

Δυσχέρεια and Ἀπορία: The Formation of a Philosophical Term*

this is the proof!

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SUMMARY: Plato's nephew Speusippus has been widely accepted as the historical person behind the mask of the anti-hedonists in *Phlb.* 42b–44c. This hypothesis is supported by, *inter alia*, the link between Socrates' characterization of them as δυσχερεῖς and the frequent references of δυσχέρεια as ἀπορία to Speusippus in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* MN. This study argues against assigning any privileged status to Speusippus in the assimilation of δυσχέρεια with ἀπορία. Instead, based on a comprehensive survey of how δυσχερ- words were used in classical antiquity, the semantic shift of δυσχέρεια can be explained in an alternative way.

1. INTRODUCTION

SINCE THE 19TH CENTURY, EUDOXUS OF CNIDUS—AN ASTRONOMER, mathematician, and Plato's student—has been widely regarded as the person whose hedonistic arguments stimulated Plato in the *Philebus* to reconsider the nature of pleasure and its relation to good life.¹ Given the popular tendency of reading the *Philebus* through the lens of the hedonistic controversy in the Academy, it is not surprising that scholars also try to find a conceptual constellation in this dialogue similar to the one already found in Aristotle's *Eth. Nic.* X. 2–3. In this section, Aristotle constructs a dialectical backdrop from the

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¹Cf. Usener 1884/1914: 89–90; Döring 1903: 124; Gosling 1975; Gosling and Taylor 1982: 143–67; Dillon 2003: 65.

debate between the “hedonist” Eudoxus and the “anti-hedonist” Speusippus, Plato’s nephew, for the unfolding of his own “heterodox” theory. From this perspective, a proper interpretation of the *Philebus* allows for a fuller picture of the Academic debates over pleasure that are partly reflected in *Eth. Nic. X*.

The *Philebus* presents the debate between hedonists—Philebus and Protarchus—and their critic Socrates concerning the nature of pleasure and its evaluation. However, it is less noticed that a group of anti-hedonists labelled “Philebus’s enemies” (44b6) are unexpectedly introduced and criticized by Socrates near the end of his analysis of false pleasures (36c2–44b2).² Despite remaining anonymous, both their character and doctrine seem to fascinate Socrates in an idiosyncratic way. As eminent figures in natural science (μάλα δεινούς λεγομένους τὰ περὶ φύσιν 44b9), they refuse to acknowledge anything healthy (ὕγιές 44c8) in pleasure, instead claiming that pleasure is essentially some sort of release (ἀποφυγὰς 44c1) from pain.³ On this reductionist understanding, they even claim—radically as well as paradoxically—that pleasures do not exist at all (παράπαν ἡδονὰς οὐ φασιν εἶναι 44b10) and thus their power (δύναμις 44c7) derives from nothing but witchcraft (γοήτευμα 44c8). Although Socrates acknowledges the nobility (οὐκ ἀγεννοῦς 44c6) of their anti-hedonistic aspiration, he complains that their censure of pleasure is based not on knowledge (τέχνη 44c6) but rather on a certain character flaw called δυσχέρεια (cf. 44c6), variously translated as dourness, difficulty, fastidiousness, or harshness.⁴

By highlighting the character traits of Philebus’s enemies, Socrates appears more interested in a personal polemic than in offering a reliable presentation of their doctrine. It is odd that his series of characterizations of the anti-hedonists seem more appropriate to an individual than a group.⁵ Thus, not by accident, a long scholarly tradition assumes that there might be some historical person behind the mask of the so-called enemies of Philebus. Among the options suggested (including Antisthenes, Anaxagoras, Antiphon, Democritus, Archytas and Heraclides Ponticus), Speusippus has become the most widely accepted candidate, not only because of the doctrinal similarities between them (cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1152b13–15; 1173a29–31; 1173b7–9), but because this equation also makes Philebus a perfect mirror of and complement to the

² For a recent discussion of false pleasures in the *Philebus* and its context see Wolfsdorf 2013: 80–96.

³ For the Greek text of Plato I follow OCT (Burnet 1900).

⁴ Hackforth 1958: “dourness”; Gosling 1975: “difficulty”; Tarán 1981: 80: “fastidiousness”; Frede 1993: “harshness”.

