

2015

Resurrectio Mortuorum: Plato's Use of Ἀνάγκη in the Dialogues

Joshua B. Gehling

University of South Carolina - Columbia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gehling, J. B. (2015). *Resurrectio Mortuorum: Plato's Use of Ἀνάγκη in the Dialogues*. (Master's thesis). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/3129>

This Open Access Thesis is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.

Resurrectio Mortuorum:
Plato's Use of Ἀνάγκη in the Dialogues

by

Joshua Brent Gehling

Bachelor of Arts
University of South Carolina, 2008

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts in

Comparative Literature

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2015

Accepted by:

Allen Miller, Director of Thesis

Jill Frank, Reader

Lacy Ford, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Dedication

To my God, the Joy of my Youth, the Light of my Life, my Savior and my Redeemer, through Whom this work—and indeed every work—finds its completion.

To my parents, Richard and Donna, who have been a constant source of love and support in all my life's endeavors.

To all my professors at the University of South Carolina who have helped me with this project, particularly Jill Frank, who gave me the idea for this Thesis, Allen Miller, who knows just the right things to say to encourage one to carry on, and Heike Sefrin-Weis, who has given me no shortage of profitable ideas when writing this Thesis and whose constant support and good advice to me while in Graduate School cannot possibly be overstated.

Abstract

This Master's Thesis, entitled "Resurrectio Mortuorum: Plato's Use of Ἀνάγκη in the Dialogues," features an extended consideration of Plato's usage of the word Ἀνάγκη as a dialogical response in the writings of Plato. Hopefully, it will highlight the uniqueness of this particular response in the context of many other affirmative responses used in the dialogues.

The first section of the thesis (I) will lay out what I take to be Plato's conception of his philosophical project and where Ἀνάγκη fits into this picture. The texts there considered will be mainly "The Seventh Letter" and the *Phaedrus*. With this interpretive framework in mind, section two (II) will feature a consideration of Ἀνάγκη in a particular Platonic dialogue, viz., the *Lysis*. Here will be established the two-faced nature of Ἀνάγκη as both *looking backwards to (i.e., dependent on)* previously agreed upon premises and as *looking forward to (i.e., leading to/anticipating)* ἀπορία. Finally, section three of the thesis (III), will feature an examination of the places in the Platonic dialogues where Ἀνάγκη is "writ large," so to speak, either in terms of quality or quantity. The main texts in this section will be the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*.

Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
Section I. Plato’s Philosophical Project, Dialogue, and Ἀνάγκη	4
a) Philosophy and Ἀνάγκη: The Living Dialogue.....	4
b) Plato on Writing: The Dead Word.....	9
c) Plato’s Resurrection of the Written Word	12
Section II. Ἀνάγκη as a Dialogical Response in the <i>Lysis</i>	21
a) Different Types of Ἀνάγκη.....	22
b) Logical Ἀνάγκη: The Two-Headed God.....	24
c) Ἀνάγκη and Finding New Paths	33
Section III. ΑΝΑΓΚΗ Writ Large	40
a) Writ Large in Quality: Ἀνάγκη and Irony	40
b) Writ Large in Quantity: Ἀνάγκη and the Philosophical Project (Reprise).....	47
Conclusion	54
Bibliography	57

Introduction

The topic of this paper has its genesis at a Greek Reading Group at the University of South Carolina. While reading through one of the dialogues of Plato, we came across a seemingly innocent and ubiquitous response from an interlocutor, “ἀνάγκη.”¹

Although I would have passed over this word with nary a second glance, Professor Jill Frank expressed her opinion that this particular word in Plato is in no way insignificant. Indeed, she felt that this word was a kind of signpost to us, the readers of Plato, to be wary and on our guard for what follows. With this word thus transformed from a simple, commonplace response to a potential signpost for “trouble ahead,” I thought that it would be interesting to give a more in depth study to this particular word in the Platonic corpus. Although there has been much ink spilled on certain aspects of ἀνάγκη in the writings of Plato, particularly to the cosmic, personified forms of Ἀνάγκη found in the *Timaeus* and in the Myth of Er in the *Republic*, I could not find practically any scholarship written on the word as a dialogical response.

¹ Responses such as “ναί,” “πάνυ γε,” “ἀνάγκη,” “σφόδρα,” “φαίνεται,” and “δοκεῖ μοι” are encountered with great frequency within the dialogues. Sometimes it seems like Plato is simply grabbing these stock responses and plugging them into the mouths of interlocutors as a means of breaking up the monotony of one person (e.g., Socrates) speaking at length. Under this reading, the variety of the responses is merely a literary way of not saying “ναί” over and over again ad *infinitum*. The goal of this paper is to attempt to separate out the uniqueness of a particular response. The response that will be here considered is the commonplace expression “ἀνάγκη.”

Thus, it is hoped that this thesis will invite deeper reflection in Platonic scholarship into studying the significance of *particular* dialogical responses that are given in the course of a Platonic dialogue. Although some readers may suggest that the varied responses in a Platonic dialogue are just an artistic way of the interlocutors offering their assent (i.e., a more ornate substitute for them always simply saying “yes” or “no”), perhaps there is something much deeper, interesting, and significant happening in the choice of the response that is used by Plato.

Admittedly, a comprehensive evaluation of every instance of ἀνάγκη and its variants in Plato is somewhat outside the realm of possibility for a Master’s Thesis. To give some idea of the ubiquity of the word in Plato, a search on *The Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* reveals 564 instances of ἀνάγκη within the Platonic corpus—and that’s just of the nominative, singular form of the noun! Additionally, variants of the ἀνάγκη- root in the writings of Plato total 1253! Because the focus of this paper will be restricted to certain parts of the writings of Plato, the conclusions reached must by necessity (pun intended) be incomplete and in no way universally applicable to the entire corpus of Plato. However, given the dearth of scholarship on the word in Plato, this thesis can hopefully serve as a preliminary to a more in-depth treatment, should any brave soul be willing to take up the charge in the future.

The word ἀνάγκη, according to the *Liddell & Scott Lexicon*, is derived from the verb ἄγγω, which means “to compress, press tight” (Liddell). The object of that verb is often particularly the throat (i.e., to choke), but can also refer metaphorically to other things, such as the way our conscience can choke us when we know that we have done something wrong. From this verb of constriction three words are derived in conjunction

with the prefix ἀνα-: ἀναγκάζω, ἀναγκαῖον, and ἀνάγκη. The prefix seems to be an intensifier, adding even more weight to the idea of constriction. Thus, the verb ἀναγκάζω means “to constrain” and may sometimes even mean “to torture” (Liddell). The adjective ἀναγκαῖον describes something as being “constraining” and can therefore be used of a number of things that put some sort of constraint upon us (Liddell). And finally, the noun ἀνάγκη can be defined as “constraint,” from which follows definitions like “force” and “necessity.” This word may also mean “torture” (Liddell). From this brief overview of the definitions of the ἀναγκ- family of words, we see the common, basic definition of “constriction” everywhere present. Sometimes it constrains things *from happening* in a certain way; sometimes it constrains things *to happen* in a certain way.

In the first section of this thesis (I), I am interested in giving a treatment of Plato’s conception of his philosophical project and where ἀνάγκη fits into this picture. With this interpretive framework in mind, we will then proceed in section two (II) to a consideration of ἀνάγκη in a particular Platonic dialogue. Here I hope to establish the two-faced nature of ἀνάγκη as both *looking backwards to (i.e., dependent on)* previously agreed upon premises and as *looking forward to (i.e., leading to/anticipating)* ἀπορία. Finally, in section three of the thesis (III), I will see what we can learn from places in the Platonic dialogues where ἀνάγκη is “writ large,” so to speak, either in terms of quality or quantity. It is hoped that by this extended consideration of ἀνάγκη in Plato we might come to a better appreciation of the uniqueness of this particular response.

Section I. Plato's Philosophical Project, Dialogue, and Ἀνάγκη

a) Philosophy and Ἀνάγκη: The Living Dialogue

Despite the extraordinary amount of Platonic writings that we have today, Plato is an author whose views, values, and ideas must inevitably elude us. Like the shape shifter Proteus, every time that we think we have him pinned down (e.g., by making Socrates be merely his mouthpiece), a new shape is assumed that throws our theories into confusion. Indeed, it is clear in various ways that Plato revels in this disconnect from his readers, his ability to slip through the fingers of their mind. For example, the dialogues are full of characters, none of which are Plato. They recall events that happened, but the person who tells them often heard the story from another person, like some amusing game played at a party where the participants whisper a secret message from person to person until the last person in line speaks what he has heard—a message wholly different from what was passed on at the beginning. Some of their most intriguing concepts are put in to the mouths of female mystics and mysterious strangers from far away lands. In sum, the Plato of the dialogues, so well versed in literary devices to shroud his own identity in mystery, eludes us as readers.

Perhaps the closest that we may ever come to a straightforward understanding of Plato and his philosophical project is found in “The Seventh Letter.” However, any discussion of “The Seventh Letter” must be prefaced with a warning. Despite what we want to find within it, this letter cannot be unequivocally thought of as the instrument for finally capturing the Protean Plato. First of all, the work is thought by some to be

spurious precisely because it is too straightforward a work for someone as methodically elusive as Plato.² Second of all, the message that Plato is giving within the letter about his philosophical project, although admittedly more straightforward than what we find in the dialogues, is itself not entirely clear nor absolutely straightforward. Therefore, any reading of the letter must proceed cautiously. There are two points that I wish to extract from “The Seventh Letter”: 1) that the ways of a tyrant (who operates under ἀνάγκη) are not the ways of a philosopher and 2) the importance of living dialogue for Plato.

In many ways, “The Seventh Letter” is a work obsessed with tyranny. From its opening section (323d-326b), Plato talks disparagingly of tyrannies, particular the so-called Thirty Tyrants that ruled Athens in his youth. Additionally, the body of the letter features a long story about Plato’s dealings with politics in Sicily, particularly his obsession to actually try to convert the tyrants of the city, both Dionysius I and II, to a philosophical life. This continued insistence on conversion within the letter highlights the great gulf that separates a tyrant from a philosopher: these two types are fundamentally opposed to one another. We can see this conflict, among other places, when Plato talks about his second voyage to Sicily (328d-330b). There, when debating whether or not he should go to Sicily for a second time, Plato decides that he must, primarily lest he be forever thought of as a mere theorist, someone who is unwilling to put his thoughts into practice. And so, he departs again for Sicily, contrasting how different his own thoughts are from that of the tyrant whom he hopes to convert:

² E.g., Julia Annas says that “The Seventh Letter” is “such an unconvincing production that its acceptance by many scholars is best seen as indicating the strength of their desire to find, behind the detachment of the dialogues, something, no matter what, to which Plato is straightforwardly committed” (Annas 285).

ἀλλ' ἦλθον μὲν κατὰ λόγον ἐν δίκῃ τε ὡς οἶόν τε ἀνθρώπῳ μάλιστα,
διὰ τε τὰ τοιαῦτα καταλιπὼν τὰς ἐμαυτοῦ διατριβάς, οὔσας οὐκ
ἀσχήμονας, **ὑπὸ τυραννίδα δοκούσαν οὐ πρόπειν τοῖς ἐμοῖς λόγοις**
οὐδὲ ἐμοί [...] (329b1-3)

And so from motives as rational and just as is humanly possible I
departed, giving up for those reasons my occupations here, which are not
without dignity, **to live under a tyranny seemingly unsuited both to my**
doctrines and to me.

Admittedly, the translation of λόγοι as “doctrines” may be a little over the top, but it
conveys the sense well enough, i.e., that the ways of a tyrant (or at least this particular
tyrant) are not in line with Plato’s own ways of thinking/speaking.

