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Date of deposit	20 January 2020
Document version	Author's accepted manuscript
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Citation for published version	Long, A. (2020). Attributing belief and judgements in Plato's <i>Gorgias, Meno and Theaetetus</i> . <i>Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy</i> , 58, 59-90. [3].
Link to published version	https://global.oup.com/academic/product/oxford-studies-in-ancient-philosophy-volume-58-9780198858997?lang=en&cc=gb

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Attributing beliefs and judgements in Plato's *Gorgias*, *Meno* and *Theaetetus*

What are the criteria in Plato's dialogues for attributing beliefs and judgements? If people believe something, must they have given it their assent and asserted it internally? This paper is about three Platonic passages, and their closest parallels in other dialogues, that seem to present conflicting criteria for belief-attribution and judgement-attribution.

In the *Theaetetus* Socrates suggests that a belief or judgement (*doxa*, plural *doxai*; translators do not agree on which English word is more apt) develops when, and only when, the subject has given a question thought, taken a position on it and asserts his or her answer internally. Without internal affirmation, or internal denial, there is no judgement or belief. By contrast, Socrates has been interpreted as suggesting in the *Gorgias* that a subject 'believes' (ἠγείσθαι) a proposition *p* if he or she believes other propositions that entail *p*.¹ From this it sounds as if people's beliefs are often vastly more numerous than they suppose, and that assent and internal assertion are unnecessary for belief. The third dialogue is the *Meno*, where Socrates attributes true *doxai* to the recollecting slave on the strength of what the slave is disposed to affirm sincerely when questioned. They include *doxai* of which the slave was not aware, at least for some of the time when he had them. This too suggests that people often contain more *doxai* than they recognize, and that internal statement is unnecessary for the possession of a *doxa*.

¹ R. Woolf, 'Socratic authority' ['Authority'], *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 90 (2008), 1-38 at 29.

The relationship and ostensible disagreement between the *Theaetetus* and the other two texts will be my principal concern: does Socrates in the *Theaetetus* have criteria for the attribution of *doxa* that are incompatible with what he says about belief and *doxa* in the *Gorgias* and *Meno* respectively? I will have less to say by way of comparison between the *Gorgias* and *Meno* themselves. So my first step will be to consider the passage from the *Theaetetus*, and its most direct parallels, and defend the interpretation outlined above. As what precedes should already make clear, my starting question is not ‘which attitude(s) or cognitive state(s) are these passages about?’, but ‘what are the criteria for attribution?’, although, as I outline at the end, exploring criteria for attribution sheds light on what is and is not being attributed.

***Doxa* as internal affirmation and denial**

In the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* Socrates discusses false ‘belief’ or ‘judgement’ (*doxa*). As there is no agreement about whether ‘belief’ or ‘judgement’ is the more appropriate translation, I will keep the noun in transliterated Greek, except when providing a translation of a passage.² To begin with the *Theaetetus*, Socrates

² In what follows all translations are my own, unless noted otherwise. For the Greek, I have used the most recent OCT editions, except for the *Republic*, for which I used Burnet’s edition. C. Rowe, *Plato: Theaetetus and Sophist* (Cambridge, 2015) has ‘belief’, whereas it is translated ‘judgement’ in M. Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato* [*Theaetetus*], with a translation by M. J. Levett (Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1990). For defence of the translation ‘judgement’ see Burnyeat, *Theaetetus*, 69-70 and S. J.

represents thought as internal dialogue, and *doxa* as an internal statement. At first the soul hesitates between options, sometimes briefly, sometimes for a long time; if it reaches a verdict, it forms at that moment a *doxa*.

ΤΙ ΣΩ. τὸ δὲ διανοεῖσθαι ἄρ' ὅπερ ἐγὼ καλεῖς;

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί καλῶν;

ΣΩ. Λόγον ὃν αὐτὴ πρὸς αὐτὴν ἢ ψυχὴ διεξέρχεται περὶ ὧν ἂν σκοπῆ, ὡς γε μὴ εἰδῶς σοι ἀποφαίνομαι.³ τοῦτο γάρ μοι ἰνδάλλεται διανοουμένη οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ διαλέγεσθαι,

Broadie, 'The knowledge unacknowledged in the *Theaetetus*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 51 (2016), 87-117 at 92-3, 95-6, 101-4. Compare the more tentative discussion in J. Moss, 'Plato's appearance-assent account of belief' ['Belief'], *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 114 (2014), 213-38, especially 217, 219-20, 236. According to W. Schwab, true *doxa* in the *Meno* includes states that would typically be called 'knowledge' today ('Explanation in the epistemology of the *Meno*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 48 (2015), 1-36 at 28 n.44). Even if the requirements of *doxa* (prior thought, internal affirmation and denial) are more demanding than those of belief, *doxa* need not be about something philosophical or, more generally, intellectual. Examples of *doxa* include identifying an animal as a horse (*Theaetetus* 190 C 1-3) or a distant object as a statue or human being (*Philebus* 38 D 5 –E 4).

³ For the punctuation here see D. N. Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* [Midwife] (Oxford, 2004), 129 n.16. Chapter 6 of my *Conversation and Self-Sufficiency in Plato* (Oxford, 2013) explores the conception of thought as dialogue but says less about the outcome, *doxa*.

αὐτὴ ἑαυτὴν ἐρωτῶσα καὶ ἀποκρινομένη, καὶ φάσκουσα καὶ οὐ φάσκουσα. ὅταν δὲ ὀρίσασα, εἴτε βραδύτερον εἴτε καὶ ὀξύτερον ἐπάξασα, τὸ αὐτὸ ἤδη φῆ καὶ μὴ διστάζῃ, δόξαν ταύτην τίθεμεν αὐτῆς. ὥστ' ἔγωγε τὸ δοξάζειν λέγειν καλῶ καὶ τὴν δόξαν λόγον εἰρημένον, οὐ μέντοι πρὸς ἄλλον οὐδὲ φωνῆ, ἀλλὰ σιγῆ πρὸς αὐτόν· σὺ δὲ τί;

ΘΕΑΙ. Κἀγώ.

ΣΩ. Ὅταν ἄρα τις τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον δοξάζῃ, καὶ φησὶν, ὡς ἔοικε, τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον εἶναι πρὸς ἑαυτόν.

ΘΕΑΙ. Τί μὴν; (*Theaetetus* 189 E 4-190 B 1)

Socrates: Do you call thinking what I call it?

Theaetetus: What do you call it?

Socrates: Discourse that the soul goes through, addressing itself, about whatever it is investigating, at least on the account I'm giving you without knowing about it. The picture I have is that the soul, when it thinks, is precisely engaged in dialogue, asking itself and answering questions on its own, saying yes and no. When it is decided, whether quite slowly or in a quite rapid leap, and it is now saying the same thing without wavering, that is what we set down as its judgement. So for my part I call judging *saying*, and I call judgement discourse addressed not to someone else, or out loud, but in silence to oneself. What about you?

Theaetetus: I do too.

Socrates: In that case, whenever someone judges one of two things to be the other, he also, it seems, *says* to himself that the one is the other.

Theaetetus: Of course.

This account of *doxa* and thought is then used against one explanation of false *doxa*. It is taken up again in the *Sophist* (263 D 6-264 B 9) and *Philebus* (38 B 12-39 A 7). Thought is internal dialogue, and *doxa* arises when the soul settles on a verdict: as the visitor puts it in the *Sophist*, when affirmation, or denial, comes about silently in the soul because of thought, that is *doxa* (263 E 10-264 A 2).⁴

Does T1 outline (1) necessary conditions for *doxa* or merely (2) one way for *doxa* to come about? If *doxa* is translated as ‘belief’, we may be inclined to favour interpretation (2). Arguably there are lots of things that people believe without going through this process, or without articulating the belief internally. So on interpretation (1) the conditions for *doxa* may seem implausibly demanding, and the passage should, we might say, allow for other ways of coming to believe things. On the other hand, Socrates acknowledges that the prior stage of thinking may be short and superficial, when the soul reaches a decision with a ‘rapid leap’. We might compare the account of recollection in the *Phaedo*, where Socrates says that whenever similarity causes us, on seeing A, to recall B, it is necessary to think whether A falls short of B in respect of similarity (74 A 5-7). Here again, we may think, the requirement is too demanding. But evidently Socrates supposes that this thought is necessary or inevitable whenever similarity triggers recollection, and (although he

⁴ Compare Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.9 1142b13-14 (καὶ γὰρ ἡ δόξα οὐ ζήτησις ἀλλὰ φάσις τις ἤδη, ‘judgement is not inquiry, but already a kind of affirmation’). See M. Duncombe, ‘Thought as internal speech in Plato and Aristotle’ [‘Thought’], *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* 19 (2016), 105-25 for both the similarities and the differences between the accounts of thought in Plato and Aristotle.

does not say as much) he may allow that the thought is so rapid that it barely registers with the subject. If A and B are human beings, the follow may count as recollection: the subject sees A, is put in mind of B but quickly realises that A is not identical with B, as they differ in one or two respects, and then, instead of greeting A as if A were B, immediately becomes absorbed with thoughts about B.

