socrates does not deny the relevance of Cratylus' appeal to linguistic habit as something different from agreement in Hermogenes' sense. Rather, he accepts that it is necessary to assign to habit a certain role in designating things and that its relation to agreement should be clarified.

To be continued.

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The paper discusses the results of scholarly debates on Plato’s own position on the issue of naturalism and conventionalism in the *Cratylus* and attempts to contribute to solving some problems. The author argues that there is no reason to suppose that Plato’s position differs from the one Socrates stands for in the dialogue: it is a naturalism of a definite kind, as argued for in the first part of the dialogue devoted to the refutation of Hermogenes’ conventionalism. Hermogenes, who treats a simple picking up of a referent by a name as sufficient for

a full-fledged communication, holds the view that the connection between a name and a referent rests on the arbitrary and changeable agreement of ordinary language-speakers. As it is argued, he one-sidedly stresses the moment of imposition and re-imposition of names, without consideration of how the assigned meanings of names are transmitted beyond the participants of an agreement and are preserved through generations of language-speakers. Socrates opposes to him the theory of a name-instrument, that is a name that in its highest function should be employed successfully in dialectical enquiry, and thus should be made to be appropriate for properties of its referent. The creator of such names thus cannot be an ordinary language-speaker, but must be a competent lawgiver, and he should be supervised by a philosopher-dialectician who would use the products of his name-giving.

This general view is further explicated and illustrated in Socrates' etymologizing and his hypothesis of mimetic capacities of mimetic sounds, which demonstrate that practically all names for various referents – from human proper names to the names of gods and physical, moral, and epistemological concepts – turn out to be meaningful descriptions of their referents. Although caveats are warranted by the text – the procedure of etymologizing is not entirely reliable and the opinions of name-givers are marred by a proto-Heraclitean teaching that all is in permanent motion, – this section demonstrates that the larger part of the philosophically relevant vocabulary consists of descriptive names that convey non-trivial, although not necessarily true judgments of their referents.

This result that Cratylus and Hermogenes applaud can be treated as the ultimate victory of naturalism. However, Socrates is not satisfied by his own reasoning and calls for its reexamination. In spite of this, he does not return to his own discourse, but turns to refuting Cratylus, who defends a more radical version of naturalism than that of Socrates. Some scholars treat this most debatable part of the dialogue as Socrates' partial yielding to conventionalism, but other scholars see it as a complete victory of conventionalism. Among these latter, some find in the text itself evidence for this victory, while others believe that, although Socrates explicitly maintains that agreement plays only a complementary role in naming, Plato steers the course of the discussion to a full victory. The author argues in the paper against both kinds of proponents of the latter view that naturalism ultimately wins both according to the text and to the character of Socrates' argument. Socrates assigns to agreement a certain role only in the communication, not in the assignment of names to their referents: in some cases, like that of σκληρότης, 'hardness', the resemblance of a name to its referent conveyed by a combination of σ and ρ is blocked by λ that conveys the opposite idea of 'softness'. In such cases, a competent language-speaker who normally understands the meaning of names due to their resemblance to referents has no option but to appeal to linguistic habit, 'to agree' with it, that is to follow those meanings that are habitual from childhood. Socrates' argument does not maintain that such meanings are arbitrary and based themselves on agreement, as according to Hermogenes. Rather it is implied that they correspond to the will of an ancient name-giver whose purpose was to make a name that resembles its referent, the

resemblance however not having been attained, either because of some initial mistake or because of later distortion. Anyway, Socrates' yielding to agreement in this sense thus does not amount to acceptance of Hermogenes' conventionalism even for these particular cases.

В статье дается обзор дискуссий относительно отношения самого Платона к коллизии натурализма и конвенционализма в *Кратиле* и делается попытка решить некоторые из вопросов. Автор статьи доказывает, что позиция Платона не отличается от той, которая представлена Сократом в диалоге: Платон – сторонник той разновидности натурализма, которую Сократ защищает в первой части диалога против конвенционализма Гермогена. Гермоген полагает, что простого указания при помощи слова на обозначаемый объект достаточно для полноценной коммуникации, и поэтому считает связь между именем и объектом произвольной, основанной на произвольном и изменчивом соглашении обычных носителей языка. Сократ противопоставляет этому воззрению теорию имени как "орудия", которое в своем высшем применении может успешно использоваться в диалектическом исследовании истины и поэтому должно соответствовать свойствам обозначаемого объекта. Творцом подобного имени может быть лишь мудрый "законодатель", действующий под руководством философа-диалектика, которому предстоит пользоваться созданными законодателем именами.

Это утверждение Сократа далее раскрывается и иллюстрируется в ходе этимологизации множества слов и в гипотезе о подражательных способностях звуков. И то и другое показывает, что практически все имена для различных объектов – от имен собственных людей до имен богов и обозначений физических, этических и эпистемологических понятий – оказываются осмысленными описаниями этих объектов. Хотя текст содержит некоторые предостережения – сократовская процедура этимологизации не вполне надежна, а сами мнения создателей имен несут отпечаток прото-гераклитовского учения о том, что все находится в состоянии непрерывного движения, – эта часть диалога показывает, что значительная часть философской лексики состоит из дескриптивных имен, которые несут нетривиальные, хотя и не обязательно истинные, суждения об обозначаемых ими предметах.

Этот результат, который одобряют Кратил и Гермоген, мог бы считаться полной победой натурализма. Однако Сократ не удовлетворен своим рассуждением и призывает к его критическому пересмотру. Несмотря на это, он не возвращается к собственным высказываниям, но вместо этого обращается к опровержению Кратила, который является сторонником более радикальной версии натурализма, чем сам Сократ. Некоторые ученые находят в этой, наиболее спорной, части диалога частичную уступку Сократа конвенционализму, а иные видят в нем даже полную победу конвенционализма, либо выраженную прямо в словах Сократа, либо имплицитно следующую из самой его аргументации. Автор статьи доказывает, напротив, что натурализм одерживает победу в соответствии как с выводами в самом тексте, так и с характером аргументов Сократа.

Сократ отводит соглашению определенную роль только в речевой коммуникации, но не в установлении имен в качестве обозначений: в некоторых случаях, как это рассматривается на примере слова σκληρότης, ‘твердость’, сходство имени с объектом, которое достигается благодаря комбинации σ и ρ, парализовано λ, которое является носителем противоположной идеи, ‘мягкости’. В подобных случаях компетентный носитель языка, который обычно понимает значение имен благодаря их сходству с обозначаемым объектом, может лишь сообразовываться с языковым узусом, “вступить в соглашение” с ним, то есть следовать тому значению слова, которое привычно для него с детства. Аргументация Сократа не предполагает, что значения подобных слов произвольны и сами основываются на соглашении, как в теории Гермогена. Скорее подразумевается, что эти значения согласны с волей древнего законодателя, который стремился создать имя, которое походило бы на обозначаемый объект, но либо сам допустил ошибку, либо имя было искажено позднее. Несомненно, во всяком случае, что уступка Сократа соглашению в этом смысле не означает его принятия конвенционализма Гермогена даже для таких исключительных случаев.

CONSPECTUS

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Summary in Russian and English