Unfortunately, when Plato arrives at Sicily for the second time, he unexpectedly
finds that his friend Dion, who invited him to come and convert Dionysius II to
philosophy, has fallen out of favor with the young tyrant. Thus, Plato, the friend of Dion,
becomes a suspicious character to Dionysius II. Although he ostensibly feigns
kindliness to Plato, begging him to stay, Dionysius II places him under a de facto house
arrest within the confines of his palace. When reflecting upon the way that Dionysius II
cunningly forced him to stay, Plato makes an interesting observation where he connects
tyranny and ἀνάγκη: “τὰς δὲ τῶν τυράννων δεήσεις ἴσμεν ὅτι μεμειγμένα
ἀνάγκαις εἰσὶν” (“but we know that the requests of tyrants are mingled with
compulsion”) (329 d7-e1). Thus, the tyrant, whose ways (as we saw above) are not
Plato’s own, is associated with the focus of this paper, ἀνάγκη.

A little while later in “The Seventh Letter,” Plato talks about how his method of persuasion and conversion, unlike that of the tyrant, does not use force. While the word in the following passage translated as force or compulsion is βία, not ἀνάγκη, the message is similar to the passage quoted above, i.e., that the tyrant operates by means of compulsion/force, whereas the philosopher, whose ways are different, does not operate in this manner, particularly to those who are unwilling to listen to what he has to say. When reflecting upon his own method of effecting conversion in those who have no desire to be converted, Plato remarks:

ἐὰν δὲ μὴ συμβουλευῆταί μοι τὸ παράπαν ἢ συμβουλεύοντι δῆλος ἦ
μηδαμῆ πεισόμενος, αὐτόκλητος ἐπὶ τὸν τοιοῦτον οὐκ ἔρχομαι
συμβουλεύσων, **βιασόμενος δὲ οὐδ’** ἂν υἱὸς ἦ μου. δούλω δὲ
συμβουλεύσαιμ’ **ἂν καὶ μὴ ἐθέλοντά γε προσβιαζοίμην**· πατέρα δὲ ἢ
μητέρα οὐχ ὅσιον ἡγοῦμαι **προσβιάζεσθαι** μὴ νόσῳ παραφροσύνης
ἐχομένους, ἐὰν δὲ τινα καθεστῶτα ζῶσι βίον, (331b4-c3)

But a man who does not consult me at all, or makes it clear that he will not follow advice that is given him—to such a man I do not take it upon myself to offer counsel; nor would I use **constraint** upon him, not even if he were my own son. Upon a slave I might force my advice, **compelling** him to follow it against his will; but to use **compulsion** upon a father or mother is to me an impious act, unless their judgment has been impaired by disease.

There are a couple general observations that we can make based on what we have read thus far from “The Seventh Letter” of Plato with regards to philosophy, tyranny, and force. 1) The ways and methods of a philosopher are different from those of a tyrant. And 2) while it is in the very nature of the tyrant to use force or compulsion, the philosopher is more hesitant to avail himself of using these corrupt means in order to achieve his end. Thus far within the course of “The Seventh Letter,” Plato has given some idea and shape to philosophy by contrasting it with tyranny and showing us what it is not.

However, later in this letter, in the famous digression from 341b-345c, Plato describes in positive terms what he feels is the nature of true philosophy, i.e., a freely entered, *living dialogue* between two people in a quest “to bring the nature [of things] to the light” (“τὴν φύσιν εἰς φῶς [...] προαγαγεῖν”). As a living dialogue between people, the search for the true nature of things demands that people spend much time being together (“ἐκ πολλῆς συνουσίας γιγνομένης περὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ καὶ τοῦ συζῆν”), doing the hard work which philosophy necessitates. Once you have spent much labor and time in the task of examining something for yourself, then a vision of a thing’s true nature erupts before you. Plato, with this imagery of light bursting forth (οἶον ἀπὸ πυρὸς πηδήσαντος ἔξαφθὲν φῶς), is clearly likening the process of philosophy and the quest for the truth (ἀληθὲς) to a fire suddenly bursting forth from the rubbing together of two sticks (τριβή).

This imagery of light and fire serves two principle ends in its description of the philosophical project. First, it highlights the hard work that philosophy requires in order to reach the truth/the light. Second, it stresses that there must be a plurality of persons for

this project. (1) From Plato's perspective, if you are going to make an honest attempt to obtain the truth and produce its light in this world, then you must actually work at sparking it yourself, no less than one who is going to start a campfire must start rubbing together sticks if he is going to produce a fire for himself. The key to this process is τριβή, i.e., a rubbing together.³ (2) Additionally, rubbing together necessitates a plurality of things. If we wish to produce fire, then we need two sticks, not one. Likewise, if we are going to produce the truth, as the image goes, then we need two minds, not just one.

b) Plato on Writing: The Dead Word

Plato's interpretation of philosophy qua living dialogue between two actual interlocutors naturally accompanies a negative outlook on the art of writing and the ability of writing to lead us to the true nature of things. Writing, by contrast to a living dialogue, is in some ways a dead art. We see Plato's negativity towards writing expressed both in "The Seventh Letter" and at *Phaedrus* 274b-277a. In "The Seventh Letter," Plato talks about the ontological inferiority of the written word and warns what may happen if a good piece of writing comes before the wrong audience. In the metaphysical hierarchy that he lays out at 343a, all ways of expressing the truth (e.g., name, account, image, and knowledge), although instrumentally helpful to some degree, are necessarily inferior to the actual vision of truth, which suddenly flashes forth, like fire erupting from two sticks. Certainly, this passage reminds one of Diotima's Ladder of Love in the *Symposium* (210a1-212c2), wherein the vision of the Beautiful—the Essence itself—suddenly and unexpectedly appears before the sight of the lover after he has

³ Anyone who has tried to start a campfire can attest to both the difficulty that comes along with this project and the attendant joy that comes when the fire suddenly bursts forth.

scaled all particularities. Moreover, writing runs the risk of being substantially misunderstood by people who are not well disposed by nature or have not been properly prepared to receive its contents (e.g., Dionysius II). And thus, Plato comes to the conclusion that the serious (σπουδαῖος) man will be the last to write down his thoughts on lofty matters (344c1). And so, if the serious man does write down his thoughts, despite what he knows about the ontological inferiority of words, the danger of their being misinterpreted, and their inability to talk back, then we can conclude that men have destroyed his wits: “βροτοὶ δὲ φρένας ὤλεσαν αὐτοί.”

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato has Socrates talk in very similar terms about the nature of writing as a kind of dead dialogue (i.e., one that cannot engage with and speak back to the reader). In the story of Theuth inventing the art of writing and presenting it to the Egyptian King Thamos, Socrates reminds us that writing was once a kind of novel technology (274c-275e). And as with almost any sort of technology, its results are not unequivocally beneficial for mankind. Some of the negative aspects of writing discussed in the *Phaedrus* are its corrosive effects on memory and, as with “The Seventh Letter,” its inability to respond to and engage with a reader, thus leading the reader to true wisdom. A piece of writing is dead insofar as it cannot talk back. For the people who know about a topic, it’s a helpful reminder. However, for those people who do not know and are trying to learn, writing cannot answer the questions that they may have. Indeed, in its worst form, a piece of writing always signifies one and the same thing every time that it is read (“ἔν τι σημαίνει μόνον ταῦτόν ἀεί”).

Moreover, writing makes people think that they are wise, when in actuality they are not. That is to say, once you have read a well-considered treatment of a topic, one

that sets out to feed you the answer to some question, you cannot really *know* this answer unless you have thought the question through for yourself. For example, you may think that you know the nature of the Beautiful if you hear a lecture on it, but the fact of the matter is that you will not truly understand its nature and be able to describe it and resist opposition to your viewpoint, unless you have thoroughly done the hard work of philosophy and thought these matters through *for yourself*.

Again in the *Phaedrus*, the dead, written word is contrasted to the living dialogue. Of the living dialogue (i.e., the λόγος which is described as ζῶν and ἔμψυχος), the written word is but an image (εἶδωλον). Also as in “The Seventh Letter,” Plato says that no wise man will seriously (σπουδῆ) take up the art of writing. Rather, he will use the nobler art of dialectic, i.e., living dialogue, to get his point across.

All of this negative discussion about the art of writing is *prima facie* perplexing, especially coming from an author as prolific as Plato, an author who, if history is any indication, labored so diligently over his dialogues, constantly tweaking and polishing them as if they were precious gems to be displayed. Moreover, there is no shortage of irony in the very fact that we the readers of Plato are receiving a critique about reading and writing *by reading it*.⁴ What are we as readers of Plato to make of the disconnect between what Plato says about the art of writing and what he actually wrote (i.e., the dialogues)? Did Plato view all of his writings in a negative light? Probably not. The conflict between Plato as an author clearly in love with the art of writing (as exemplified in the dialogues) and Plato as a philosopher and curmudgeonly old man opposed to the art of writing highlights the fact that Plato *was aware of the need to breath new life into*

⁴ This is akin to someone trying to advocate for stricter gun laws by coming in to town with guns blazing.

the art of writing, to call writing back from the netherworld and its valley of dry bones into a status of closer conformity with the living dialogue, which is the necessary setting for true philosophy. In the next section below (I.c), we will take up a consideration of some of the ways in which Plato sought to resurrect the written word. It is hoped that this preliminary discussion of Plato's desire to bring writing back to life will lay the groundwork for a device such as the ἀνάγκη response in the dialogues, i.e., a device which works towards this end of revivification.

c) Plato's Resurrection of the Written Word

When one tries to apply Plato's critique of writing found in the *Phaedrus* and "The Seventh Letter" to what Plato himself actually wrote (i.e., his dialogues), it starts to become clear that while some of the critiques are relevant to the dialogues, others among them have been successfully avoided by Plato. Of course, Plato cannot avoid the charge that writing is ontologically inferior to living dialogue. If writing is always and essentially relegated to be but an image of living dialogue, just as any instantiation is but an image of some idea/concept/form, then *a fortiori* the dialogues themselves *qua* writings are essentially and unchangeably inferior to the living dialogue.

Moreover, one of the virtues of living dialogue is the collaboration that occurs there between at least two people, in which one of the participants can answer the questions that come up and adapt to the particular demands of each individual interlocutor. Against this virtue of the living dialogue stands the coordinating vice that accompanies the dead word, i.e., that it always signifies the same thing to the reader and runs the risk of being misinterpreted because of this very fact. Yet despite this vice of the dead word, it must be admitted that Plato's dialogues, although they do not completely

break free from this criticism, nevertheless do exhibit a *constant awareness* of this limitation of writing, as well as a *constant desire* to break free from these chains of bondage.

One of the ways in which Plato demonstrates both an awareness of the limitations of writing as well as a desire to break free from them is blatantly obvious, i.e., by writing in the format of a dialogue. While Plato could have very easily written in the ornate style of the earlier philosopher-poets or in the later essay format of Aristotle, he made a very conscious decision to put down what he had to say in the form of dialogues. Already we can see here Plato explicitly trying to conform the written word more closely to that of which it is merely an image: the living dialogue.

In placing before his audience a number of different characters rather than a single voice (e.g., the author of an essay), Plato complicates the assertion that writing always must signify the same thing. Indeed, the multiplicity of characters—all of whom come from the mouth of Plato—makes it hard for the work to signify the same thing precisely because we can never really be sure *what it signifies in the first place*. Additionally, Plato often frames the dialogues by distancing the re-telling of the dialogue from the actual events. In some cases, the real conversation has been passed down between multiple people before it has finally been presented to us in a written dialogue (e.g., the *Symposium*'s framing device at its beginning). This distancing between real conversation and later reporting causes suspicion in the minds of the audience about the veracity of the proceedings and throws serious doubts upon our placing our absolute trust in the dialogues. Indeed, this device invites a critical and engaged approach to the dialogue, a preliminary warning to “stay on your toes!” For these reasons, as any one

who has read Plato repeatedly can attest, the dialogues are so multi-layered, so rich in complexities, that here, almost more than anywhere else in literature, Plato has found some extraordinary way to make the written word signify something different every time the attentive reader comes to them. Plato's dialogues are always presenting us as readers with new possibilities, new significations every time we read them. Granted, in some sense they are the same significations that have always been there, but Plato took such care to infuse the dialogues with such an extraordinary abundance of them that the reader is forever discovering new signification and meanings in the dialogues.