In any case, there is strong textual evidence for interpretation (1).⁵ First, in the context of T1 the objective is to understand *doxa* and thereby to understand false *doxa*. So Socrates should not describe only one kind of *doxa*, or one kind of origin for it, without explicit indication that his account is incomplete. Secondly, in T1 Socrates offers what looks very much like a definition of *doxa*: ‘I call judging (the cognate verb: δοξάζειν) *saying*, and I call judgement (*doxa*) discourse addressed not to someone else, or out loud, but in silence to oneself.’ He does not say that some *doxai* are like this, and others are different. Thirdly, according to Socrates’ last sentence in T1 *whenever* people believe or judge, they say the proposition to themselves. Internal statement thus looks essential. Furthermore, the *Sophist* suggests that the prior process of thinking is essential if there is to be *doxa*: the visitor says that *doxa* ‘is the completion of thought’ (264 B 1).

According to these passages, then, asserting the proposition internally, after giving it thought, is necessary for there to be *doxa* at all. There are thus claims about what *doxa* is, namely internal affirmation or denial; about the manner in which it comes to be – thinking about something and then deciding to give a verdict on one

⁵ Compare Moss’ account of T1 (‘Belief’, 233): ‘on the view here developed *doxai* are always assents’.

side; and finally about the time of origin. A *doxa* comes to be at a specific time: when the soul approves an answer to the question it has posed.⁶

When I turn to the relevant part of the *Gorgias* I will put some emphasis on the passage's context and argue that the comments on belief there are not representative of Socrates' treatment of belief in the rest of the dialogue. So, before we turn to the *Gorgias*, I should consider whether the significance of T1 is somehow reduced by its context. In its immediate context, the account of *doxa* in T1 compounds the difficulties about false judgement. Socrates will observe that nobody would say to himself or herself 'the odd is even', or 'the cow is a horse' (190 B 2-D 2), and yet, according to T1, that is what it would be to have those false judgements. But it would be a mistake to limit the function of this conception of *doxa* to making Theaetetus yet more puzzled about falsehoods, for it plays an indispensable role in the explanation of false *doxa* that Plato eventually provides in the *Sophist*. In that

⁶ There is a further question about what becomes of a *doxa* some time *after* it has come to be, when it is no longer occurrent: should we speak of the subject as 'believing/judging' (δοξάζειν) or merely as containing the *doxa*? (A similar question arises when I consider below the discussion of recollection in the *Meno*.) The most promising passage is the *Philebus*, where the soul is famously compared to a book in which *doxai* are stored (38 E 12-39 A 7), but even that passage is less informative than we might wish. Socrates says merely that *doxai* 'come to be in us' (39 A 3-6). He later speaks of a person 'believing' or 'judging' (δοξάζειν, 40 C 8-D 2), but this may refer to the time when the *doxa* first comes about and is said to oneself. So it is not clear whether at a later time, during the absence of an occurrent belief or judgement, the subject should still be said to believe or judge.

dialogue the visitor first explains how there can be false discourse or statement (*logos*), by which he means false oral utterances, although in explaining them he also provides an explanation of false writing. The challenge at this stage is to show how something could *both* be a genuine *logos* and be false. The visitor's answer depends on there being a certain structure in any *logos*: saying something of or about something (262 E 6-263 B 13), as in the false *logos* 'Theaetetus flies'. A false *logos* is of or about something (if it were not, it would not be a *logos* at all) and yet says about it something different from what really 'is' concerning it. The visitor immediately extends his explanation of false *logos* to false *doxa*, and he can do so only if *doxa* shares the structure of *logos*.⁷ Otherwise the visitor would need a brand new explanation of false *doxa*. In the visitor's own words, 'as they [perceptual impression and *doxa*] are akin to *logos*, some of them too, some of the time, must be false' (264 B 2-4). Plato's explanation of false *doxa* thus depends on the isomorphism of *doxa* and *logos*.

If we are to measure the level of commitment to the account of *doxa* in T1, we should also consider how Socrates behaves as midwife in the rest of the *Theaetetus*. After all, part of Socratic midwifery is drawing out his interlocutor's 'belief' or 'judgement' (δόγμα, 157 D 2).⁸ So it worth seeing what he counts as sufficient

⁷ 'This allows the visitor to import to the cognitive realm the semantic account of falsehood he established earlier' (Duncombe, 'Thought', 108).

⁸ In Plato *dogma* is often equivalent to *doxa*. See *Republic* 412 E 5-8 (δόγματος ... δόξαν), 493 A 8 (δόγματα, ἃ δοξάζουσιν), 506 B 8-C 9, *Philebus* 41 B 4-5 (κατά γε τὴν ἐμήν [sc. δόξαν]. τοῦτο δὲ τὸ δόγμα...). In oral discussion of the paper it was suggested to me that the reason for choosing *dogma* in the *Theaetetus* passage is that

grounds for attributing a belief or judgement to Theaetetus. In the first part of the *Theaetetus* Socrates examines theories that are, at least on one interpretation, entailed by Theaetetus' definition of knowledge.⁹ Theaetetus defines knowledge as perception; Socrates then clearly associates (to use a neutral verb) that definition with Protagoras' relativism and then with the secret doctrine of flux and relativity. According to this interpretation, both Protagoreanism and the secret doctrine are relevant because Theaetetus' definition of knowledge entails them. And yet Theaetetus is not told that, simply by virtue of his definition and that logical relationship, he has the belief or judgement that Protagoreanism and the secret doctrine are true.

Instead, Socrates outlines the theories and their attractions, and then asks Theaetetus whether he accepts them. Concerning Protagoras' theory, Theaetetus is asked whether he and Socrates will 'be persuaded by' Protagoras and agree that the wind is cold for one person and not cold for another person (152 B 7-8). The

Socrates and Theaetetus have just asked each other what 'seems true' (δοκεῖ, 157 C 1-6), but that verb can also be associated with *doxa*, as in *Gorgias* 469 C 5-D 5. For the examination of *doxa* in Socratic midwifery see also *Theaetetus* 161 E 4-162 A 3.

⁹ See above all M. Burnyeat, 'Idealism and Greek philosophy: what Descartes saw and Berkeley missed', *Philosophical Review* 90 (1982), 3-40 and *Theaetetus*, 9-10. According to Sedley (*Midwife*, especially 40, 44, 48), Theaetetus' definition is assimilated to Protagoreanism and can be true only if the world is in total flux. For an opposed interpretation, see M.-K. Lee, *Epistemology after Protagoras: Responses to Relativism in Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus* (Oxford, 2004), especially 79, 88, 90-1 and 117.

introduction of the secret doctrine is more complicated. Socrates first shows Theaetetus the doctrine's intrinsic credibility. For example, he is shown that the doctrine can resolve puzzles about growing and shrinking: we can accept without hesitation that an item is now larger, now smaller, without worrying about what size it has independently of the comparisons an observer might make. There is nothing to say about that, for nothing has intrinsic size. Socrates then asks Theaetetus for his belief or judgement: 'tell me if you are satisfied with this claim: nothing *is* good, beautiful, or any of the things we were going through just now, but things always *come to be* good and so on?' (157 D 7-9).¹⁰ Theaetetus then says simply that the thesis should be accepted, not that he is committed to it by his definition: 'when I hear you expounding the theory like this, it appears wonderfully reasonable to me; we must suppose that things are as you have set them out' (157 D 10-12).¹¹

This is not the place to show whether or not the secret doctrine does follow, or is thought by Socrates or Plato to follow, from Theaetetus' definition. What we should note is that the logical relationship between the definition and the secret doctrine is not used as grounds for attributing to Theaetetus belief in the latter before he has explicitly endorsed it. Scholars who think that the definition does not imply the secret doctrine, and is not treated in the dialogue as implying it, will have a ready

¹⁰ The expression σοι ἀρέσκει should be translated 'you are satisfied with', 'you are convinced that', or something similar, rather than 'you are pleased with'. The Greek verb can be used of the decisions or opinions of a public group (compare the consciously political language in *Republic* 380 C 4-5), and in later Greek will be used of a philosopher's doctrines – not of what 'pleases' the philosopher.

¹¹ Compare Theaetetus' endorsement at 160 C 3 (παντάπασι μὲν οὖν, ᾧ Σώκρατες).

explanation: as there is no entailment in that direction, we should not expect Socrates to use it in order to attribute beliefs or judgements. But if the secret doctrine does (and, in the dialogue, is supposed to) follow from Theaetetus' definition, as other scholars argue, the account of *doxa* in T1 explains Socrates' quietness about that point. That logical relationship, together with Theaetetus' statement of the definition, does not permit him to attribute to Theaetetus the *doxa* that the doctrine is true. Indeed, it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that the conversation of the *Theaetetus* is built on the assumption that a *doxa* must be asserted – to oneself and then, in interpersonal dialogue, to the interlocutor.

Polus and injustice in the *Gorgias*

In Plato's *Gorgias* Socrates has a debate with Polus about which is worse: acting unjustly or being the victim of injustice. According to Socrates, committing injustice is worse than being its victim, a thesis I will abbreviate to CIW. By contrast, Polus believes that being the victim is worse. Or at least that is what Polus says he believes: at the start of the debate Socrates says that Polus shares Socrates' own belief, and even that everyone else shares it as well.¹²

¹² As Woolf, 'Authority', 28 n.52 observes, Socrates does not deny that Polus also believes what he (Polus) professes. Socrates may think that Polus holds contradictory beliefs. Woolf's valuable discussion of T2 ('Authority', 27-31) says much less than my own account about (a) Socrates' attribution of a belief to 'the rest of humankind', and (b) the immediate context of T2 in the *Gorgias*.