⁵ Frede 1997: 268.

intra-school constellation in Aristotle's *Eth. Nic.* X. 2–3, to the point that the two texts seem mutually supportive when read through this lens.⁶

In spite of such merits, one cannot deny that Socrates' sketch of Philebus's enemies appears too general to conclusively identify them with Plato's nephew. The radical hostility towards pleasure and the belief in the dependence of pleasure upon pain can hardly be decisive, as other individuals or groups held similar views as well.⁷ Moreover, their reduction of the power of pleasure to witchcraft is not reflected in what has survived of Speusippus's thought; conversely, Speusippus's notorious refusal of pleasure as a quality (*Eth. Nic.* 1173a13–15) and his determination of pleasure as unlimited (ἀόριστον 1173a16) are all absent in *Phil.* 44b–46c. Even the negative characterization of their personality as δυσχέρεια also seems to be an obstacle to this mainstream view; it is puzzling that Plato could depict his nephew, the heir of the Academy, in such an offensive way. More evidence is therefore required for one to maintain the Speusippus hypothesis. This desideratum or gap is filled by Schofield's seminal contribution in 1971 entitled "Who were οἱ δυσχερεῖς in Plato, *Philebus* 44Aff?". In this article, he astutely observes that Plato's emphasis of the anti-hedonists as δυσχέρεια implies much more than a purely personal attack. Otherwise it would hardly make sense that Socrates seems to be so captured by this word cluster as to even claim that the δυσχέρεια and δυσχεράσματα of the anti-hedonists are what he and Protarchus should follow and explore in their joint inquiry into the nature of pleasure (44c7, 44d2; cf. 44d8, 46a5). According to Schofield, Socrates' demand can be properly understood only when the words in question shift from their subjective/psychological sense to an objective/technical one, which occurs when Plato moves from a characterization of the annoying personality of Philebus's enemies to the theoretical puzzle/ἀπορία raised by, or implied in, their anti-hedonistic doctrine.

⁶Speusippus has been suggested by Döring 1903: 125–27 and Burnet 1914: 324, which is then picked up and defended by Philippson 1925: 468–74 in a more elaborate way. The followers of this proposal include Gauthier and Jolif 1958–59: 800–3; Düring 1966: 457; Schofield 1971; Krämer 1971: 205–9; 2004: 27; Friedländer 1975: 491; Dillon 2003: 65–77; Tarrant 2008, 2010. *OCD* (4th Edition) s.v. "Speusippus" also accepts this proposal. For the history of scholarship see Tarán 1981: 79; Frede 268–69; McConnell 2015: 331. Anaxagoras and Antiphon are suggested by Romeyer-Dherbey 1999 and Bignone 1938: 225 respectively, which is less noticed.

⁷In the *Phaedo* Socrates seems to hold both. For similar views in the Cynics, see McConnell 2015. It was even a relatively popular view to regard pleasure as nothing but a release of pain in antiquity, especially in poetry (cf. Diès 1941 XLV; Erler 2012: 62–67).

But how is this assumption related to the Speusippus hypothesis mentioned above? Schofield detects that in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, most notably in MN, *δυσχέρεια* is frequently used in the sense of *ἀπορία* raised by Speusippus in the Academic debates on first principles. Very probably, Schofield further assumes, *δυσχέρεια* is a technical term coined or favored by the second scholarch of the Academy when speaking of theoretical *ἀπορία*, which squares well with his propensity to enrich his conceptual apparatus by introducing metaphorical or unfamiliar expressions.⁸ If so, the Speusippean way of using *δυσχέρεια* explains perfectly why Socrates plays with the double sense of *δυσχέρεια* in his confrontation with the anti-hedonists in the *Philebus*. If this suggestion can stand, it ingeniously turns an obstacle to an advantage, lending a strong reinforcement to the Speusippus hypothesis. It, further, reveals a hidden conversation scattered in Plato's *Philebus* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* MN, two texts which—due to their distinct topics—do not seem to be closely connected with each other. Just as Aristotle uses *δυσχέρεια* ironically in taking issue with Speusippus's metaphysics, so too Plato blends philosophical seriousness with playful polemics by parodying Speusippus's ethics.