There are also many other ways in which Plato invites the reader to think through matters for himself/herself, i.e., not only to read the words of a dialogue on a page, but actually to be engaged by the words and prompted to a kind of dialogue with Plato, the author. First of all, there is the frequent usage of myths in Plato's dialogues, which try to transcend the limitations of the written word and awaken within our soul some deeper, primordial truth. Myths are stories that signify many things *par excellence*.

Additionally, there is Plato's use of ἀπορία in many of his dialogues. By ending his dialogues in ἀπορία, Plato is demonstrating that knowledge cannot simply be fed to his readers, rather they must accomplish the hard work of philosophy for themselves. We the readers are constantly being challenged at the end of the early Platonic dialogues, not to accept the ἀπορία as definite and conclusive, but to find ways in which we could have avoided arriving at this impasse, this roadlessness, along the metaphorical journey that was the dialogue. As we shall see below in section II, the ἀνάγκη response, which is closely related to the concept of ἀπορία, is another one of the ways in which Plato is

trying to make the written word closer to living dialogue and inviting readers to do the hard work of philosophy and dialogue for themselves.

Admittedly, a response like ἀνάγκη (“it is necessary”) is both necessary and destructive to dialogue/dialectic as Plato conceives of it. On the one hand, it is necessary and helpful to it because dialectic demands that the interlocutor speak up in order for forward progression to be made. That is to say, you must commit to some view and put yourself out there, so to speak, before your idea can be cross examined and then refuted or approved. However, for this same reason, at least in the dialogues, any thing that leads to constriction and narrowing of horizons/possibilities (like the ἀνάγκη response) runs the risk of ending in ἀπορία if the interlocutor is not willing to look for alternative routes that could have been taken but were not. And as we know from reading Plato, more often than not, the proud interlocutor is in the end unwilling to continue looking for the alternative routes that do not lead to an impasse.

With all this talk about the dialogue format, perhaps it would be helpful to take a brief detour in order to differentiate my views from the two major interpretive methods that have been applied to them throughout time. On the one hand, at least as far back as Aristotle, there has been a tendency to read the dialogues in a primarily philosophical context through analyzing the truth or falsity of the particular doctrines contained therein. On the other hand, at least as far back as Carneades and the New Academy, there has been a tendency to suggest that the dialogues do not really contain any teaching that can be straightforwardly assigned to Plato and analyzed. Rather, Plato, like his master Socrates, was essentially non-dogmatic. In modern Platonic criticism, it is possible to make out the heirs of this particular type of interpretation. These interpreters tend to

stress the literary and dramatic elements of the dialogues, reading the dialogues as a whole, rather than breaking them down into a series of arguments to be analyzed. On the former view of the dialogues (the one possibly pioneered by Aristotle), they are simply “a dispensable vehicle for the conveyance of [...] substantive philosophical theories,” while on the latter view, they tend to be seen “as an essential ingredient in Plato’s approach to philosophical issues” (Klagge 3). If we must choose between these two options, then I would agree with the second assessment that the dialogue format is essential and certainly not dispensable. As to the question of whether we should read the dialogues from a philosophical or a literary viewpoint, I agree with Gerald Press that drawing this distinction is not holistic and leads to an incomplete view of the marvelously complex author that Plato is, for “it is no more appropriate to interpret the arguments in abstraction from their full, actual linguistic setting than it would be to interpret Plato solely as a poet and playwright” (Press 1993, 113).⁵

Additionally, I think that the arguments presented in the dialogues are not meant to be dogmatic. Even the theory of the Forms, that great bastion of Platonic dogmatism, is almost everywhere introduced with either an explicit expression of doubt or an abundance of subtle particles of doubtful assertion to cast a skeptical light upon the proceedings (e.g., the discussion of Forms featured throughout the *Phaedo*, which showcases both).⁶ However, that does not mean that we ought not to evaluate the

⁵ Gerald Press gives some great tips for how to read Plato. See, for example, chapter 13 in *Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed* where he instructs his readers on how to approach Plato through a logical reading, then a dramatic/literary reading, and finally, and most importantly, through an integrative reading that harmonizes the logical and the literary readings.

⁶ Alexander Nehamas in his lovely book, *The Art of Living*, warns us against thinking that there is some dogmatic system in Plato’s dialogues underlying the surface level, which

arguments that Plato has his characters make. Indeed, to neglect a philosophical analysis of the arguments in favor of a purely literary analysis would be clearly wrong. The fact of the matter is that both the philosophical arguments within the dialogues and the literary context in which they take place are equally essential and working towards the same goal, that being an invitation to the readers to do the hard work of philosophy *for themselves*, to live the life of philosophy that Plato's Socrates is so enthusiastic about in the *Apology*, the *Phaedo*, the *Gorgias*—indeed, almost everywhere! In “The Seventh Letter,” as we saw above, Plato is so devoted to this cause that he is willing to travel hundreds of miles in order to attempt to convert people to this lifestyle. Ultimately, I think that the dialogues are trying to get us to think for ourselves⁷ and to promote a thirst for knowledge, i.e., to foster philosophy (love-of-wisdom) within the hearts of his readers. And, as we know from the *Symposium*, the philosopher is he who lacks wisdom himself (200a-201c). To posit a dogmatic Plato (i.e., one who has obtained wisdom and is trying to impart it to us) would be to invalidate the picture of the philosopher as a figure of indigence that is painted in the *Symposium*, as well as to miss the point of the early conversation in that dialogue between Socrates and Agathon, viz., that knowledge cannot be poured out from person to person as liquid in cups can (175d-e).

only certain discerning readers will discover, as if “Plato uses the dialogue form to encode his real position and reveal it only to those of his readers who are capable of reading his code” (Nehamas 36). Although to read Plato as a sneaky dogmatist is appealing, particularly in light of some of the cryptic things that Plato says in “The Seventh Letter,” and although certain influential interpreters of Plato have indeed advanced just this kind of view (e.g., the Neoplatonists in ancient times and the Tübingen school and Leo Strauss in modern times), Nehamas speaks against it because it builds an unnecessary wall between the literary and philosophical elements of the dialogue, subordinating the former under the latter, thus depriving us of a more holistic approach to Plato.

⁷ See Kraut's introduction to the *Cambridge Companion to Plato* for a similar claim, viz., that the dialogues are trying to get the audience to think for themselves.

In this interpretive framework, logical problems within the arguments of the dialogues, which are uncovered through philosophical analysis, are *absolutely intentional* creations of Plato, formulated in order to invite the audience to come to an awareness of these problems and attempt to overcome them for themselves. The participants in the dialogues do often struggle nobly and arduously in pursuit of the truth, though sometimes, admittedly, they do not (e.g., the latter half of the *Gorgias* where Socrates is forced comically to conduct a dialogue with himself). Nevertheless, the quest itself, rather than the conclusions of the arguments, is what Plato stresses in the dialogue form. Indeed, the dialogues do not feed us dogmas because that would essentially go against Plato's idea of philosophy as dialectic (i.e., as a free, unforced, unhindered exchange of ideas in pursuit of the truth). This viewpoint of philosophy as dialectic necessitates that the philosopher is "neither adamantly committed to the assumptions, nor prejudiced in favor of particular outcomes" (Nails 35).

All this is not to say that the philosophical analysts, who scrutinize the arguments Plato has characters present in the dialogues, are not doing the kind of work that Plato wants. Rather, the problem with their interpretation is that they sometimes misunderstand the fact that, when they find logical problems within arguments offered in the dialogues, Plato does not intend this to be a *stopping point* of inquiry, but rather a *beginning*. Fallacies are just another device by which Plato is attempting to revivify the written word and bring it in to closer conformity with the living dialogue, i.e., to invite the reader into dialogue with the author of the dialogues, dead and gone though he may be. In fact, the logical fallacy in the Platonic dialogues is not an end, but a new beginning—indeed, perhaps the *true* beginning—of the philosophical quest for Plato.

As it seems to me, for all of the foregoing reasons in section I.c, Plato has brought the written word into as close a conformity with the living dialogue as any author could. And as for the principal deficiency of writing that remains, viz., that the dialogues are so rich and varied with complexities that certain people will inevitably misinterpret them, here it is important to point out that this exact same deficiency exists within the living dialogue. In fact, in both the living dialogue and the written word, even those most willing to do the hard work of philosophy and come to true understanding for themselves, while others will inevitably and suddenly remember—like Euthyphro—that they have somewhere else to be, some other commitment to occupy their time. In the end then, both the living dialogue and the written word hang dependently upon the effort and strengths of the interlocutor. It is precisely on these strengths and weaknesses that the dialogue or the writing on the page will stand or fall.

Let's turn now to look more closely at one particular convention of the dialogue format (i.e., the ἀνάγκη response) by which Plato conforms the written word more closely to the living dialogue, creating a space of engagement and activity for the audience, inviting us to do the hard work of philosophy, for it is only by doing this hard work that we can become wise for ourselves. And those who are not engaged by the dialogues, who simply read static doctrines on a page, rather than contemplating the questions that they ask us, run the risk of becoming like those poets, craftsmen, and politicians of the *Apology*—those who *thought* that they were wise, while in fact they were not.

This preliminary discussion of the living dialogue, the dead word, and the quest to reconcile them has hopefully provided a framework in which we can better understand Plato's purposes and goals when using a device like the ἀνάγκη response.

Section II. Ἀνάγκη as a Dialogical Response in the *Lysis*

Let's turn now to a consideration of the usages of ἀνάγκη in a particular Platonic dialogue. For our investigation, we will use the *Lysis*, a dialogue which I think works particularly well because it features such a great abundance of failed arguments and dead-end streets in its examination of the concept of friendship. As we will see below, there seems to be an intimate connection between ἀνάγκη and impasses in argumentation.

In the *Lysis*, words derived from the base ἀναγκ- appear eighteen times. A close examination of their usage within the *Lysis*, as well as in a key passage in the *Cratylus*, reveals the word ἀνάγκη to be a Janus-like figure, two-headed in scope, looking both backwards to an established premise and forwards to establishing a conclusion, usually a conclusion that leads to some impasse in the argument. Furthermore, as, at least on its surface, one of the most destructive dialogues of them all, featuring a Socrates who appears to be particularly sophistic and eristic, the *Lysis* urges us to find an explanation for why the participants in the dialogue are constantly led on the wrong path to difficult terrain in their arguments. Part of the explanation is found in the response of ἀνάγκη, which while limiting and seemingly destructive to the conversation within the dialogue, is also a kind of meta-invitation to the readers of the dialogues to 1) consider *where* the path of the argument encountered rough terrain and 2) to construct for themselves *alternative paths* from those which are presented within the dialogue. In this constructive aspect, the ἀνάγκη response can be seen as liberating—an invitation from Plato to the readers to engage in constructive, philosophical thought for themselves.

a) Different Types of Ἀνάγκη

Perhaps it would be helpful though, before we proceed on to an investigation of ἀνάγκη in the *Lysis* specifically, to first consider some of the various connotations of the Greek word ἀνάγκη. There were indeed many variations of ἀνάγκη for the Greeks. Although a comprehensive list is not reasonable within the confines of this thesis, it may be helpful to list some examples of things that “compel” before we move on to focus on one particular subject of compulsion (i.e., the compulsion of an argument). First, there is the compulsion that one person may force upon another. This usage is found within the *Lysis* at 205d. There Ktesippos laments the way in which the love-stricken Hippothales *forces* his friends to hear the songs and speeches that he composes about his beloved: “ταῦτ’ ἐστὶν ἃ οὗτος λέγων τε καὶ ἄδων ἀναγκάζει καὶ ἡμᾶς ἀκροᾶσθαι.” Against their own wishes, the friends of Hippothales are forced to listen to the sappy praise of his beloved. Second, people may impose force and constriction on one another through societal institutions or even through political and ideological policies. The best example of this societal restriction upon another person is found in the institution of slavery (Liddell 53). At *Iliad* 6.458, Hector uses the term ἀνάγκη when dreading the future day when Andromache will be a slave in a foreign land. Additionally, a good example of the way in which political and ideological policies can force us down a certain path is found in Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War*, where the particular imperial policy that Athens is pursuing is said to have forced them into war with Sparta. Third, there are a great number of appetitive forces that act upon us in a forceful and constrictive way. The two most obvious examples of these forces would be our appetite for food and sex. It would be nice to not have to eat, but lo and behold, when it becomes 6:00 in the

evening, a natural appetite forces me to eat. Likewise, the sex drive comes upon us with a certain compulsory force that is hard to resist in many instances.