T2 ΣΩ. ἐγὼ γὰρ δὴ οἶμαι καὶ ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους τὸ ἀδικεῖν τοῦ ἀδικεῖσθαι κάκιον ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ μὴ δίδόναι δίκην τοῦ δίδόναι.

ΠΩΛ. Ἐγὼ δέ γε οὐτ' ἐμὲ οὐτ' ἄλλον ἀνθρώπων οὐδένα. ἐπεὶ σὺ δέξαι' ἂν μᾶλλον ἀδικεῖσθαι ἢ ἀδικεῖν;

ΣΩ. Καὶ σὺ γ' ἂν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι πάντες.

ΠΩΛ. Πολλοῦ γε δεῖ, ἀλλ' οὐτ' ἐγὼ οὔτε σὺ οὐτ' ἄλλος οὐδεὶς. (474 B 2-10)

Socrates: You see, I think that I, you and the rest of humankind believe that committing injustice is worse than having injustice done to you, and that not being punished is worse than being punished.¹³

Polus: But for my part I think that neither I nor any other person believes that. Just think: would you choose to have injustice done to you rather than commit it?

Socrates: Yes. So would you and everyone else.

Polus: Far from it! I wouldn't, you wouldn't and nobody else would.

¹³ In what follows directly, I focus on CIW, not the question of punishment. In T2 Polus challenges Socrates on CIW specifically, and later in the dialogue Socrates takes himself to have shown that everyone, Polus included, would make the same choice as he would between committing injustice and being its victim (475 E 3-6). But in the subsequent discussion of punishment (476 A 3-481 B 5) he does not return to the point about Polus' belief or choice, as I observe below.

What lies behind this claim about Polus' belief?¹⁴ We might suppose that Socrates is looking forward to the later point in the dialogue where Polus endorses CIW (475 D 3-E 6). But that fails to explain Socrates' claim that the rest of humankind share the belief: at no point in the conversation will there be an expression of agreement from all of them or some other evidence that they assent, or have assented, to CIW.

Moreover, the verb translated 'believe' (ἠγείσθαι) is the present infinitive, not the future. So in T2 Socrates is not saying that Polus will believe CIW after he has heard Socrates' argument for it, but that Polus, like everyone else, believes it now, despite what he professes, and before he has heard Socrates' argument.

T2 contains a disagreement about choice as well as about belief: Polus asks whether Socrates would really choose to be treated unjustly in order to avoid acting unjustly, and Socrates, saying that he would, denies that the choice makes him unlike other people. The shift from belief to choice is first made in Polus' challenge ('would

¹⁴ The Greek verb is now ἠγείσθαι. It can be used in Plato as an equivalent of having a *doxa* (*Theaetetus* 170 A 6-8; compare 171 A 6-9). At times we may wonder whether apparently cognitive nouns refer to cognitive states or merely to their contents (see n.45 below). But within the *Gorgias* the verb ἠγείσθαι consistently refers to the speaker's or interlocutor's cognitive state (see e.g. 453 A 1, 472 D 1-4, 477 B 6), and the translation 'believe' or 'think' is appropriate. At 474 C 5-D 1 there seems to be no difference between ἠγῆσὺν and δοκεῖ σοι – one of Polus' beliefs, for which the second locution is used, points, when put together with his other answers, to another belief, concerning which Socrates says ἠγῆσὺν – and δοκεῖ σοι can be the equivalent of having a *doxa* (469 C 6-7, *Theaetetus* 170 A 3-7). Compare *Gorgias* 471 E 3-4 (ἠγούμενοι ... δοκοῦσιν).

you choose...?’), and so we might suppose that Socrates himself would prefer to speak of Polus’ belief, not what he would choose. But, if it is a concession to Polus, it is not merely a short-term concession, for later Socrates expresses the conclusion of his argument in terms of choice:

T3 ΣΩ. Ἀληθῆ ἄρα ἐγὼ ἔλεγον, ὅτι οὔτ’ ἂν ἐγὼ οὔτ’ ἂν σὺ οὔτ’ ἄλλος οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων δέξαιτ’ ἂν μᾶλλον ἀδικεῖν ἢ ἀδικεῖσθαι· κάκιον γὰρ τυγχάνει ὄν. (475 E 3-6)

Socrates: Then I said the truth when I said that neither I nor you nor any other person would choose to commit injustice rather than be its victim. For committing injustice is in fact worse.

Polus’ challenge in T2 presupposes a direct connection between people’s choices and their beliefs about goodness and evil: if people really did believe CIW, they would choose to be the victim of injustice if that were the only way to avoid committing it. Polus is putting pressure on Socrates to concede that, faced with such a choice, he would not choose victimhood; and Polus thinks that this concession would confirm that people, including even Socrates himself, do not believe CIW. That, I think, is the connection marked by ἐπεὶ (loosely translated ‘just think’ above) in the Greek of T2. In T2 Socrates does not deny the connection between choice and belief, but uncompromisingly swaps Polus’ *modus tollens* for the following *modus ponens*: people do believe CIW, and so they would choose victimhood if committing injustice were the only other possibility. Socrates thus has no reason to resist talking about choice, even though at first he speaks in terms of belief. But I take it that when at the end of the argument (T3 above) Socrates establishes his point about Polus’ choice, he

takes himself to have established that Polus holds the corresponding belief (that is, the belief that CIW). Otherwise the dialogue would offer nothing to defend Socrates' claim about belief in T2.¹⁵

The confirmation for Socrates' claim about Polus' belief – and indeed the belief of everyone else – must therefore lie in the argument between T2 and T3 (474 c 4-475 e 6). That argument relies on an account of the fine or beautiful (καλός) as either pleasurable or beneficial, and of its opposite, the repellent (αἰσχροός),¹⁶ as either painful or bad. Polus needs no convincing that committing injustice is more repellent

¹⁵ On the other hand, the Greek of T3 suggests that the basis for Socrates' claim there about choice is that one of the two items really is worse, not that it is *believed* to be worse. Compare the discussion of what people want in R. Kamtekar, *Plato's Moral Psychology: Intellectualism, the Divided Soul, and the Desire for Good* [Psychology] (Oxford, 2017), 72-3, 87-91. In T3, as often in Plato, τυγχάνω with the participle marks not chance or coincidence but reality.

¹⁶ The Greek word is not easy to translate. In T. Griffith and M. Schofield, *Plato: Gorgias, Menexenus, Protagoras* [Gorgias] (Cambridge, 2010) the translation is 'disgraceful', which has the disadvantage of suggesting that the pain and harm flow from the disapproval of others, or from the expectation of their disapproval. Socrates' point is easier to understand when he speaks about its opposite, the fine or beautiful: a fine body (474 D 3- E 1) is so called either because it brings pleasure to the viewer or because it benefits by enabling one (primarily, I suppose, the person whose body it is, but also, say, the owner of a 'fine'-bodied animal) to do what he or she wants. A body that is 'repellent' is either painful to look at or a hindrance to its users; I admit that my translation 'repellent' has a poor fit with the body's being a hindrance.

than being its victim; he accepts that as soon as it is put to him (474 C 4-8, 475 D 1-3). Let us abbreviate it to CIR. According to Socrates, ordinary people too agree to CIR, and Polus agrees that they do (475 D 1-3).¹⁷ The task now is to get from CIR to CIW. Socrates argues that if one item is more repellent than another, the former must have either (a) more pain, or (b) more badness, or (c) both. When spelling out the implications of CIR, the first – committing injustice exceeds in pain – is eliminated quickly, which of course rules out (c) as well. So committing injustice must exceed in badness. And that, Socrates says, is CIW, the thesis he set out to show.

It is this argument that Socrates later describes as having the firmness of adamant and iron (508 E 6-509 A 4). But what concerns us here is not the strength or persuasiveness of the argument but its bearing on the belief-attribution in T2.¹⁸ As I have said, the support for Socrates' belief-attribution must come from this argument; there is no other support for it in the dialogue. When Socrates says, before delivering the argument, that Polus and other people believe CIW, his statement derives partly from confidence that Polus and other people believe CIR, but also from confidence in the connection between CIR and CIW. We should notice that near the start of the argument Socrates asks Polus, in effect, whether CIW follows from CIR, and Polus says 'no' (474 C 7-D 2). So even if Polus believes CIR at the time of T2 (and he needs no argument to convince him of it), he denies, directly afterwards, that CIW follows from it. But Polus then endorses the account of the fine and the repellent that enables

¹⁷ The point is repeated in the debate with Callicles (489 A 2-4).

¹⁸ For assessment of the argument see E. R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1959), 249; T. Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1979), 157-8; Griffith and Schofield, *Gorgias*, 46 n.47.