Schofield's argument has been well received. While many scholars simply adopt his conclusion as a given fact, others seek to reinforce and develop this view in profound ways, exploiting its potential for a deeper understanding of Plato's *Philebus*, the Academy, and the relation between the Academics and Aristotle. Tarrant, for instance, declares that “just as Schofield found strong linguistic arguments for identifying Plato's *δυσχερεῖς* with Speusippus,” he offers “strong linguistic arguments for identifying the *MM*'s *δυσχερεῖς* with Plato's.”⁹ By revealing that Aristotle's allusion to Speusippus in the *Magna Moralia* is similar to the way that Plato plays with his nephew's *Fachsprache* in the *Philebus*, Tarrant goes so far as to support a new interpretation of the *Philebus* as Plato's palinode on the evaluation of pleasure due to the intra-school discussion, a change of mind essentially motivated by Speusippus's criticism of his earlier position.¹⁰ This line of interpretation is then picked up by Murgier, who argues that by attacking the *δυσχερεῖς*, one of the main concerns of the *Philebus* is to demarcate Plato's *non*-hedonistic stance—which integrates the category of pure pleasures into the concept of human goodness—from Speusippus's *anti*-hedonistic attitude.¹¹ Going beyond the

⁸ Merlan 1968: 122; Schofield 1971: 14.

⁹ Tarrant 2008: 12.

¹⁰ Tarrant 2008: 2010.

¹¹ Murgier 2016: 78.

exegetic interest of Plato's dialogue, Dillon even attempts to restore the lost ethics of Speusippus, which depends considerably upon the portrayal of the *δυσχερεῖς* in the *Philebus*.¹²

On the other side, scholars who express a dissenting voice as to the identity of Philebus's enemies do not seem to respond to Schofield's linguistic argument adequately.¹³ No doubt, they are correct to maintain that the reliability of the Speusippus hypothesis hinges less on *linguistic* evidence and more on *doctrinal* criteria. However, they attempt to demolish this hypothesis without engaging with Schofield's argument directly. As a result, they either pass quickly over its potential for understanding the whole spectrum of the intra-Academic controversy, failing to appreciate its force and subtlety, or they readily accept (or neutralize) the evidence itself but resist its validity when applied to the *Philebus*. Frede, for instance, underlines that even if one, following Schofield, reinterprets the personal *δυσχέρεια* as an *objective* difficulty, Speusippus's position still cannot be reconciled with that of the anti-hedonists.¹⁴ Similarly, McConnell, who argues that Antisthenes, rather than Speusippus, is the person behind the *δυσχερεῖς*, concedes that Schofield's "evidence *certainly* pushes us towards identifying the *δυσχερεῖς* in the *Philebus* with Speusippus" (emphasis added).¹⁵ The only objection he raises to this argument is to reiterate that the linguistic evidence "can hardly be said to be decisive on its own."¹⁶ The proponents of the Speusippus- hypothesis, however,

¹² Dillon 2003: 64–77. Recently, in his unpublished, yet widely circulating monograph *The Aim and the Argument of Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Menn accords *δυσχέρεια* a significant role in expounding Aristotle's account of the debates on first principles within the Academy, particularly the way he dialectically "use[s] the Speusippean term and develop[s] the Speusippean style of criticism" (Menn: 51 [Ch. Ig3]) in rebutting Plato and Xenocrates. He concisely summarizes the function of this linguistic evidence in this context: "Tracking Speusippus in Aristotle's argument is not as easy as it might be, because Aristotle almost always refuses to name him [...], but phrases like 'those who posit only mathematical number' serve in effect as conventional substitutes for his name. There are other less decisive but also important signifiers for Speusippus. Notably [...] the word *δυσχέρεια* seems to have been a favorite of Speusippus', and it has been argued that the word and its cognates are used repeatedly in the *Philebus* with reference to him; and this suggestion is confirmed by Aristotle's usage." (39 [Ch. Ig3]). I accessed the on-line edition in 2015.

¹³ Scholars who reject this hypothesis include Diès 1941: LX–LXII; Davidson 1949: 363, 367; Hackforth 1958: 87; Lieberg 1958: 72–73; 1959: 28–34; Isnardi Parente 1980: 357–58; Tarán 1981: 79–85; Frede 1997: 265–74; McConnell 2015.

¹⁴ Frede 1997: 269.

¹⁵ McConnell 2015: 334.