Fourth, there is a certain necessity that is present in the cosmic order of things. This cosmic ἀνάγκη is an impersonal, involuntary power present in nature. Some of the Presocratics used ἀνάγκη and τύχη as the explanations for how the nature of things was established. For example, Empedocles thought that the four elements (earth, wind, fire, water) come together and break apart through Love and Strife, a process started up and maintained by a certain natural necessity (Guthrie II 159-167). Likewise, for Democritus, there is no need to explain *why* atoms do what they do: it is simply necessarily so (Guthrie II 414-419). In responding to these Presocratics, Plato and Aristotle often set ἀνάγκη apart as a force that ought to be distinguished from the rational workings of Νοῦς. By this contrast, they take up the question of whether the world came to be as it is by necessity and chance, or by the design of a craftsman. See in particular the *Timaeus* for a consideration of how Νοῦς persuades ἀνάγκη in order to fashion our world. Relevant to our purposes, is the way in which ἀνάγκη limits and determines what the Demiurge may fashion. It is important to point out that the god of the *Timaeus* is not a god who can impose whatever rules and qualities he likes upon matter, as the Christian ex nihilo creator can. Rather, he *is constricted* by the necessary order of the way things are. Given what he had to work with, he created the best world possible. Furthermore, the way in which he fashions things constricts the things that come afterwards. Thus, this cosmic necessity looks both forwards and backwards.⁸

⁸ For more insights into the many ways in which the Greeks used the term ἀνάγκη, consult the following:

b) Logical Ἀνάγκη: The Two-Headed God

The fifth and final kind of ἀνάγκη that we will consider, the one which is the focus of this paper and naturally shares similarities with all the aforementioned instances of ἀνάγκη, is logical ἀνάγκη, i.e., the necessity in arguments that compels us forward. This seems to me to be the most pervasive connotation of the term within the *Lysis*. Similar to how the demiurge is both 1) constricted by the necessary order of things and 2) constricts the things that he fashions because of the cosmic ἀνάγκη, the participants in a dialogue are 1) constricted by the necessity of the premises to which they assent, and 2) constrict the forward progression of the argument via this assent.

To fill out the first aspect of logical ἀνάγκη (i.e., how it is constricted through agreed-upon premises), it is helpful to review the method of argumentation of Socrates in the so-called early-middle dialogues. There is a particular passage in the *Meno* that may be helpful in this respect. At 75d, Socrates is trying to teach his interlocutor the proper way that dialectic should proceed in confronting the answer to a “What is F?” question.

-For more on ἔρωσ as ἀνάγκη see Hugh Parry’s article “The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite: Erotic ‘Ananke’.” There Parry shows that there are many instances in lyric and tragic poetry, as well as in the “Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite” in which ἔρωσ is considered to be a force of necessity. In this particular Homeric Hymn, according to Parry, the sexual act is conceived of as a kind of turning point, one that is prepared by the bliss of pre-coital anticipation, but which simultaneously looks to the post-coital future—one of unpleasantness and loss.

-For more on ἀνάγκη in Thucydides, see Martin Ostwald’s book *ANAGKH in Thucydides*.

-For more on cosmic ἀνάγκη, see Radek Chlup’s “Two Kinds of Necessity in Plato’s Dialogues,” Francis Cornford’s *Plato’s Cosmology*, and Glen Morrow’s “Necessity and Persuasion in Plato’s *Timaeus*.”

-Finally, for an extensive overview of different usages of ἀνάγκη in classical literature, please consult Allison Green’s “The Concept of Ananke in Greek Literature before 400 BCE.”

In the *Meno*, the quest is to find the identity of virtue. However, throughout the dialogue, Socrates is sidetracked from this particular search. At 75d, Socrates is trying to give an answer to the question “what is shape?” in order to illustrate how the greater question “what is virtue?” should be conducted. After having defined shape as “that which always follows color,” Meno rightfully points out that someone may ask how Socrates defines color, since that is unclear, and wonders how Socrates will proceed. Before giving a reformulated definition without color (viz., “shape is that which limits a solid”), Socrates gives us this interesting passage about how dialectic ought to proceed:

καὶ εἰ μὲν γε τῶν σοφῶν τις εἴη καὶ ἐριστικῶν τε καὶ ἀγωνιστικῶν ὁ ἐρόμενος, εἴποιμ' ἂν ‘εἰ δὲ μὴ ὀρθῶς λέγω, σὸν ἔργον λαμβάνειν λόγον καὶ ἐλέγχειν.’ εἰ δὲ ὥσπερ ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ νυνὶ φίλοι ὄντες βούλοιντο ἀλλήλοις διαλέγεσθαι, δεῖ δὴ πραότερόν πως καὶ διαλεκτικώτερον ἀποκρίνεσθαι. ἔστι δὲ ἴσως τὸ διαλεκτικώτερον μὴ μόνον τάλιθ' ἀποκρίνεσθαι, **ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἐκείνων ὧν ἂν προσομολογῇ εἰδέναι ὁ ἐρωτώμενος.** πειράσομαι δὴ καὶ ἐγὼ σοι οὕτως εἰπεῖν. (75c-d)

And if my questioner was one of those clever and disputatious debaters, I would say to him, ‘I have given my answer; if it is wrong, it is your job to refute it.’ Then, if they are friends, as you and I are, and want to discuss with each other, they must answer in a manner more gentle and more proper for discussion. By this I mean that the answers must not only be true, **but in terms admittedly know to the questioner.** I too will try to speak in these terms.

In this interesting passage, two important points emerge with regard to dialectic. First of all, there is a necessity to say what is on one's mind, i.e., to have the courage to put forward a proposition or premise knowing that it is going to be scrutinized and perhaps even destroyed in a quest for the truth. Unlike the eristic, whose goal is to selfishly win an argument, the goal of a participant in Socratic dialogue is presumably to find the truth, even if that means putting his own personal beliefs up for scrutiny and (more than likely) for demolition. The second point that is established in this passage is that the two participants in dialectic must confront a question that is not understood, on which there may not initially be agreement (e.g., What is virtue? What is shape?), via things that *are understood* and on which there *is agreement*. In this particular case, Socrates says that the terms need to be agreed upon by both participants in a dialogue. Thus, Socrates will go on to define shape via the concept of limit (πέρας), a term which both participants understand.

Although the *Meno* passage illustrates the need for agreement upon terms, there is also a more general need for agreement in Socratic dialectic. Indeed, the scholar Gregory Vlastos tells us that the Socratic method of argumentation and refutation proceeds through agreement, not only on terms, as in the *Meno* passage, but through the more general agreement of premises. Once someone has put some claim forth as the object for refutation, the method is to then find premises 1) which undermine the original claim and 2) to which both parties involved in a discussion may agree (Vlastos 712). Once this agreement of premises has been established, the claim needs to be either rejected or modified accordingly.

The relevant conclusion for ἀνάγκη from this brief analysis of Socratic argumentation is that the participants in a dialogue are constricted by the premises to which they agree, so much so that the very things which they believe in and hold dear are by logical compulsion destroyed. It seems to me that the response of ἀνάγκη, more so than any other response of an interlocutor in the dialogue, is tied back to previously agreed upon premises and expresses the logical constriction necessary for Socratic argumentation.

In addition to the aspect of ἀνάγκη that is backward looking and constricted by former premises, there is a second aspect of ἀνάγκη that is forward looking and constricts the forward progression of the argument. This second aspect of the term is taken up in the *Cratylus*. While presenting the etymologies for a number of different words (very often, bogus etymologies), Socrates sets his sights on a consideration of the term ἀνάγκη:

‘ἀνάγκην’ δ’ οὖν ἔτι βούλομαι διαπερᾶναι, ὅτι τούτοις ἐξῆς ἐστι, καὶ τὸ ‘ἐκούσιον.’ τὸ μὲν οὖν ‘ἐκούσιον,’ τὸ εἶκον καὶ μὴ ἀντιτυποῦν ἀλλ’, ὥσπερ λέγω, εἶκον τῷ ἰόντι δεδηλωμένον ἂν εἶη τούτῳ τῷ ὀνόματι, τῷ κατὰ τὴν βούλησιν γιγνομένῳ: τὸ δὲ ‘ἀναγκαῖον’ καὶ ἀντίτυπον, παρὰ τὴν βούλησιν ὄν, τὸ περὶ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν ἂν εἶη καὶ ἀμαθίαν, ἀπείκασται δὲ τῇ κατὰ τὰ ἄγκη πορεία, ὅτι δύσπορα καὶ τραχέα καὶ λάσια ὄντα ἴσχει τοῦ ἰέναι. ἐντεῦθεν οὖν ἴσως ἐκλήθη ‘ἀναγκαῖον,’ τῇ διὰ τοῦ ἄγκους ἀπείκασθὲν πορεία. ἕως δὲ πάρεστιν ἡ ῥώμη, μὴ ἀνιῶμεν αὐτὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ σὺ μὴ ἀνίει, ἀλλὰ ἐρώτα. (420d-e)

But I still want to investigate ‘*anankē*’ (‘compulsion’) and ‘*hekousion*’ (‘voluntary’), since they’re next. The name ‘*hekousion*’ expresses the fact that it signifies yielding and not resisting, but yielding, as I said before, to the motion (*eikon tōi ionti*)-the one that comes into being in accord with our wish. ‘*Anankaion*’ (‘compulsory’) and ‘*antitupnon*’ (‘resistant’), on the other hand, since they signify motion contrary to our wish, are associated with ‘error’ and ‘ignorance.’ Indeed, saying ‘*anankaion*’ is like trying to get through a ravine (‘*ankē*’), for ravines restrain motion, since they are rough-going, filled with bushes, and hard to get through. It’s probably for this reason we use ‘*anankaion*’ in the way we do—because saying it is like trying to get through a ravine. Nonetheless, while my strength lasts, let’s not stop using it. Don’t you stop, either, but keep asking questions.

After establishing that ἀνάγκη is associated with compulsion and is predominately against or beyond our wish (παρὰ τὴν βούλησιν), Socrates proceeds to make two interesting claims about ἀνάγκη. First of all there is the claim that ἀνάγκη is constrictive of our forward progress. Like a passage through ravines, where the way forward is difficult (δύσπορα), rough (τραχέα) and covered with thorns/bushes (λάσια), when someone proclaims something to be necessary, it complicates things, making the way forward difficult, if not impossible. Of course, the etymological connection that allows for this interpretation of ἀνάγκη is the similarity of that word to the word for ravines, ἄγκη. Secondly, not only is ἀνάγκη constrictive of forward progression, it is also somehow wrapped up with error and ignorance (τὸ περὶ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἂν εἴη καὶ

ἀμαθίαν). As we shall explore more below, the *Lysis* is a dialogue that seems to be particularly interested in finding the correct way forward in arguments. Indeed, there is much talk within that dialogue about the proper way forward. Given this passage from the *Cratylus* that alerts us to the role of ἀνάγκη as a detour into difficulty and constriction, the fact that an acceptable way forward is not found within the *Lysis* calls us as readers to look for the point where the proceedings went off the rails, so to speak, into a rocky and thorny terrain where forward progression became very difficult, if not impossible.