Socrates to derive CIW from CIR (475 A 2-5). Concerning Polus, then, we can say the following against his having the belief that CIW at the time of T2: (i) he denies CIW at T2; and (ii) directly after T2 he denies that CIW follows from CIR. What tells in favour of his believing CIW at T2 is (iii) he believes CIR, probably already in T2; and *either* (iv) soon after the time of T2, he will accept from Socrates the account of the repellent that connects CIR to CIW; and so at T2 he is already disposed to accept that account *or* (v) CIW follows, in point of fact, from CIR. Socrates treats (iii) and (v), or (iii) and (iv), as outweighing (i) and (ii).

Concerning the ‘rest of humankind’, to quote Socrates in T2, things are clearer. There is no equivalent of (iv) in their case. So the belief-attribution to them must rest on (v) and their counterpart to (iii): CIW follows from CIR, given the real nature of the fine and the repellent, and these other people believe or ‘have agreed to’ CIR (475 D 1-3). So when Socrates says in T2 that other people too believe CIW, he must be leaning partly on their belief in CIR, and partly on the real connection, as he sees it, between CIR and CIW, a connection that is independent of these people’s beliefs on the matter. He is simply silent on whether these other people believe, or could come to agree, that CIW follows from CIR. Socrates moves directly from his conclusion about Polus’ choice to the equivalent conclusion about that of other people (475 E 1-3, followed by T3 above), with no hint of a contrast between the arguments used for Polus and for them. So, given what we have found about the argument concerning other people, it is most natural to take his argument about Polus’ choice – and, implicitly, his belief – to rest on (iii) and (v), not (iii) and (iv).

These belief-attributions, to Polus and all humankind, obviously fail to meet the conditions for *doxa* set down in the passage from the *Theaetetus*, T1 above.

Unless Polus is lying, he has not considered CIW and given it his approval – and of

course it would be extremely implausible to say that every human being had done this. In the *Theaetetus* Socrates has a temporal requirement as well, and this too has not been satisfied: from a Theaetetan perspective, until such a time as Polus and everyone else do give their approval to Socrates' claims, they do not have the relevant *doxa*. Logical connections, even of adamant strength, do not warrant a *doxa*-attribution.

At this point we must try to understand the rationale for speaking about belief at all in T2, and then examine the status of T2 within the *Gorgias* as a whole. We might agree with Socrates that there is a sense in which someone competent in logic may know more about our beliefs than we ourselves do, if we either lack the competence or fail to self-apply it thoroughly. It may be common knowledge that we believe p and q, but we ourselves may fail to know or consider what follows from them; considering or being shown what follows will be startling when the previously unrecognized consequence has a poor fit with our self-image – as in contemporary tests for implicit bias. But we may protest that this is better expressed as a point about commitment, not beliefs: it is better to say that our beliefs commit us to what they, or more strictly their contents, entail than that that consequence is itself believed.¹⁹

¹⁹ Compare L. J. Cohen, 'Belief and Acceptance', *Mind* 98 (1989), 367-89 at 372-3.

Alternatively, we might say that the relationship of entailment is not enough: the entailment must be obvious, or immediate, or the consequence must be, in some way, relevant to the believed proposition from which it follows. See R. Audi, 'Dispositional beliefs and dispositions to believe' ['Dispositions'], *Noûs*, 28 (1994), 419–434 at 429 for the first of these ('obviously entails'), although the discussion there is of being disposed to believe, not of beliefs themselves.

Here, it seems to me, recent discussions have paid insufficient attention to the immediate context.²⁰ Before the debate Polus says that Socrates is refuted by the fact that nobody else shares his position: ‘don’t you think you have been utterly refuted, Socrates, when you say the kinds of things no one in the world would say?’ (473 E 4-5). Socrates says in reply that, for the kind of proof he favours, the statements of other people are irrelevant: what matters is making his interlocutor – Polus, in this case – speak in favour of Socrates’ own position and ‘testify’ for it (474 A 2-B 1).²¹ This is the immediate context of T2. And directly after T3 Socrates repeats this point about his own kind of proof: he dismisses other people and says that he is concerned only with what his interlocutor says (475 E 7-476 A 2). So even though Socrates discusses in the argument what other people believe and would choose, he wants to make Polus shift to a different model of proof and refutation, where only the beliefs and statements of the two participants matter. The startling claim about belief must be understood in this context. Socrates is not trying to use, as support for his own position, the belief of ‘the rest of humankind’ (T2 again); on the contrary, he is trying to make Polus attach *less* importance to what other people believe and say. To that end Socrates shows that the balance of opinion is more complicated than Polus assumes: whatever people would initially say, if we asked them about injustice, they have another belief (in CIR) that commits them to Socrates’ own position. Socrates is thus destabilizing the apparent consensus against him, and this can be done more effectively if he allows himself to treat a consequence what is believed as itself believed. But, to repeat, his aim in saying that is not to draw support for his own side

²⁰ Woolf, ‘Authority’ and Kamtekar, *Psychology*, 93-6.

²¹ Compare *Gorgias* 471 E 2-472 D 4.

from his claim about other people, but to unsettle Polus' initial confidence in a consensus.

If we look beyond the passage's immediate context to the rest of the *Gorgias*, we find elsewhere an ostensibly similar willingness on Socrates' part to contradict his interlocutors about what their position is. But only in T2 is this inflected as a point about the interlocutor's current 'belief', and in the other passages there is a reference to previous statements by the interlocutor that support Socrates' account of their position. In an earlier part of the *Gorgias* Socrates and Polus disagree about what Polus is 'claiming' (φησίν, 466 E 4-5): according to Socrates, Polus denies that doing whatever you please is having great power.²² Polus is baffled. Socrates' point is as follows: Polus has *already said* that having great power is good for the possessor (466 B 6-8), but doing as you please, at least without understanding, is not good but bad for you – as Polus himself thinks and admits (466 E 9-12, 467 A 5). Unlike in T2, Socrates's attribution is supported by what Polus has already said (as Socrates himself points out, 466 E 6-7, 467 A 4). Socrates does not say that Polus *believes* the conclusion, namely that doing whatever you please is not to have great power, before he hears the argument for it; and the beliefs of other people are not mentioned at all.²³

²² The Greek verb can be used to introduce an account of someone's meaning, thought or point rather than a precise quotation. See J. Kerschensteiner, *Kosmos: Quellenkritische Untersuchungen zu den Vorsokratikern* (Munich, 1962), 76, n.4.

²³ I am less confident than Woolf ('Authority', 28 n.52) that Socrates' point at 466 E 4-5 about what Polus claims should be reworded as a point about Polus' belief, particularly as it comes in a dialogue so obviously alive to the possibility of insincerity (see e.g. n.25 below). At *Gorgias* 470 A 9-12 (cited in Kamtekar,

Rather, according to Socrates Polus claims that doing whatever you please is not having great power, given that (1) he has already said that having great power is good, and (2) doing whatever you please can be bad, as Polus himself admits. Later in the *Gorgias* Socrates asserts that Callicles ‘claims’ or ‘is saying’²⁴ what he, Socrates, says (516 D 4-5). Here again, unlike in T2, Socrates is looking back to has already been said: Callicles has agreed that Pericles made the Athenians more savage and more unjust, whereas a good statesman should make citizens more just, and so Callicles, like Socrates, ‘claims’ that Pericles was not a good statesman. Elsewhere, then, Socrates puts together, and draws inferences from, his interlocutors’ previous statements to show them what they are ‘claiming’. But only in T2 does he attribute to an interlocutor prior belief in his conclusion, and it is only in T2 that the support in the conversation for the attribution lies exclusively in what comes next, not in previous admissions.²⁵

Psychology, 93) Socrates says what ‘appears’ to Polus, but, unlike in T2, he is summarizing what Polus has just agreed to in the conversation (469 E 6-470 A 8).

²⁴ The verb (φῆς) needs to be supplied from the context.

²⁵ See also 495 E 1-2, but there (as in Griffith, *Gorgias*) a future verb should be supplied: Callicles *will* not agree with what he has said. Finally, see Callicles’ self-contradiction in 482 B 5-6. Callicles may deny now that committing injustice, without punishment, is the worst evil, but, whenever the Athenian people say that it is, he will change his tune (481 D 1- 482 A 2). The point is that Callicles will *say* something different in order to ingratiate himself with the people and so will contradict himself (ἐναντία λέγειν, 482 C 1-2), not that he shares Socrates’ belief. Given that Callicles’ intention will be to curry favour with the people, there is little reason to expect all his

The lack of a parallel concerning belief reinforces the sense that in T2, where Socrates does speak of Polus' belief, he is addressing a failing in Polus that has just come to light: being excessively impressed by other people's beliefs, particularly when they converge. By contrast, Callicles, who appeals to nature as his authority, is obviously free from that failing, whatever else we may dislike in him. Indeed, his complaint that Socrates is a 'demagogue' (482 C 4-5, E 2-4, 494 D 1) may take aim at Socrates' appealing and deferring, in Callicles' view, to popular beliefs.²⁶ Early in Callicles' intervention he rejects CIR (482 D 7-8), which ordinary people were said to accept (475 D 1-3): according to Callicles, committing injustice is more repellent only by convention, whereas by nature being the victim of injustice is more repellent (483 A 7-8). Unlike Polus, Callicles sees no dialectical cost in contradicting the views of ordinary people – although, as we later learn (481 D 1-482 A 2), in politics Callicles himself has to be more circumspect and defer to the Athenian people. But in a private conversation there is little point in using against Callicles the kind of belief-attribution found in T2.²⁷ On the contrary, Socrates says that most people agree not with him but with Callicles, although they do not express their real views as openly as Callicles does (492 D 1-3). The attribution to other people of belief in Socrates'

statements to them to express his own beliefs.

²⁶ This is the interpretation suggested by Griffith's translation of 482 E 3-4: 'dragging the discussion down to commonplace appeals to public opinion'.

²⁷ For discussion of the dialectic between Callicles and Socrates, see, among other studies, J. Doyle, 'The fundamental conflict in Plato's *Gorgias*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 30 (2006), 87-100 and M. Schofield, 'Callicles' return: *Gorgias* 509-22 reconsidered', *Philosophie Antique* 17 (2017), *Platon et la politique*, 7-30.

position is used only against Polus, whose confidence in a consensus on his own side needs to be shaken.

Even within the discussion with Polus Socrates does not sustain the paradoxical belief-attribution of T2. At T2 Socrates says that Polus believes not only CIW but also that ‘not being punished is worse than being punished’. But when Socrates actually turns to the subject of punishment (476 A 3-481 B 5) and argues that not being punished is the worse of the two fates, he does not suggest again that Polus already, at the time of T2 or earlier, shared Socrates’ belief. On the contrary, he now puts himself and Polus on opposed sides of the debate: Polus, unlike Socrates, ‘thought’ it worse to be punished (ᾤου), and the two of them were disagreeing about, or disputing, the value of punishment (ἡμφοεσβητήσαμεν, 476 A 2-6, 479 D 7-E 6). This is, strictly speaking, compatible with Polus’ already believing Socrates’ conclusion about punishment, for Polus may of course have inconsistent beliefs.²⁸ But we must not leave unexplained why Socrates first (in T2) attributes to Polus belief in the Socratic conclusion concerning punishment, and then, when arguing for that conclusion, mentions only Polus’ previous opposition to it. The most plausible explanation, I submit, is that the belief-attribution has already served its purpose when Socrates turns to the subject of punishment at 476 A 2: Socrates has shown Polus, by means of a parallel between Polus himself and other people, an unexpected complexity in other people’s views about injustice, and thus the difficulty for Polus of using an apparent consensus on that subject to belittle Socrates’ position and reinforce his own.

²⁸ Compare n.12 above.

A similarly *ad hominem* interpretation is most appropriate in the closest parallel to T2 in Plato: the discussion of Love with Diotima in the *Symposium*. Here it is Socrates' own confidence that needs to be unsettled. According to Socrates, *everyone agrees* that Love is a great god (202 B 6-9). Diotima replies that Socrates, like her, claims that Love is not a god at all (202 B 1-C 4). As in T2 from the *Gorgias*, the conclusion is attributed to the interlocutor before the argument is delivered and while the interlocutor still puts himself on the other side of the debate. Although Diotima speaks at first of what Socrates 'claims' – he is one of those who 'claim' (φασίν, 202 C 1) that Love is not a god – at the end of the argument she moves to a belief-attribution: 'you see that you too believe (νομίζετε) that Love is not a god' (202 D 7).²⁹ When Diotima attributes this belief, she takes herself to have vindicated her statement that Socrates 'claims' Love not to be a god; that statement of hers was made at the start of the argument, and in opposition to Socrates' account of himself.

²⁹ I prefer this translation of the Greek (σὺ ἠέρωτα οὐ θεὸν νομίζεις) to 'do not believe that Love is a god', as in M. C. Howatson, and F. C. C. Sheffield, *Plato: the Symposium* (Cambridge, 2008), which leaves open the possibility that Socrates has no belief at all about Love's divinity. On Diotima's account, Socrates claims Love not to be a god (202 C 1-2) and so has a position on the subject. In Greek οὐ νομίζεις can mean 'you believe that ... not', rather than 'you do not believe that...', and it is this wording that is used for the allegation of atheism against Socrates (Plato *Apology* 26 C 1-8, 35 D 6). See H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. Messing (Cambridge, MA, 1956), 610 (2691-2). For discussion of the Greek verb in ancient discussions of religion and atheism, see H. S. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology* (Leiden 2011), Appendix IV, 541 n.10, 542-4, 554-9.

So it is reasonable to take her to mean that Socrates believed all along (including at the time when he expressed the opposed view) that Love is not a god. Like Socrates in the conversation with Polus, Diotima thinks herself qualified to gainsay Socrates' self-description. And the context is of course similar to that of T2: Socrates has just said that there is universal agreement that Love is a god, which suggests that one of Diotima's goals in the apparently premature attribution is to shake his confidence in that agreement.³⁰ Once this aspect of the context is recognized, the similarity between the two passages shows that we are dealing not with a single Socratic doctrine about belief and its requirements so much as with a Socratic (or Socratic-Diotimean) strategy for addressing an apparently straightforward consensus on the other side.

The *Symposium* is the closest Platonic parallel, inasmuch as there too (if my interpretation is right) belief in the conclusion is attributed to the interlocutor before

³⁰ Some readers may be surprised to see Socrates of all people placing confidence in this consensus. Two explanations: (1) in the *Symposium* he is speaking about what is and is not a god, and – strange as this may seem to us – a consensus on that subject may have been thought to carry special importance. In the *Apology* (26 D 1-3) Socrates himself appeals to the fact that everyone believes the sun and moon to be gods. (2) Socrates is attributing to himself, in the conversation with Diotima, an error of Agathon and the others that he wishes to expose and correct. Ever since the subject was introduced (177 A 8) Love has been treated by Agathon, Phaedrus and the others as a god, and so Socrates has reason to undermine trust in their agreement on Love's godhead. He achieves this by representing *himself* as putting trust in that agreement and then being refuted by his teacher.

he hears the argument for it.³¹ The discussion in the *Apology* of Socrates' alleged atheism may constitute another parallel. Socrates asks how he could both believe in spirits or lesser deities, as his accuser Meletus says, and be an atheist:

Τ3 εἰ δ' αὖ οἱ δαίμονες θεῶν παῖδες εἰσιν νόθοι τινές ἢ ἐκ νυμφῶν ἢ ἐκ τινῶν ἄλλων ὧν δὴ καὶ λέγονται, τίς ἂν ἀνθρώπων θεῶν μὲν παῖδας ἠγοῖτο εἶναι, θεοῦ δὲ μή; ὁμοίως γὰρ ἂν ἄτοπον εἶη ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις ἵππων μὲν παῖδας ἠγοῖτο ἢ καὶ ὄνων, τοὺς ἡμιόνους, ἵππους δὲ καὶ ὄνους μὴ ἠγοῖτο εἶναι. (*Apology* 27 D 8- E 3)

If spirits are illegitimate children of gods, born from nymphs or from some others, as the stories actually go, what person could believe that there are children of gods but no gods? It would be as absurd as if one believed in mules, the offspring of horses and donkeys, but not in horses and donkeys.

On one interpretation, Socrates means that the existence of spirits, and their being the children of gods, together entail the existence of gods; and that this logical connection

³¹ We might expect a parallel in the *Euthydemus*, where Euthydemus and his brother know in advance where their arguments will lead and sometimes cannot resist showing this off. But on inspection the brothers turn out to use less startling language than Socrates does in the *Gorgias*: the brothers say, at the start of an argument, that their interlocutor will be refuted, or that he may deny what he now says, or will be made to accept bizarre claims (275 E 4-6, 295 A 4-5). The brothers never start an argument with the claim that their interlocutor already asserts or believes its conclusion, let alone that everyone believes it.

absolves him of atheism.³² But equally Socrates could mean that, as a psychological and cultural fact, belief in spirits inevitably involves some thought about their origin – and so anyone who believes in spirits and regards them as the offspring of gods will inevitably come to believe (if he or she has not already done so) that gods exist.

Nobody could believe in an offspring of a god and fail to see the connection to the gods' existence, particularly given that Greeks tell detailed stories about the origins of gods and lesser deities, as Socrates points out ('as the stories actually go', in my translation). The text seems to me indeterminate between these two interpretations.

I have tried to articulate precisely what supports the belief-attribution in T2, but, as we have seen, it would be exaggerating to describe what has emerged as 'the Socratic conception of belief', or even the conception of belief defended or assumed by him throughout the *Gorgias*, or, more narrowly still, a conception of belief sustained throughout the conversation with Polus. The belief-attribution is made in response to Polus' treating a consensus on his own side as authoritative proof that Socrates is wrong, and it belongs firmly to that context. Elsewhere in the *Gorgias* (466 E 4-5, 516 D 4-5) Socrates gainsays his interlocutors about what they are 'claiming', not about their beliefs, and in those other passages he draws support not only from an argument that he is about to deliver but from what the interlocutors have already said to him.

³² Strictly speaking, the *current* existence of the gods does not follow (gods could have produced offspring and then all perished), but it would be uncontroversial to assume that gods cannot exist without being everlasting. Woolf, 'Authority', 29 n.53 says that the passage contains a 'hint' that beliefs should be attributed on the strength of other beliefs and logical connections.

Recollection and true *doxa* in the *Meno*

Of Plato's three discussions of recollection (*Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*) only the *Meno* mentions the presence of *doxai* in the recollecting subject. To see how *doxa* comes to be relevant we must start with the dialogue's famous challenge about inquiry.