Before moving on to where we should look to avoid rough terrain in the *Lysis* though, let us take some examples from that dialogue to demonstrate the way in which ἀνάγκη 1) has a backwards referent to former premises and a forward referent to some δυσπορία and 2) is a constrictive force.

One instance of the ἀνάγκη response comes at 210a. In the rather amusing exchange that has led up to this moment of constriction, Socrates has been trying to demonstrate to Lysis that the boy's parents do not love him simply because he is their child, but rather they love him only insofar as he is useful to them. The premises that have been agreed upon which seem to lead to the logical constriction of 210a are something like the following: If you love something unconditionally, you want it to be as happy as possible, which means letting it do whatever it wants; not even parents let their children do whatever they want; rather, all of us only allow freedom to those we consider to be skilled in some matter. With this setup in mind, when Socrates asks Lysis if the king of Persia would let them do whatever they want as long as they seem to be experts on a subject (“ἄρ’ οὖν καὶ τᾶλλα πάντα ἡμῖν ἐπιτρέποι ἂν μᾶλλον ἢ ἑαυτῶ καὶ τῶ υἱεῖ,

περὶ ὅσων ἂν δόξωμεν αὐτῷ σοφώτεροι ἐκείνων εἶναι;”), Lysis is constricted to admit that, given what has been established and agreed upon before, it is necessary, i.e., that it follows from what has been said: “ἀνάγκη, ἔφη, ὃ Σώκρατες.” This instance of ἀνάγκη is interesting, insofar as it takes place within an argument that is deeply entrenched in a discussion on constraint and freedom. As his parents have constrained Lysis with regards to the things that he wants to do, so has the persuasiveness of the argument constrained Lysis into agreeing with it. Furthermore, Lysis, by agreeing with the logic that Socrates is putting forth, directs the argument on to the questionable conclusion that we only love people insofar as they are useful to us. Thus, this instance of ἀνάγκη at 210a shows a moment of constriction that looks to former premises, as well as to a future, problematic conclusion.

The two occurrences of ἀνάγκη at 219c-d both fit into the connotation of the word as logical compulsion given formerly agreed upon premises. Leading up to that point, Socrates introduced the premise that most things that are dear are dear for the sake of (ἔνεκα) some other dear thing. For example, a father may hold dear a cup that has a cure for hemlock in it, if his son just had a drink of hemlock. However, what the father primarily holds dear is his son. Given this premise, Socrates claims that it follows that we either need to find some primarily dear thing, or we must have an infinite regression of things that are held dear. When Lysis responds that this is necessary (“ἀνάγκη”), he is constricting the argument to follow a path that will be difficult, insofar as the first dear thing, which will be held dear on account of (ἔνεκα) nothing else, is an impossibility in light of the earlier agreement in 210a that something is held dear only insofar as it is useful.

Sometimes, ἀνάγκη is set in contrast to semblance, thus highlighting the fact that necessity may constrain us against our wish (παρὰ τὴν βούλησιν). There are two examples of this conflict between semblance and necessity in the *Lysis*: one at 213b and another at 217a. In both instances, although the interlocutors only reluctantly agree to what Socrates is saying, they are compelled by the logic of the argument, by things formerly agreed upon, to accept what is being said.

In the first example in 213b, Socrates is trying to figure out who a friend is: is a friend the person who loves, the person who is loved, or are both the lover and the beloved taken together described as friends? All of these options lead to an impasse, according to Socrates. The reciprocal option is not satisfying, because it does not allow for one to be a lover of things that do not love a person back, such as wisdom. The singular options (i.e., that either the lover or beloved alone is a friend) are not satisfying, because they allow for the possibility that a friend may be a friend to an enemy, something that Socrates sees as an impossibility. Having abandoned the claim that the beloved may be the friend in 213b, Socrates is forced back to a claim that he had formerly abandoned, viz., that the lover is a friend. Menexenus, who is a somewhat more unwilling and sophisticated interlocutor than Lysis was, follows this path back to the lover=friend claim reluctantly, knowing that it has already been refuted. When Socrates claims that, since the beloved cannot be a friend, then we must return to the lover=friend claim (i.e., “οὐκοῦν εἰ τοῦτ’ ἀδύνατον, τὸ φιλοῦν ἂν εἶη φίλον τοῦ φιλουμένου”), Menexenus halfheartedly musters up the hesitant, non-committal response, “φαίνεται,” suggesting that he is not in complete agreement that the premise is true. Nevertheless, given that the premise is true, then another thing would follow, according to Socrates,

viz., the claim that the one who hates would be an enemy of the one hated (“τὸ μισοῦν ἄρα πάλιν ἐχθρὸν τοῦ μισουμένου”). To this assertion, Menexenus is forced to concede “ἀνάγκη.” The conflict in this passage between what merely seems (φαίνεται) and what is logically compulsory highlights the force of ἀνάγκη qua constriction. This passage shows that the discussion is leading Menexenus to places that he does not want to go (viz., ultimately to the conclusion that no-one is a friend, neither the lover nor the beloved, nor both together), but to which, given the premises, he must follow.

The second example of the compulsory force of ἀνάγκη being highlighted in contrast to semblance comes at 217a. At that fairly late point in the dialogue, Lysis, no doubt growing weary of being led to places that he does not wish to follow, puts semblance and ἀνάγκη right next to one another in his hesitant reply. When Socrates summarizes his current claim about who can be a friend, saying that the neither good nor bad must be a friend to only the good, Lysis responds with the tepid reply, “ἀνάγκη, ὡς ἔουκεν.” This reply suggests that, although he is compelled to agree with what has been said based on former premises (e.g., that the good cannot be friend to the good, because the like cannot be friend to the like, because the like is useless to the like), Lysis is perhaps not completely on board with where the argument is moving.

The highest concentration of the word ἀνάγκη in the *Lysis* occurs at 216b, which features a whopping four occurrences of the word together. Interestingly enough, especially in relation to the passage from the *Cratylus* above, is the fact that the only appearance of the word ἀπορία within the dialogue occurs immediately following this cluster of necessity. Remember that the *Cratylus* passage very explicitly suggested that ἀνάγκη complicates the way forward. And what is ἀπορία if not a constriction of

forward progression, a privation of a good way forward? At any rate, ἀνάγκη in these passages is once again compelling us to difficult conclusions due to things formerly agreed. Here, Socrates and Lysis are caught between the authority of Hesiod, who was referred to in 215c as putting forth the claim that opposites are friends, and the authority of some “all-wise” and “disputatious men” who allege that this viewpoint is simply absurd, because things most opposed to one another are going to be enemies, not friends.

c) Ἀνάγκη and Finding New Paths

Having established the peculiar nature of ἀνάγκη as a word that is both constricted by past progress and constricting future progress, perhaps it is good that we consider its place within the framework of the *Lysis* as a whole. For this particular dialogue, as was briefly mentioned above when we considered the *Cratylus* passage, seems to be for some reason especially interested in the hindrance of progression in arguments. Try as they might, the participants in the dialogue of the *Lysis* again and again find themselves at an impasse or dead end in their quest to determine the nature of friendship and the identity of the friend.

Indeed, the very beginning of the *Lysis* sets a precedent for the herky-jerky, starting-and-stopping arguments that make up the dialogue. After all, at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates’ physical journey straight from the Academy to the Lyceum is disturbed and complicated. The first word of the dialogue, “I was going” (“ἔπορευόμην”—note the πορ- root contained within the word, the same root from which words like ἀ-πορ-ία and δυσ-πορ-ία are formed), already sets up a precedent for the arguments that are to follow: just as Socrates’ forward progression is interrupted by

Hippothales, so too will the forward progression of the argument be disturbed and set off track throughout the dialogue.

Furthermore, the arguments in the *Lysis* are likened to physical paths upon which we travel and from which we ought to turn aside if the way becomes too rough. For example, at *Lysis* 213e-214a Socrates reaches a difficult path after his first conversation with Menexenus, in which it was determined that neither the lover, nor the beloved, nor both together can be considered friends. Given that these options seem exhaustive for the identity of a friend, the way forward with the argument has become especially difficult and a change of direction is needed. Socrates describes the change thus:

ὦ Λύσι, ἀληθῆ μοι δοκεῖς λέγειν ὅτι εἰ ὀρθῶς ἡμεῖς ἐσκοποῦμεν, οὐκ ἂν ποτε οὕτως ἐπλανώμεθα. ἀλλὰ ταύτη μὲν μηκέτι ἴωμεν—καὶ γὰρ χαλεπή τις μοι φαίνεται ὥσπερ ὁδὸς ἢ σκέψις—ἣ δὲ ἐτρέπημεν, δοκεῖ μοι χρῆναι ἰέναι, σκοποῦντα τὰ κατὰ τοὺς ποιητάς: οὗτοι γὰρ ἡμῖν ὥσπερ πατέρες τῆς σοφίας εἰσὶν καὶ ἡγεμόνες. (213e-214a)

I think you're right, Lysis, to say that if we were looking at things in the right way, we wouldn't be so far off course. Let's not go in that direction any longer. That line of inquiry looks like a rough road to me. I think we'd better go back to where we turned off, and look for guidance to the poets, the ancestral voices of human wisdom.

This passage is interesting, particularly in light of the *Cratylus* passage. Admittedly, the vocabulary is not exactly the same. The word for “way/passage/road” in the *Cratylus* excerpt, “πορεῖα,” is here expressed by the word “ὁδός.” The difficulty of a particular

way, here expressed simply by the word “χαλεπή,” in the *Cratylus* was more artfully rendered by a whole string of adjectives: “δύσπορα καὶ τραχέα καὶ λάσια ὄντα ἴσχει τοῦ ἰέναι.” Nevertheless, the idea expressed in the two passages is strikingly similar. Both passages refer to a hindrance of forward progression. While the *Lysis* passage does not explain why we find ourselves on such a difficult path, the *Cratylus* passage does in fact suggest a reason why this may have happened, viz., ἀνάγκη, particularly of the logical sort. That is to say that the things that are agreed upon early in the *Lysis* place constrictions upon all the arguments that follow.