The challenge comes within a twofold attack by Meno on Socrates that is partly about Socrates' habit of causing puzzlement, partly about his ability to inquire. The latter, the challenge about inquiry, asks how people who do not know can pursue an inquiry and complete it successfully.³³ By this point in the discussion both Meno and Socrates have described themselves as puzzled, but the challenge about inquiry, as Meno formulates it (80 D 5-8), applies to people by virtue not of their feeling puzzled or perplexed, but their lack of knowledge. Meno seems to have Socrates himself in mind: 'how will *you* search for something, Socrates, if you don't know at all what it is?' (81 D 5-6).³⁴ It is Socrates' lack of knowledge, not his puzzlement, that

³³ For the importance of success in the inquiry see G. Fine, *The Possibility of Inquiry: Meno's Paradox from Socrates to Sextus [Inquiry]* (Oxford, 2014), 109-10 and the response there to D. Scott, *Plato's Meno [Meno]* (Cambridge, 2006).

³⁴ See especially R. M. Dancy, *Plato's Introduction of Forms [Forms]* (Cambridge, 2004), 221, who emphasizes the importance for Meno of Socrates' claim not to know 'at all' (71 B 3). Compare G. Fine, *Plato on Knowledge and Forms: Selected Essays [Knowledge]* (Oxford, 2003), 50-1; D. N. Sedley and A. G. Long, *Plato: Meno and Phaedo* (Cambridge, 2010), xvi; Fine, *Inquiry*, 82.

(the challenge suggests) makes successful inquiry impossible.³⁵ But Meno has also complained, with the vivid image of an electric ray, about Socrates' habit of causing others to be puzzled (79 E 7-80 B 7). And the examples in the dialogue of the knowledge-less position all involve puzzlement as well. The first is Meno's own condition after his attempt to define virtue, where he is, by his own description, 'full of puzzlement' (80 A 3-4) and out of answers (80 B 1-2). Socrates himself, 'puzzled' and lacking knowledge of what virtue is (80 C 9, D 1), is the second. The third example is the slave,³⁶ who, after two unsuccessful attempts to answer Socrates' question in geometry, admits that he lacks the knowledge and, as Socrates puts it, realizes that he is puzzled (84 A 1-B 1).

Socrates needs to respond both to Meno's complaint about puzzlement and to his challenge about inquiring without knowledge. His response is to show, through the conversation with a slave, that (1) puzzlement is beneficial, not harmful, for the purpose of inquiring, and (2) people who do not know can inquire successfully. *Doxai* become relevant in the discussion of (2). According to Socrates, when the slave

³⁵ Socrates broadens the scope of the problem beyond himself ('impossible for a human being to inquire...', οὐκ ἄρα ἔστιν ζητεῖν ἀνθρώπῳ) and reformulates it so as to include those who have knowledge (80 E 1-5). See Scott, *Meno*, 78; Fine, *Inquiry*, 84-5. But in Socrates' formulation too the problem is about knowledge and its absence, not the feeling of puzzlement.

³⁶ Slave, not slave boy: the noun παῖς does not show his age. See LSJ s.v. III; E. Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address: From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford 1996), 232, 234; R. Benitez, 'Boy! What Boy? (A Plea for Meno's Slave)', *Ancient Philosophy* 36 (2016), 107-14.

endorses the correct answer to the geometrical question, he shows the presence inside himself of true *doxai*. The discussion of geometry addresses the challenge about inquiry by showing that people who do not know, such as the slave, and by extension Socrates and Meno too, contain ‘true *doxai*’.

T4 ΣΩ. Τῷ οὐκ εἰδότηι ἄρα περὶ ὧν ἂν μὴ εἰδῆ ἔνεισιν ἀληθεῖς δόξαι περὶ τούτων ὧν οὐκ οἶδε;

MEN. Φαίνεται. (85 C 6-7)

Socrates: So in someone who doesn’t know – whatever the things may be which he doesn’t know – there are true beliefs about the very things he doesn’t know?

Meno: Evidently so.

Meno’s reply may give strong, not weak, endorsement – ‘so we have seen’, or ‘evidently so’ – as it is the presence of true *doxai* that is supposed to be shown empirically by the slave’s answers. By contrast, there are not similar empirical grounds for accepting Socrates’ next claim (85 C 9-D 1), that the slave would eventually *know*, not merely have the *doxa*, to which Meno replies with a probably weaker ‘so it seems’ (ἔοικεν, 85 D 2).

As we have seen, Meno’s challenge, so far as it concerns inquiry, is about the absence of knowledge, but it is brought into focus by three examples (Meno, Socrates, and in Socrates’ response the slave) involving puzzlement as well. Socrates’ response in T4 should speak directly to these examples. Even at the time when the slave admits his ignorance and feels puzzled (84 A 1-B 10), ‘there are true *doxai* in him’, in the words of T4. Socrates himself, despite his puzzlement and lack of knowledge about virtue, has ‘in him’ true *doxai* about it, and so does Meno, even

when he has come to feel perplexed. After all, Socrates' objective is to show that he and Meno should continue discussing virtue and try to find out what it is, even at the point where both he and Meno are in *aporia*. In other words, Socrates' wording at T4 should describe not only the slave's current condition in geometry, when the correct answer has been endorsed by him, but also the slave's condition back at the time when he felt perplexed and unable to answer.³⁷ T4 should also describe Socrates' own condition and Meno's concerning virtue, even at the time when Meno has despaired of finding the correct definition of it and says that he has no answers left (80 B 1-2). Otherwise the passage would fail to show that they should not, at that time and in that condition, abandon the inquiry into virtue.

The application of T4 to this time is confirmed when Socrates goes on to argue that the slave 'has in him' true *doxai* both when he was a human being and when he was not a human being, and takes this to mean that they are in the slave 'for all time' (86 A 6-9). If the *doxai* are present for all time, then obviously they were present when the slave (and, in the parallel case, Meno) felt perplexed and out of answers. But I have defended my interpretation independently of that slightly later

³⁷ Further evidence in the text: (1) Socrates says that the *doxai* 'were present' in the slave (ἐνῆσαν, 85 C 4), and in the context this means at the same time as when they said that the slave did not know (see 85 C 2), which is either 82 E 8-9 or 84 A 1-B 10. On either alternative, the true *doxai* are already present in 84 A - B, when the slave despairs of giving the right answer. (2) Directly after T4 Socrates notes that the *doxai* have 'now' been 'stirred up' in the slave (85 C 9). This suggests that the immediately preceding exchange, where the correct answer is endorsed, is the time when the *doxai* were 'stirred up', not the time when they first came to be inside the slave.

passage, where Socrates uses his attribution of *doxai* to argue for the soul's immortality. Socrates has a distinct reason to defend the soul's immortality that does not have to do with Meno's challenge about inquiry or complaint about puzzlement: Meno is not waiting to take part in the Eleusinian Mysteries (76 E 8-9), which suggests an alarming indifference to the fate of his soul after death.³⁸ The part of the 'recollection' passage concerned with immortality, and the consequent need to live 'as piously as possible' (81 B 6), may address this indifference in Meno, not the challenge in 80 D 5-8 about inquiry and knowledge.

What exactly is Socrates attributing in T4 to the slave – and, in the parallel discussion of virtue, to Meno and himself? More specifically, do the true *doxai* mentioned there, or their content, include the solution to the geometrical problem, as

³⁸ For the connection of the Mysteries to the afterlife see e.g. the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* 478-82, Sophocles fr. 753 Nauck (Plutarch *How to study poetry* 21f), Isocrates 4.28. In their commentaries Bluck and Sharples note that 'initiation' can be used to describe philosophical enlightenment, but they do not note the connection between Meno's non-participation in the literal Mysteries and Socrates' argument for the soul's immortality. Meno has told Socrates 'I have to go away before the Mysteries' (76 E 8); is it really likely that Meno was alluding to philosophy? Moreover, Socrates has only just committed himself to speaking in a way intelligible to Meno (75 D 2-7), and there is no reason to expect Meno to interpret Socrates' talk of the Mysteries as a reference to philosophy. In my view scholars have assumed too quickly that there is no reference at all to the literal Mysteries, and this has caused them to miss the relevance of this passage for the later discussion of reincarnation and immortality.

well as the more elementary answers used to reach it? When the slave gives the solution, Socrates insistently attributes it to the slave ('on your account, slave of Meno...', 85 B 5-6). He then asks Meno whether the slave failed at any point to give his own *doxa* as his reply (85 B 8-9), to which the answer is 'no' – the slave expressed his own *doxai* throughout. It is in this context that Socrates and Meno agree (85 C 4-5) that 'these *doxai*' were in the slave, and T4 follows directly. So it seems certain that in T4 Socrates is including every *doxa* expressed by the slave, including the solution.³⁹ That implies that, in the parallel case, the correct *doxa* about the definition of virtue 'is in' Meno and himself. There is no paradox in saying that the slave believes the solution to the geometrical problem at the time when he has endorsed it, but, as I have argued, Socrates must intend the attribution in T4 to obtain even before that, when the slave has no answer for Socrates. Similarly T4 should describe Meno's condition at 80 A 2-B 7, when he is 'numb' with perplexity. As in our examination of the *Gorgias*, the contrast with the discussion of *doxa* in the *Theaetetus*, T1 above, should be evident. When the slave is in the grip of perplexity, he has not yet endorsed internally, at least during his current life, the correct solution

³⁹ So L. Brown, 'Connaissance et réminiscence dans le "Ménon"', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 181.4 (1991), 603-19 at 612-3; J. Gentzler, 'Recollection and "the problem of the Socratic elenchus"', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 10 ['Recollection'] (1994), 257-95 at 281; Dancy, *Forms*, 231. Contrast Fine, *Knowledge*, 4 n.8 and Fine, *Inquiry*, 121 (during the exchange the slave acquires 'new' beliefs), 128 ('these beliefs need not be about what the answer is'), 132, 134, 160-1.

to the problem Socrates has set him. And yet he is said to contain already the *doxa* concerning it.