In fact, the earliest instance of an “ἀνάγκη” response in the dialogue (210a), occurs within an argument on love qua utility that will have profound and far reaching effects on making the way difficult (χαλεπή) throughout the *Lysis*.⁹ By answering “ἀνάγκη” within the course of this argument, Lysis has expressed an agreement that is not isolated in its impact, but which, in looking both forward to the conclusion (i.e., that we only love someone insofar as they are useful) and backward to the premises of the

⁹ There has been some debate about how destructive the initial conception of friendship qua utility is to the rest of the dialogue. I personally side with Donald Levin, who writes, “the notion put forth here and constantly reiterated throughout the dialogue, namely that friendship must be based on utility, is one of the rocks on which the whole discussion founders—for it is on this account that Socrates disallows the pairing of like with like [...] and denies that the good man, self-sufficient as he is, can be anyone’s friend” (Levin 244). For other scholars, like Robert Hoerber (see especially pages 22-23) and Laszlo Versenyi (see p.190), or even Terry Penner and Christopher Rowe (pp. 32-37), who emphasize the constructive aspect of the *Lysis* despite its overtly eristic or destructive moves, utility is not the main problem of the dialogue. Although I admit that the discussion about that which is primarily dear (who/which is loved for the sake of no other dear thing) in the later parts of the dialogue does showcase an attempt by Socrates to move beyond the realm of utility, nevertheless the concept of friendship qua utility is in play even after this argument with the discussion of need (ἐνδεής) and with the consideration about whether οἰκεῖος=ὄμοιος.

argument, in some ways can be seen to encompass the whole of the argument. Lysis is expressing a kind of implicit consent to what is going on. The fact that Lysis and Socrates agree that love is a purely utilitarian phenomenon, makes the way difficult throughout the dialogue, but it does not need to make the way difficult for us in the audience. For Plato is showing us, as an audience, paths of arguments that do *not* work when discussing the topic of friendship. Insofar as we are aware of the dead-end paths put before us in the dialogue, we are that much closer to achieving an understanding of what friendship is. It is our job to determine why the ways traveled in the dialogue become so difficult. The ἀνάγκη provides an opening and invitation to the audience to do the hard work of the dialectic for themselves, rather than spoon-feeding it to them. The ἀνάγκη can sometimes be seen as a kind of marker for where the argument veered off into difficult terrain. The interlocutors in the dialogue are both constricted and constricting when they utter it, but we as an audience are free from this constriction—free to pave new and better paths.

But lest the importance of the ἀνάγκη be overstated, it is perhaps important to point out at this juncture that not all of the things that make the way difficult in the *Lysis* can be traced back to the ἀνάγκη. Indeed, there are also certain methodological problems at play. For instance, there is a certain contentment with ambiguity of terms that is surprising given Socrates' usual demands for clarity from his interlocutors (e.g., see *Charmides* 163e for Socrates' demand for clear definitions). Indeed, the ambiguity of terms such as φίλος (dear or friend?) and ὅμοιος (absolutely the same or simply alike?),

among others, provide an abundance of problems for the discussion.¹⁰ For example, the ambiguities allow Socrates to (somewhat cheaply) refute the idea that like is friend with like by assuming that “like” means “absolutely alike in every way.” If only a little effort was put into actually clarifying and precisely defining each term, one can imagine that many of the difficulties of the dialogue would have been avoided.

Additionally, perhaps another reason that the *Lysis* ends in an ultimate failure to understand who a friend is can be explained by Socrates’ inability to conceive of a love beyond the sort of selfish image portrayed in the *Symposium*. Plato sometimes draws a connection between love qua ἔρως and tyranny.¹¹ In the tyrannical man, more than any other, erotic love is allowed free reign. Only when erotic love is tempered by self-control (e.g., in the famous Ladder of Love section of the *Symposium*, 210a-212c) is there any positive value in love qua ἔρως. One of the possible reasons then that the *Lysis* is constantly leading to ἀπορία is the fact that Socrates cannot get beyond the flawed misunderstanding that all love (e.g., friendship) must be reduced to the erotic, tyrannical sort, which despotically wishes to possess the other *for oneself and for one’s own benefit*. Rather, if we the audience are to find the true meaning of love, it would be best not to go along with Socrates’ preconceptions of friendship as rooted in ἔρως. If we are to do

¹⁰ According to the scholar Robert Hoerber, in the *Lysis* “Plato of course is cautioning his readers that a proper definition of terms is essential to any discussion of a topic such as friendship” (Hoerber 23). Paul Shorey expresses a similar sentiment: “It [the *Lysis*] reads precisely as if its philosophic purpose were to illustrate the mental confusion that arises when necessary and relevant distinctions are overlooked or not clearly brought out. If that is so, it may be compared, in this respect only, with the second part of the *Parmenides* [...]” (Shorey 115). W.K.C. Guthrie, in his treatment of the *Lysis*, even describes the dialogue as a whole as “not a success” because of Socrates’ methods, particularly his seemingly sophistic contentment to leave ambiguities in terms unresolved (Guthrie IV pp. 143-146).

¹¹ E.g., *Republic* 574d.

that, then we can see that many of the choices taken in the dialogue that lead to difficulties are in fact not necessary. Indeed, if one loves the other not for the sake of oneself but for the sake of the other, as Aristotle posits,¹² then we are closer to realizing the essence of true friendship. However, if we are bent on interpreting friendship qua erotic love, then our definitions are bound to fail. For the tyrannical man, who is the fullest realization of love qua ἔρωζ, is he who is described as “friendless” (ἀφίλω) (*Republic* 580a4).

Thus, by reflecting upon these hypothetical problems in the *Lysis*, both the ambiguity of terms and the conception of love qua ἔρωζ, we see that we, of course, cannot look to *only* the “ἀνάγκη” response in order to understand where things went wrong. It is simply one of a number of places towards which we should look when trying to discern where things went wrong and what we should avoid in our own consideration of a topic.

Hopefully, through the work of section II of this thesis, the subtle nuances of the term ἀνάγκη have come to light. From a brief consideration of the word and its usages, many different kinds of ἀνάγκη were revealed, e.g., erotic, cosmic, and political. However, the kind of ἀνάγκη that is most present within the *Lysis* is its logical form. As we have laid out above, the ἀνάγκη response is wrapped up in ideas of constriction and compulsion. In its looking backwards to formerly established premises, it is constricted. In its looking forward to conclusions that will be difficult, it constricts. Through this simple word (among other ingenious devices), Plato provides an opening for the readers to construct a better argument—an invitation to not follow the difficult path that the

¹² E.g., *Nicomachean Ethics* 1156b9-11.

participants in the dialogue experienced by avoiding the presuppositions that made the path so difficult in the first place. The ἀνάγκη response should thus be seen as a kind of foreshadowing within the context of the dialogue that a difficult path lies ahead, but also as an exciting opportunity for us the readers outside the dialogue to find a better way forward.

Section III. ΑΝΑΓΚΗ Writ Large

After studying individual and isolated examples of the ἀνάγκη response in the *Lysis*, perhaps it would be helpful to follow in the methodological footsteps of Plato in the *Republic* and look at forms of ἀνάγκη “writ large,” so to speak, in order to come to a fuller appreciation of this intriguing word. Hopefully, by looking at ἀνάγκη “writ large,” in its intensified forms and dense repetitions, we might come to a better understanding of it writ small in its ordinary, simple and less frequent usages. Thus, this third section of the paper will look at ἀνάγκη “writ large” both in terms of (a) quality, i.e., heightened forms of the ἀνάγκη response, such as πολλή ἀνάγκη, and in terms of (b) quantity. For section a, we will be looking at the great variety of heightened forms of the response found in the *Republic*, particularly how they are manifestations of Platonic irony. In section b, we will be focusing on one of the densest collections of the ἀνάγκη response, the *Parmenides*, and how Plato may be there softening the significance of individual instances of the ἀνάγκη response.

a) Writ Large in Quality: Ἀνάγκη and Irony

Although I have found that it is certainly not always meant to be ironic, the ἀνάγκη response in the dialogues of Plato does often seem to be a showcase for irony. When Socrates or (more commonly) an interlocutor makes the assertion that something is necessary, thus limiting the boundaries and horizons of dialogical exploration and possibly leading to an impasse, the meaning on the part of Plato seems to be not necessarily the opposite of this assertion (i.e., that, in fact, it is *not* necessary), but rather

something different from what is meant. The irony of the ἀνάγκη response is one that opens doors and new possibilities, suggesting, as it seems to me, not that something *is not* necessary, but that something *may not* be necessary. Therefore, the ἀνάγκη response qua irony conveys meaning, but not any one particular meaning. It suggests possibilities, roads not taken, rather than leading us to some neat and tidy alternative. Since the meaning conveyed by the ἀνάγκη response is not the opposite of what it's suggesting, but rather something different, then we as an audience are invited to further explore the issue, rather than Plato forcing some particular meaning down our throats. In this sense then, the ἀνάγκη response as an example of irony is primarily directed at the audience and is not necessarily understood by the interlocutors within the dialogue, even though they are most often the ones who are speaking the response. Thus, Plato uses the interlocutors as a vehicle for engaging the audience by means of irony.

Melissa Lane provides a thoughtful treatment and reevaluation of Socratic Irony in *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates* (pp. 237-259).¹³ There she starts with a working definition of irony and proceeds to come to a deeper understanding of Socratic Irony particularly. The working definition of irony is found on page 237: “saying something with the intent that the message is understood as conveying the opposite, or an otherwise different meaning.” One of the central questions that Lane considers in this article is the question of whether irony in the dialogues is a force that deceptively *conceals* meaning, as the Aristophantic Socrates seems to operate, or is it a force that *conveys* meaning, as Aristotle thought? And if irony does convey meaning, then is it

¹³ Although our discussion is admittedly here centered on the idea of Platonic Irony, her treatment of the function of irony is generally helpful.

simply conveying the *opposite* of what is said or is it conveying a message *different* from what is said?

Alexander Nehamas also speaks helpfully about irony in the dialogues, suggesting what is meant by irony is something different, rather than the opposite of what is said. In his book *The Art of Living* he explains the different consequences of reading irony qua opposite vs. irony qua different:

If we take irony as saying the contrary of what you mean, the meaning of an ironic statement is perfectly clear. If we take it, more generally, as saying something other than what you mean, the meaning of an ironic statement is much less determinate. It can remain hidden even from those who know full well that you are being ironic. (Nehamas 63)

Thus, ἀνάγκη is an example of Plato using irony to suggest *something different*.

However, what kind of different thing it is suggesting is not entirely clear, for that is up to the audience, not the characters in the dialogue, to determine.

I decided to further investigate the close alliance of ἀνάγκη and irony by looking at heightened responses of ἀνάγκη in the *Republic*.¹⁴ I thought that perhaps I would find all forms of these responses to be suggestive tools used by Plato to imply something different from what is explicitly said. What I found was not nearly so comprehensive and conclusive. Not every heightened form of ἀνάγκη, just as not every simple form, can unequivocally be counted as an instance of ἀνάγκη invested with some deeper meaning or with irony. Rather, for the most part the dialogical responses seemed to me to be fairly

¹⁴ These so-called heightened forms of the response that I investigated in the *Republic* are the following: πολλή ἀνάγκη (18 examples), πᾶσα ἀνάγκη (two examples of this qua dialogical responses, as opposed to a constituent elements in a sentence), μεγάλη ἀνάγκη (one example), and ἀναγκαιότατα (two examples).

innocuous. I will however highlight a few passages below in the *Republic* that I thought were particularly suggestive of the bond between irony and ἀνάγκη.¹⁵ It must be noted that this list is not exhaustive. The reason for that is not because I have only studied a certain number of responses, but in fact because I found that not every instance of heightened ἀνάγκη can be classified (at least as far as I can tell) as an instance of irony that constitutes a radical shift in the trajectory of the dialogue.¹⁶ Some neutral forms of the expression (at least in my opinion) include: 402c9, 464e3, 495a1, 496a4, 515c3, 522c11, 566a5, 568e6, 579a4, etc. However, when one studies the heightened forms of the ἀνάγκη response in the *Republic*, it is hard to deny that there is sometimes a connection between these responses and Platonic irony. And so, I will now present a few particular examples of heightened forms of the ἀνάγκη response in the *Republic* and explain how they can be interpreted as instances of Platonic irony.

One passage where the ἀνάγκη- root is used a number of times for comic and (possibly) ironic effect is around 373a. This is where Socrates is compelled to expand upon his simple, rustic city after it has been called a city of pigs because it only provides for the necessities of life (τἀναγκαῖα at 373a5). Thus, the response coming at 373e1, πολλή ἀνάγκη, is certainly a pun off of the idea of necessities. In a discussion where Socrates is moving beyond a city of mere necessities, the response from the interlocutor that there is “much necessity” is prima facie amusing. Additionally, pay attention to the particular move that is being made in this passage from simple cities of necessity

¹⁵ I was also looking for a pattern to emerge in the order in which dialogical responses play out (e.g., are there certain patterns of responses that lead up to and anticipate an ἀνάγκη response or a particular heightened variation of an ἀνάγκη response?) For this hypothesis I could unfortunately find no consistent pattern or evidence.