It now becomes essential to examine Socrates' wording in T4 and in particular to see whether, in Plato's Greek, saying that (a) the *doxa* that some proposition p is true 'is inside' a subject necessarily implies that (b) the subject 'believes' or 'judges' p, in the sense that he or she has the relevant cognitive attitude towards it.⁴⁰ In the *Theaetetus* (T1 above) Socrates puts it beyond doubt that he has in mind 'judging' or 'believing', the possession of a cognitive state or attitude: he is giving an account not only of *doxa* but also of the cognate verb, *doxazein* (190 A 5, 9). By contrast, T4 says not that the slave 'judges' or 'believes', *doxazein*, but that the true *doxai* 'are inside' the slave (ἐνεῖσιν, 85 C 6; compare 85 C 4, 86 A 7). There has been comparatively little discussion of the use of the second verb in recent scholarship on the passage.⁴¹ Elsewhere in Plato it is very unusual to say that a *doxa* 'is inside' (ἐνεστί or some other form of the verb) people or their souls. Much more common is to say that a

⁴⁰ As I observe later (n.45), on one interpretation the *doxa* is itself a 'truth' or proposition. Adherents of this view would spell out or reword (a), in their own account of the *Meno*, as something like the following: 'the *doxa* consisting of the proposition p...'

⁴¹ Gentzler and Dancy accurately reproduce Plato's wording (e.g. the true belief 'was in the slave', Gentzler, 'Recollection', 281; 'the belief that the side of the double square is the diagonal was a belief in him', Dancy, *Forms*, 231, emphasis added), but they do not discuss his choice of it.

virtue (such as justice) or a vice ‘is inside’ them.⁴² Outside the *Meno* I can find only one passage where a *doxa* is said to ‘be inside’ people, and even this passage is in fact about the virtues:

T5 Καὶ μὴν εἶπερ αὖ ἐν ἄλλῃ πόλει ἢ αὐτῇ δόξα ἔνεστι τοῖς τε ἄρχουσι καὶ ἀρχομένοις περὶ τοῦ οὐστίν᾽ ἀρεῖν δεῖ ἄρχειν, καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ ἂν εἴη τοῦτο ἐνόν. ἢ οὐ δοκεῖ;
(431 D 9-E 2)

And if there is any city where the same belief is in both the rulers and the subjects about who should rule, it will be in this one. Don’t you think so?

The passage comes from the discussion of the city’s virtues in *Republic* Book 4.

Socrates and Glaucon ask not only what the virtues are, but ‘in whom’ they are (428 D 5-7, E 7-8, 429 A 8) – that is, the group or groups of citizens that we should look to

⁴² Notice especially the change of wording at *Charmides* 159 A 1-3: if the virtue σωφροσύνη ‘is in’ (ἔνεστιν) Charmides, he ‘would have a belief about it’ (δόξα ἂν τίς σοι περὶ αὐτῆς εἴη). Socrates does not say that the belief would ‘be in’ Charmides. For virtue and vice ‘being in’ people see also *Republic* 352 A 5, C 4, 358 B 5, 402 C 5, 409 B 6. Intelligence (νοῦς) can also be said to ‘be in’, or not to ‘be in’, people (*Ion* 534 B 6); if S. P. Menn is right in interpreting νοῦς as a virtue (*Plato on God as Nous* (Carbondale, 1995), 14-18), this is not surprising. For the sake of completeness I note that according to the Seventh Letter *doxa*, together with knowledge and intelligence, ‘is in’ souls (ἐνόν, 342 C 4-6). For the question of the letter’s inauthenticity see M. Burnyeat and M. Frede, *The pseudo-Platonic Seventh Letter*, edited by D. Scott (Oxford 2015).

when calling the entire city brave, wise and so on. In T5 Socrates has turned to moderation or self-discipline (σωφροσύνη), which he will define as agreement or unanimity between better and worse about which should be in command (432 A 6-B 1). He and Glaucon are about to agree that this particular virtue, when it is a property of a city, ‘is in’ both the rulers and their subjects (431 E 4-6) – we cannot decide whether rulers and subjects are in agreement without looking to them both. This, I suggest, is what causes him to speak of the *doxa* as ‘being in’ both groups: he is on the point of suggesting that the *virtue* ‘is in’ both groups, in the sense outlined above. So the passage from the *Republic* should not be used as evidence that in other contexts, such as the *Meno*, where Socrates does not have special reason to use of *doxa* a verb used more commonly of virtue, ‘the *doxa* is in X’ necessarily implies ‘X believes or judges’.⁴³

⁴³ The point is only strengthened if we look for uses of the same wording about knowledge. In the *Meno* knowledge is not said to ‘be in’ people or souls, and so we have to look to the *Phaedo*. There knowledge is said to ‘be in’ people before recollection (ἐνοῦσα, 73 A 9), and yet it is denied that ‘we know throughout our lives’ (ἐπιστάμεθα διὰ βίου, 76 A 5; see 76 B 10-C 4 for the denial). So knowledge of an item can ‘be in’ people without their ‘knowing’ that item. (I use ‘item’ so as not to exclude either propositions or objects.) My interpretation of the *Meno* has been anticipated by Dancy: ‘the boy has in him beliefs to the effect that so-and-so and such-and-such, but that does not mean that he believed that so-and-so or such-and-such’ (*Forms*, 231). Dancy, *Forms*, 231-2 then applies the same distinction to knowledge. Usually in the scholarship on recollection (the exceptions are Gentzler, ‘Recollection’ and Dancy,

So far I have argued only that we are not required to interpret Socrates in T4 as saying that the person without knowledge believes correctly. More significantly, a later part of the *Meno* gives us reason not to suppose that Meno, the slave and Socrates already believe or judge correctly at the time when they experience perplexity. The conception of true *doxa* introduced in T4 will become crucial to the final round of the discussion of virtue. Socrates and Meno will agree there that someone believing truly – not someone ‘in whom there are true *doxai*’, but someone ‘believing correctly’ (ὀρθῶς ... δοξάζων, 97 B 1) – is just as reliable a guide as someone with the relevant knowledge. The example is someone who, because he believes truly, leads others correctly to Larisa. Indeed, Socrates says, *whenever* someone ‘has correct *doxa*’ (97 C 9-10), he or she acts correctly.⁴⁴ But Meno is not a reliable guide on the subject of virtue, or the slave (during his perplexity) in geometry. True answers can be elicited from the slave, and presumably Socrates believes the same about himself and Meno concerning virtue; but if the perplexed slave is completely unaided, he will not guide others to the correct answer, no more than an unaided Meno will tell Socrates the correct definition of virtue. By contrast, the person ‘believing correctly’ about the route to Larisa can simply be asked for

Forms) the questions of innate, implicit or latent knowledge get more attention than the corresponding questions about belief.

⁴⁴ ‘Having’ true *doxa* is used also in the discussion of recollection (ἔχει δὲ ταύτας τὰς δόξας, 85 E 7). This expression can be used, I suggest, of *both* the conditions between which I distinguish: it can mean either that true *doxa* ‘is in’ the person, as in T4 and the surrounding passages, or that the person ‘believes correctly’ – that is, that he or she has the relevant cognitive state, like the reliable guide to Larisa in 97 A.

guidance or directions. So the attribution in T4 cannot be the equivalent of saying that the slave ‘believes correctly’, in the same sense as the person guiding to Larisa.

I conclude that for a *doxa* to ‘be in’ a person or a soul is not, at least in T4, the same as for the person to ‘believe’. Confirmation, if it is still needed, comes in the apparent discrepancy between these two passages:

T6 Εἰ οὖν ὄν τ’ ἂν ἦ χρόνον καὶ ὄν ἂν μὴ ἦ ἄνθρωπος, ἐνέσσονται αὐτῷ ἀληθεῖς δόξαι, αἱ ἐρωτήσῃ ἐπιστῆμαι γίνονται, ἄρ’ οὖν τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον μεμαθηκυῖα ἔσται ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ; (86 A 6-9)

If there are going to be true *doxai* in him [the slave] both for the time when he is a human being and for the time when he isn’t, *doxai* which become knowledge when awoken by questioning, then for time everlasting won’t his soul be in a state of having learned?