¹⁶ I.e., a radical shift that leads us down the road towards ἀπορία.

(associated with peace) to cities that go beyond necessities (associated almost necessarily with war). In the city of luxury, the endless acquisition of money causes the inhabitants to overstep the limits of necessity (“ὑπερβάντες τὸν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ὅρον”) and will inevitably lead to conflict with neighbors. And what is Glaucon’s answer to this claim that war is an inevitability of cities that proceed beyond necessity? “Πολλὴ ἀνάγκη.” This response is both humorous (i.e., that there should be much necessity for anything in a city that exists beyond necessities) and also determinative of the trajectory of the dialogue, which henceforth operates under the explicit assumption that war is inevitable in cities that go beyond the confines of necessity. However, is there really “much necessity” that open conflict is always inevitable between people who strive to have goods beyond what necessity requires? Not in my opinion. Indeed, the ἀνάγκη response here leads the dialogue down a certain path that will have far reaching implications for the education and conduct of citizens, such that the conversation now becomes intensely built around war (“Πολεμήσομεν δὴ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο, ὦ Γλαύκων;”). If we as an audience have our own living dialogue about the formation of societies, what would happen if we did not choose this particular road at the crossroads, i.e., if we did not assent to this particular ἀνάγκη? What if we said that war was not inevitable and did not attempt to structure society around that proposition? These are questions that are left up to the reader to decide, invited by the curious magnitude of necessity involved in the response.

Let’s turn now to look at another possibly ironic, heightened form of the ἀνάγκη response, 492d1. This is a curious passage about the power of compulsion that a mob can exert upon an individual and his/her capacity to exercise independent judgment. There

Plato suggests that the person who possesses a philosophical nature can be corrupted by the whims, interests and pursuits of the mob, thus ruining the philosophical nature, which should be essentially free thinking and open-minded, rather than ruled by conventions. When Socrates asks what kind of education (ποίαν παιδείαν) can possibly keep one free from the herd mentality, he receives the response from Adeimantus “Πολλὴ ἀνάγκη,” which elliptically agrees with Socrates that it is very hard to achieve this kind of education, precisely because the herd mentality exerts such a compulsory force upon us. The irony of this particular passage lies in its relation to the earlier form of education laid out in books II- IV. Jill Frank skillfully points out the conflict between two conflicting forms of education¹⁷ in the *Republic* in her article “Wages of War.” There, she makes the enlightening assertion that “the compliance to others and respect for authority inculcated by the plethora of laws guiding the early curricula are fundamentally at odds with the self rule and independence of thought characteristic of philosophy” (450). The magnitude of necessity imposed by the mob and what it does to the philosophical nature invites the audience to rethink their earlier commitments to an education of war and conformity.

Finally, let’s look at one more instance of a heightened form of ἀνάγκη that can be read as an instance of Platonic irony. At 441d7 Socrates suggests that justice takes the same form in a city as it does in an individual soul. This is one of the crucial points of the dialogue around which the dialogue revolves and we see it here expressed in this exchange:

¹⁷ Viz. as inculcating conformity (as in books II-V) or as fostering independent judgment (as featured in books VI-VII)

Καὶ δίκαιον δὴ, ὦ Γλαύκων, οἶμαι φήσομεν ἄνδρα εἶναι τῷ αὐτῷ
τρόπῳ ὄπερ καὶ πόλις ἦν δικαία.

Καὶ τοῦτο πᾶσα ἀνάγκη. (441d5-7)

Moreover, Glaucon, I suppose we'll say that a man is just in the same way
as a city.

That too is entirely necessary.

Of course, this dialogue would have followed a completely different path if the interlocutor had disagreed with the earlier assumption that every thing to which we predicate the same term (e.g., just) is inevitably going to be similar enough to each other to warrant this predication. Perhaps there are certain things that we call by the same name (e.g., “just”) not out of any intrinsic relationship, but rather for some other reason. Without this earlier agreed upon premise concerning predication and the argument for sameness of all things to which the same predicate is attached, then the dialogue could not possibly have proceeded to the conclusions that it reached. The discussion of a city and the discussion of the Forms would have been rendered effectively impossible in that context. Here, the ἀνάγκη stands at a kind of threshold between two worlds, viz., previously agreed upon premises and eventual conclusions. If we are unhappy with the conclusions of the dialogue, then it is incumbent upon us to find divergent paths, one of which would be the denial of necessary likeness among things which share the same predicate (e.g., how we call both a soul and a city just). Perhaps there is some affinity of disparate things that predication makes manifest, but it may not be the same degree of likeness which Plato is espousing in the *Republic*.

Hopefully, this brief consideration of the ἀνάγκη response as an example of Platonic irony has demonstrated the possibility that it is being used in this way in a number of instances. Although I had hoped to come to the grander conclusion that the heightened forms of this response are always laced with irony, the evidence simply does not suggest that such a far-reaching conclusion is possible.

b) Writ Large in Quantity: Ἀνάγκη and the Philosophical Project (Reprise)

Let's now turn from an investigation into ἀνάγκη writ large in terms of quality to an investigation of a certain dialogue where this word is writ large in terms of quantity. We come now to the *Parmenides*, one of the most enigmatic and fascinating dialogues in the Platonic corpus. Although the *Republic* is roughly seven times longer than the *Parmenides*,¹⁸ there are only 26 more instances of the word ἀνάγκη in the *Republic* than there are in the *Parmenides*.¹⁹ The *Parmenides*, to coin a Platonic phrase, is a dialogue of πολλή ἀνάγκη. What are we to make of this dense collection of necessity in this dialogue? Perhaps we can come to a better understanding of this question by taking up a consideration of the meaning and peculiar structure of this dialogue.

I take the central problem of the *Parmenides* to be the regressive kinds of thinking to which the theory of Forms is vulnerable, especially from the perspective of Eleatic philosophy. As is often the case with Plato, from the very first section of the dialogue, the theme is obliquely announced. For example, in the first three words of the dialogue, we hear Cephalus telling us, “Ἐπειδὴ Ἀθήναζε οἴκοθεν ἐκ Κλαζομενῶν ἀφικόμεθα [...]” (“When we arrived in Athens from home in Clazomenae [...]”) (126a1). These

¹⁸ There are 294 Stephanus pages for the former, compared to 40 Stephanus pages for the latter.

¹⁹ The word occurs 141 times in the *Republic*, compared to 115 times in the *Parmenides*.

lines immediately call to mind the Pre-Socratic philosopher, Anaxagoras, who was famously known as the philosopher who brought philosophy from his birthplace of Clazomenae to Athens. Anaxagoras was also well known for opposing the doctrines of Parmenides on the impossibility of change. By invoking this famous Pre-Socratic at the dialogue's beginning, Plato is immediately announcing that the problems discussed within this dialogue, titled *Parmenides*, will take up and respond to problems presented by Parmenides, in a similar way to how Anaxagoras wrote in response to the problems of this philosopher.

Additionally, the elaborate, dramatic framing sequence of the dialogue, in which we as the audience of Cephalus are four times removed from the actual dialogue, is itself suggestive of the central problem of the dialogue: regression. To elaborate on the complex set-up: once, there was a dialogue between a young Socrates and Parmenides. This conversation was memorized by Pythodorus. Pythodorus in turn then told this dialogue to Antiphon, who memorized it. And now, Cephalus, the narrator of the dialogue, is telling us about the dialogue.²⁰ Nowhere else in Plato, at least to my knowledge, is there a greater regression of speakers. The only thing that comes close is the opening of the *Symposium*, but that dialogue is only thrice removed from the actual proceedings. So, as we see from the opening lines and the framing device, the dialogue's central problem is the problem of regression (for the Theory of Forms) as seen from the perspective of an Eleatic, particularly from the doctrine of Eleatic monism.

²⁰ The regression of speakers is clearly demonstrated around 126a6-127b1: “ἔφη δὲ δὴ ὁ Ἀντιφῶν λέγειν τὸν Πυθόδωρον ὅτι ἀφίκοντό ποτε εἰς Παναθήναια τὰ μεγάλα Ζήνων τε καὶ Παρμενίδης.” ([Cephalus tells us that]: “Antiphon said that Pythodorus said that Zeon and Parmenides once came to the Great Panathenaea.”)

We see this regression threat to the Forms in the first section of the dialogue (126a-134e), especially around 132a-b (The Third Man Argument) and at 132c-133a (The Likeness Regress Argument). It should not be surprising, if this is the central problem of the dialogue, that we begin to see the ἀνάγκη response appear in these particular passages. For instance, during the Likeness Regress we see the response make its first appearance around 132c8 and 132e2,²¹ suggesting a kind of narrowing and commitment to a certain path which may—and indeed does in this case—lead to ἀπορία.

The structure of the *Parmenides* is a peculiarity among Platonic dialogues. This interesting structure makes no small difference to the role of ἀνάγκη and ἀπορία in the dialogue. In the first section (1) of the dialogue (126a-134e), difficulty (ἀπορία) is a constant threat to the proceedings.²² Unlike in the early dialogues of Plato, here in the *Parmenides*, the ἀπορία comes very early on in the first quarter of the dialogue. In this first section, Plato is steering the dialogue, like a ship en route to a shoal, towards an early and devastating ἀπορία. The *Parmenides* then becomes very early on an *explicit* challenge to us the audience to do the hard work of philosophy for ourselves. This explicit invitation is found in the second section of the dialogue (2), the bridge section, 134e-137c. In this section, which we shall look at in more detail below, Plato *explicitly* invites the audience to resolve the ἀπορία of the first section. The third section of the dialogue (3), 137c-166c, is one of the most notoriously difficult and dense passages in all of Plato's writings. We the audience are invited to make our way through this treacherous entanglement of paradoxes so that we may be better equipped to face the

²¹ There, the response is the heightened form, Μεγάλη ἀνάγκη.

²² Despite all of the enormous difficulties that this dialogue has presented to readers and interpreters, the word ἀπορία surprisingly only occurs four times in the *Parmenides*. All of them are in this first section of the dialogue (133a8, 133b1, 130c3, and 129e6).

difficulties that were presented in the first section of the dialogue. To say that we as readers ought to tread lightly in the third section is an understatement! We are constantly being forced into dead end paths, roads clogged with thorns, and perilous drop-offs.²³ It's certainly no coincidence that section three contains the densest concentration of the word *ἀνάγκη* anywhere in Plato's writings. I count 108 instances of the word from 137c-166c.²⁴

Section two, the bridge section, is a peculiarity in the dialogues of Plato for the way that it explicitly challenges us to resolve the difficulties of the first section. In this bridge section, Parmenides chides Socrates for trying to define each of the Forms "before he has been properly trained" (*πρὶν γυμνασθῆναι*) (135c8). What Socrates needs, according to Parmenides, is more experience in *ἀδολεσχία* (135d5). This word, which means basically "idle talk," is an interesting word to use, especially because it seems to be suggesting that the work that will be done in section three of the dialogue will be a kind of *ἀδολεσχία*. Are we to suppose that section three of the dialogue, in which Parmenides helps Socrates and Aristotle to find ways to resolve the difficulties in section

²³ Some lines of Hopkins, ripped from their original context and meaning in their poem, seem appropriately applied to the thicket that is section three of the *Parmenides*: "O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall/ Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap/ May who ne'er hung there." Indeed, I feel like Shelley before Mont Blanc when I approach section three. The power of this section is immense, extraordinary, undeniable—even possibly sacred and holy (the Neoplatonists saw this clearly)—but what is the content of this power? *What on Earth is its meaning?!*

²⁴ It would certainly be interesting to study the concentration of the word *ἀνάγκη* within section three of the *Parmenides*, i.e., to narrow down where the usage of the word is most dense *in section three itself*, and then consider the importance of that most dense section, in terms of content, to the rest of the dialogue. Would we find that an alternative way of thinking with reference to the content of this densest section might yield an answer to the problems of section one? Could this approach bring us one step closer to some hoped for key for understanding the deductions in section three of the *Parmenides*? Admittedly, fearing lest I myself become lost in the thicket of section three if I go too deeply into it, I have avoided this question for now, though I think that it is a good and interesting one.

one, is merely teaching them how to perform “idle talk?” Does this cast a negative light on the seriousness of section three? Perhaps it’s difficult to go that far, but the choice of words by Plato here is undoubtedly provocative. After this interesting exchange of words, Parmenides tells Socrates the plan moving forward: we must hypothesize about each thing. First, we must determine what the consequences will be (τὰ συμβαίνοντα, i.e., literally the things that accompany it) if we posit a thing’s existence. And second, we must determine what the consequences will be if we posit its non-existence (136a). Parmenides is then forced (ἀνάγκη; 136e8) by the others present to lead this kind of discussion for them, a project which Parmenides describes oxymoronically through the phrase “πραγματειώδη παιδιάν” (137b2). Like the word ἀδολεσχία above, to describe the third section of the dialogue as παιδιά is interesting. However, the qualifier attached to it here softens the blow. Thus, the third section will be “work-like play” or “play that is like work.”

In this bridge section of the dialogue, section two, Plato is making explicit a challenge that was always hoped for and implied in the earlier dialogues, viz., the challenge to the readers to not be content with the impasse (ἀπορία) at the end of the dialogue, but to find for themselves new ways forward, better paths that will lead them closer to the truth. As I have been saying throughout this paper, it is often helpful to look back at places of constriction, i.e., instances of the ἀνάγκη response, in order to find where we can find alternative ways forward. Perhaps Plato in the *Parmenides* offers us a glimpse into the kind of hard work that he hopes will take place after an ἀπορία is discovered. In this sense then, the *Parmenides* is an explicit expression of a hope in Plato that was implicitly present in the early dialogues. This particular dialogue is then a

helpful reminder that the hardest work should take place after ἀπορία has been established. And section three certainly goes out of its way to showcase that this sort of work *will indeed be hard!*²⁵

Mary Louise Gill offers an interpretation of the latter part of the *Parmenides* with which I am in general agreement. I quote it here below because I think that it's helpful to us for understanding the kind of explicit invitation that Plato is offering to his audience in this dialogue:

“[Section three] contains some invalid arguments, and many of the valid arguments rely on false premises. Although Plato probably made some mistakes, most of the errors seem quite deliberate. [...] As I understand part II [the section which I have referred to above as section three], it highlights conflicts by means of antinomies and exposes errors based on invalid reasoning or misconceptions, **and it challenges us, as readers, to notice what has gone wrong.** My suggestion is that unlike the malleable young Aristotle, who expresses serious misgivings just once [142a], and that only when prompted at the end of Deduction 1, **we are meant to balk repeatedly and to respond. The exercise encourages us to recognize and diagnose the difficulties and to work out for ourselves what solutions are called for and why.**” (Gill 64-65, emphasis mine)

One final question that we are left with about the *Parmenides* concerns the significance and meaning of the individual ἀνάγκη response in light of an overabundance of usages

²⁵ For the record, I'm not suggesting that we need to follow a system of Eleatic hypothesizing after *every* ἀπορία of *any* dialogue. Rather, I'm merely suggesting that we should think deeply—perhaps no less deeply than Plato does in section three of the *Parmenides*—when we take up these difficulties for ourselves.

in this dialogue. How has this quantitative plethora of ἀνάγκη responses found in section three of the *Parmenides*— ἀνάγκη writ large in a quantitative sense—affected the singular instances of ἀνάγκη? After all, in our discussion of the *Lysis* above, I tried to show how each instance of the ἀνάγκη response had possible importance as a kind of signpost for alternative routes that could have been taken. What shall we say about this individual significance, however, when section three of the *Parmenides* contains roughly 108 instances of them? Perhaps the key to understanding the use of ἀνάγκη in the *Parmenides* and the seemingly diminished significance of each individual occurrence lies in the peculiar structure of the work that we have been discussing above. Indeed, by stressing *explicitly* the need for the readers to do the hard work of philosophy in the *Parmenides*, the *implicit* means used by Plato to urge his readers on to do real philosophy (e.g., the ἀνάγκη response) assume less importance in this particular context. In the *Parmenides* then, perhaps we can suggest that there is not the same need for individual words to invite the audience to reflection precisely because the dialogue as a whole is an invitation to reflection unlike almost anything else that Plato attempted.

Thus, from section III of this thesis we have learned a few things: 1) ἀνάγκη is often, though not always, tinged with Platonic irony, and 2) perhaps not every instance of ἀνάγκη as a response is imbued with the same level of significance. As we saw in the *Parmenides*, the force of the individual response was there lessened precisely because the normal objective of the ἀνάγκη response (i.e., to implicitly and subtly prompt us on to do the hard work of philosophy) was there made explicit.

Conclusion

Although there is sometimes a tendency for readers to overlook the particular importance of the ἀνάγκη response within the dialogues of Plato as just a literary variant on an affirmative response, the uniqueness of this response ought to be highlighted. On the one hand it seems to express less personal commitment than a “ναί” or a “πάνυ γε” response. On the other hand, it is more emphatic than a simple “φαίνεται,” “εἰκόσ,” or “δοκεῖ μοι.”

So, we do indeed need to be on our guard when we see ἀνάγκη in Plato. However, what this paper has found is that we do not necessarily *always* need to be on our guard, nor in this frame of mind to the same degree, whenever we encounter the ἀνάγκη response. While Plato sometimes imbued this response with deeper meaning, the response does not intrinsically have a particular, multi-faceted meaning in its every occurrence. Often it does seem to be nothing more than a strong affirmative. Admittedly though, in many instances, the word, as a perfect storm of irony and a foretelling of ἀπορία, does seem to suggest to the reader alternative ways that the dialogue could have taken. It is in these deeply purposive instances of the ἀνάγκη response that Plato is inviting us to come and dialogue upon these matters for ourselves. The ἀνάγκη response then is sometimes the point of departure to which we ought to look back when determining how to carry on the living dialogue for ourselves. As such, we ought to be on our guard when we see the response and aware of its far reaching roots and consequences, but nevertheless aware that to interpret *every instance*

of this ubiquitous dialogical response in Plato in this manner would be to compulsorily force ἀνάγκη beyond its sphere of influence.

Perhaps this reading even offers us a different idea of the relationship between Plato and his most famous pupil, Aristotle, for Aristotle is one of the earliest examples of a person who answered the invitation that Plato was offering in the dialogues, taking up the problems and reworking them for himself. Thus, in Aristotle, we see the living fruit of the dialogues, indeed perhaps the fullest realization of the sort of work that Plato hoped the dialogues would prompt. In response to the failed discussion of friendship in the *Lysis*, we get the discussion in the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. In response to the problems featured in the *Parmenides*, we get the dense musings of the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*.²⁶ Aristotle is then the truest heir to the thought of the dialogues of Plato—though perhaps he has not always been portrayed as such nor did he himself always explicitly acknowledge this fact—insofar as he is doing the hard work that Plato had hoped to invite by writing them. Whether Aristotle agreed with Plato or not was irrelevant, and indeed perhaps not the thing most pleasing to Plato. Rather, what was most pleasing to Plato was to find another mind so willing and eager to do the hard work which philosophy necessitates, a man so eager to dedicate his whole life to this cause,

²⁶ E.g., concerning the discussion of indivisibility, movement, change (...especially change!), lines, points, and contact in the *Physics*, G.E.L. Owen in *Logic, Science, and Dialectic* explains: “It was in the *Parmenides* that Aristotle found not only the general approach to his problem but the special ideas in terms of which he treats it” (Owen 247). Aristotle does not necessarily agree with what Plato wrote in the *Parmenides*, but that was not what Plato wanted, in my opinion. Rather, Aristotle’s engaging and wrestling with the thicket of perplexities and problems in the *Parmenides* is *precisely* what Plato wanted from his audience. Aristotle is reevaluating ἀνάγκη and ἀπορία established in the dialogue and finding new roads, new paths on which he may make forward progress towards the ultimate goal of truth. Thus, a continuity, rather than a disconnect, is reinstated under this reading between Plato and Aristotle.

rather than a man like Euthyphro, who suddenly remembered that he had somewhere else to go.

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam! Nisi Dominus aedificaverit domum in vanum laboraverunt qui aedificant eam...

Bibliography

- Annas, Julia. "Classical Greek Philosophy." *The Oxford History of Greece and the Hellenistic World*. Ed. Boardman, Griffin and Murray. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991
- Chlup, Radek. "Two Kinds of Necessity in Plato's Dialogues." *Listy filologické* (1997): 204-216.
- Cornford, Francis MacDonald. *Plato's cosmology: the Timaeus of Plato*. Routledge, 1937.
- Frank, Jill. "Wages of War: On Judgment in Plato's *Republic*." *Political Theory*. Vol. 35, No. 4 (Aug., 2007), pp. 443-467
- Gill, Mary Louise and Paul Ryan. *Plato: Parmenides*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996.
- Green, Allison Clare. "The Concept of Ananke in Greek Literature before 400 BCE." Dissertation, University of Exeter. February, 2012.
- Guthrie, W.K.C. *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- Guthrie, W.K.C. *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume IV*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Hoerber, Robert G. "Lysis." *Phronesis*. Vol. 4, No. 1 (1959): 15-28.

- Klagge, James C., and Nicholas D. Smith, eds. "Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues." *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, supplementary vol. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Lane, Melissa. "Reconsidering Socratic Irony." *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*. Ed. Donald R. Morrison. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Levin, D. "Some Observations Concerning Plato's *Lysis*." *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*. Edd. J. Anton and G. Kustas. Albany, N.Y.: 1971. pp.236-258.
- Liddell, Henry George, and Robert Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. Harper & Brothers, 1889.
- Morrow, Glenn. R. "Necessity and Persuasion in Plato's *Timaeus*." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Apr. 1950): 147-163.
- Nails, Debra. *Agora, Academy, and the Conduct of Philosophy*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.
- Nehamas, Alexander. *The Art of Living*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Ostwald, Martin. *ANAGKH in Thucydides*. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1988.
- Owen, G.E.L. *Logic, Science and Dialectic*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1986.
- Parry, Hugh. "The Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite: Erotic 'Ananke'." *Phoenix*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (Autumn 1986): 253-264.
- Penner, Terry and Christopher Rowe. *Plato's "Lysis"*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

- Plato. "Charmides." Trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997.
- Plato. "Cratylus." Trans. C.D.C. Reeve. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997.
- Plato. "Lysis." Trans. Stanley Lombardo. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997.
- Plato. "Meno." Trans. G.M.A. Grube. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997.
- Plato. "Parmenides." Trans. Mary Louise Gill and Paul Ryan. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997.
- Plato. "Seventh Letter." Trans. Glenn R. Morrow. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997.
- Press, Gerald A. "Principles of Dramatic and Non-Dogmatic Plato Interpretation." *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretation*. Ed. Gerald A Press. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1993.
- Press, Gerald A. *Plato: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007.
- Shorey, Paul. *What Plato Said*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1933.
- Versenyi, Laszlo. "Plato's 'Lysis'." *Phronesis*, vol. 20, No. 3 (1975): 185-198.
- Vlastos, Gregory. "The Socratic Elenchus." *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 79, No. 11 (1982): 711-714.