T7 καὶ γὰρ αἱ δόξαι αἱ ἀληθεῖς, ὅσον μὲν ἂν χρόνον παραμένωσιν, καλὸν τὸ χρῆμα καὶ πάντ’ ἀγαθὰ ἐργάζονται· πολὺν δὲ χρόνον οὐκ ἐθέλουσι παραμένειν, ἀλλὰ δραπετεύουσιν ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου... (97 E 6-98 A 2)

True *doxai* are also a thing of beauty, as long as they stay with one, and all their consequences are good. But they are not prepared to stay with one for long. Instead they run away from the person’s soul.

The passages seem to contradict one another on the duration of true *doxai*: are they present for all time (T6) or only briefly (T7)? Evidently there must be a distinction between *doxai* ‘being in’ a person, as in T4 and T6, and the person believing (such as the reliable guide to Larisa and, given its context, in T7).

What Socrates means by the former, *doxai* ‘being in’ the slave or Meno, is best measured by the discussion with the slave. The first hint that *doxai* will become relevant comes when Socrates talks about the slave’s attitude to his own answers: ‘reply by saying what you believe’ (τὸ γὰρ σοι δοκοῦν τοῦτο ἀποκρίνου, 83 D 2). Later, as we saw above, he asks Meno whether the slave gave ‘his own *doxai*’ in his answers (85 B 8-9; compare 84 D 1-2). The slave is giving as his answers not only what has, as we might put it, crossed his mind, but what he believes, at the time when he gives the answers. So the prior condition, when the slave is still perplexed but, according to T4, containing true *doxai*, is one in which the appropriate sequence of questions will not only elicit from him the right answer but prompt in him a certain attitude to it: he will not only think of the answer to Socrates but also think it true. But, to repeat, this is not equivalent to already *believing* that answer before the question has been put to him.⁴⁵

If we choose to express the point in terms of dispositions, we must not say that Plato presents ‘believing that p’ as ‘having the disposition to give p as an

⁴⁵ As I finalized this paper I was fortunate to read D. Bronstein and W. Schwab, ‘Is Plato an innatist in the *Meno*?’, *Phronesis* (forthcoming). Bronstein and Schwab argue that the *doxai* already inside the slave are the contents or truths that he comes to believe, not the cognitive state of believing itself. In this paper I confine myself to the negative point that the *doxa* is not such a cognitive state, but, as long as one can explain what it means to possess an uncognized truth (a challenge they address in the last section of their paper), their interpretation is an attractive account of T4. My thanks to David Bronstein for sending me before publication a copy of their paper.

answer’, or something similar.⁴⁶ That behavioural disposition is closer to what Socrates calls ‘containing the *doxa*’ or, more literally, the *doxa* ‘being in’ the person. Closer, but not quite identical: a *doxa* is inside a person if he or she has the disposition not only to give certain answers but, at the time of answering particular questions, to take a certain attitude to their answers, such that Socrates’ ‘say what you believe’ requirement is met. In other words, the relevant disposition is to give, in the appropriate context, the answer sincerely.⁴⁷ (In a different context, such as when the slave is first asked to solve the problem, he may give a different and incorrect answer.) As we have seen, the presence of a *doxa* in someone, as in T4, is not the

⁴⁶ Compare the following (E. Schwitzgebel, ‘A phenomenal, dispositional account of belief’, *Noûs* 36 (2002), 249–275 at 250): ‘I call it a dispositional account because it treats believing as nothing more or less than being disposed to do and experience certain kinds of things’. Schwitzgebel then immediately contrasts his own account with other dispositional accounts that say less than his about conscious experience.

⁴⁷ Contrast Dancy, who admittedly speaks of an ability rather than a disposition: ‘the boy has in him the belief that the side of the double square is the diagonal in the sense that, once he is asked questions in the right order, he will be able to say, on his own, that it is’ (*Forms*, 232). On my account, the slave must also have a certain attitude to the answer at the time when he gives it. Dancy’s earlier formulation (‘he [the slave] can see, by himself, the truth of the matter’, *Forms*, 231) is in this respect better. See also Gentzler, ‘Recollection’, 281 n.49: the true beliefs in the soul ‘are mere propensities to give mental assent to true propositions’. (This is one of two interpretations Gentzler considers possible, the other of which is that the true belief is ‘explicit, but unconscious belief’.)

same as believing. Indeed, it is not even described as a kind or way of believing, as some of our adverbial expressions, such as believing latently or implicitly, might be taken to suggest. So I am not interpreting Plato as, in Fine's phrase, a 'dispositional innatist', at least about *believing*.⁴⁸

To conclude: in the *Meno* to say that a *doxa* 'is inside' a person does not imply that the person 'believes' or 'judges'. The former describes the relationship between the slave and the solution to the geometrical problem at the time when the slave was confused and unable to give Socrates an answer: the *doxa* about the solution was inside him even then, despite his not having affirmed the solution internally, or assented to it, during his current life. The latter, believing, describes the guide to Larisa, reliable whenever he believes truly; and Socrates does not say whether or not an internal assertion about the way to Larisa has occurred within the guide, as is required by his discussion of *doxa* in the *Theaetetus*. 'Having' a *doxa* can be used of both conditions, and so this wording alone cannot be relied upon to show into which of the two categories a person falls.⁴⁹ In my view these distinctions can be used to clarify what Socrates says about knowledge as well as *doxa*,⁵⁰ but that is not a task for this paper. Our task is to see whether assent and internal assertion are needed for *doxa* in the *Theaetetus* and other texts. The *Meno* is silent about whether they are

⁴⁸ Fine, *Inquiry*, 147. Compare the contrast in Audi, 'Dispositions' between a dispositional belief and a disposition to believe.

⁴⁹ See n.44.

⁵⁰ See Dancy, *Forms*, 232, although Dancy uses 'have a belief' as equivalent to 'the belief is in'. I agree that this is one use of the phrase, but 'having the belief' and 'having knowledge' can also be used as equivalents of 'believing' and 'knowing'.

necessary for *believing*, although it suggests that a *doxa* can *be in* a person without either of them having occurred in his or her current life.

Conclusion

In the *Gorgias* Socrates gainsays his interlocutors about their own positions when they are unaware of, or distance themselves from, the consequences of what they accept or have said. To that extent Socrates represents himself as knowing other people better than they know themselves. But there is no consistent preference for speaking of their *beliefs* in such passages; sometimes he speaks of what they are claiming or putting forward in the debate. In the one passage where he attributes a belief to an astounded Polus, he is addressing Polus' tendency to defer to what other people believe and say; it is essential to recognize that the attribution comes in this context and involves an attribution not only to Polus but to other people too. So when in the *Theaetetus* Socrates stipulates that every *doxa* involves an internal assertion, he is not contradicting a conception of belief that he holds throughout the *Gorgias*.

Rather, in the *Theaetetus* Socrates is making unavailable to himself an *ad hominem* move made against Polus – and, by his own account, made against him by Diotima.

In the *Meno* he says that there are *doxai* 'in' people which they have not yet, at least in this life, assented to or asserted internally. But this attribution must be distinguished from saying that these people *believe*, when they are in that condition.

The *Meno* is silent about whether believing requires assent or internal assertion – not

unreasonably, as in that dialogue Socrates does not need to confront the problem of falsehood whose solution requires *doxa* to have the same structure as what we say to others. In my discussion of the *Meno*, as elsewhere in the paper, I have prioritized the question of *doxa*-attribution, not the question of what Socrates means by *doxa*. But shifting to the first question allows us to see that Socrates is not, despite appearances, saying that the slave enters the conversation already believing the solution to the problem, and that is an important first step for a proper understanding of what *doxa* means in the passage on recollection. Whereas my discussion of the *Gorgias* does not require us to distinguish Polus' 'belief' from the cognitive state called a *doxa* in T1, I do distinguish that state from what is attributed to the slave in T4.

As my account depends on contextualization to a greater extent at some points than at others, I will close with a brief and, I expect, provocative comment on literary context and what remains 'perhaps the most burning question in Platonic scholarship today', the relation and interplay between literary and philosophical accounts of the dialogues.⁵¹ The contrast between my accounts of T1 and T2, from the *Theaetetus*

⁵¹ C. H. Kahn, 'From *Republic* to *Laws*: a discussion of Christopher Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast*', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004), 337-62 at 343, which remains (especially at 343-53) a powerful commentary on contemporary approaches to the dialogues. Kahn asks (343) 'how far can the historical and dramatic setting, the character of the interlocutors, the artistic diversity of the dialogues, or the absence of Plato's own voice be an essential factor for the understanding of Plato's philosophy?'. The present paper suggests, at least concerning dramatic setting and character, that we should refrain from a once-and-for-all account of their bearing on what Socrates says.

and *Gorgias* respectively, and my extended discussion of the dialogues to which they belong, illustrate that a reasoned case can be made for giving the literary and dramatic context of one passage a kind of significance that is not given to another. Considering whether or not to interpret a certain argument or conception as *ad hominem* need not come down to intellectual temperament or the *a priori* adoption of a single approach to every part of every dialogue. The dialogues themselves can furnish us with grounds for sensitive discrimination.⁵²

⁵² My thanks to the editor, the two anonymous readers for the journal, Ursula Coope, Luca Castagnoli and those who commented on parts of the paper when they were presented at St Andrews and the Southern Association for Ancient Philosophy in Cambridge.

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