¹⁶ McConnell 2015: 334; cf. Isnardi Parente 1980: 358.

do not aim to offer a decisive proof, but to show that the disparate passages can be woven by this linguistic particularity into a likely story, which cannot be verified, but is plausible. In comparison, Tarán's reply to Schofield touches on a weakness in Schofield's strategy when he points out that, "even if *δυσχερής* is a typical Speusippean word [...], he would have used it *in a different sense from* that in which the word is used in the *Philebus*."¹⁷ Tarán, however, does not spell out how the word, in his view, is used by Speusippus and in the *Philebus* respectively, and he does not ask a more fundamental question of whether or not *δυσχέρεια* is actually *a Speusippean word*. In fact, there is *no direct evidence* for Speusippus's alleged fondness for the term *δυσχέρεια*.¹⁸

This snapshot of scholarship suffices to show that it is far from a trivial linguistic issue to figure out the origin and role of the objective use of *δυσχέρεια* in the Academic tradition. Its clarification will have a serious impact on the interpretation of Plato's *Philebus* because it bears on the contextualization of the dialogue, the reconstruction of the ethical thought of Speusippus, and even the assessment of the dialectical tactics among the Academics, including the respective roles Speusippus and Aristotle play in the debate on first principles. It is imperative to note here that research into the senses of *δυσχερ-*words in Plato and Aristotle cannot be divorced from the problem of grasping the ways they manage to cope with their contemporaries and predecessors, or from the question of how they perfect their methodological apparatus by employing a distinct aporetic approach in their own research. By the same token, a survey of the semantic shift can contribute to a thorough inquiry into the kinds of historical, linguistic, and philosophical factors that could have contributed to this transformation if its emergence was not arbitrary.

Against this background, the current study has a double aim. First, it seeks to disprove the objective use of *δυσχέρεια* as Speusippus's hallmark or invention. The alleged association of *δυσχέρεια* with him turns out to be groundless

¹⁷ Tarán 1981: 80, emphasis added.

¹⁸ The word *δυσχεραίνειν* is also found once in Iamblichus' *DCMS IV* (17.10 *Festa/Klein*), a text which Merlan (1968) first ascribes to Speusippus, while Tarán does not acknowledge its authenticity and excludes it from his Speusippus-collection (cf. Tarán 1981: 86–107. For a different view see Dillon 1984). Even if this text is completely loyal to Speusippus both in spirit and in vocabulary, it can at most indicate that Speusippus *could also use* this term in the same way Aristotle and many others (e.g. Plato, Isocrates, Demosthenes, and Theophrastus) use it (*pace* Dillon 2003: 48). For my detailed explanation see below. For the *δυσχερ-*words in Iamblichus, see *VP* 35.262.8; *Protrep.* 29.30; *Myst.* 5.23.35.

if we closely scrutinize how Aristotle expresses himself with this term and its cognates (sections 2 and 3). In fact, a dialogue-internal account can explain in a more natural way Socrates' labeling of the extreme anti-hedonists as *δυσχερεῖς* (section 4). This negative result, however, does not aim to erase the significance of Schofield's insight; rather, it opens up the possibility of tracing the origin of the assimilation of *δυσχέρεια* into the theoretical *ἀπορία* in an alternative way. I offer—in parallel with the semantic transformation of *ἀπορία*—a new explanation for the semantic shift of *δυσχερ*-words frequently observed in Plato and Aristotle (sections 5 and 6). A closer study of the evidence indicates that the Academy might have played a significant role in the emergence of the aporetic use of *δυσχέρεια*; yet, more important are Plato and Aristotle's adoption and use of the sophistic and oratorical tradition, beyond the intra-school debates between Speusippus and his opponents.

2. ΔΥΣΧΕΡΕΙΑ AND THE ACADEMIC DEBATE OVER FIRST PRINCIPLES

According to Schofield, *δυσχέρεια* is used as theoretical *ἀπορία* fifteen times in Aristotle, and nine of these instances are in *Metaphysics* MN, of which six passages are associated with Speusippus: *Metaph.* 1086a2–5, 1087b18–21, 1090a7–10, 1091a33–b1, 1091b1–3 and 1091b22–25. The frequent connection between *δυσχέρεια* and the problems Speusippus sees or tries to avoid (in MN: 6/9), as Schofield believes, reflects Aristotle's intention to address Plato's nephew by alluding to one of his favorite terms, since Aristotle “often uses the vocabulary of a thinker whom he is discussing.”¹⁹

No doubt it is an ingenious argument built on a perceptive observation, especially if we take into account that there is no *direct* evidence for the identity of the *δυσχερεῖς* in the *Philebus*. The statistics to which the hypothesis resorts, however, have at least two weaknesses: different forms of the term are not examined in detail, nor does the study exhaust the textual evidence.²⁰ In

¹⁹ Schofield 1971: 13; cf. Tarrant 2008: 4. It is of course disputable whether Aristotle is more inclined to appropriate the vocabulary of his opponents, or rather, as Cherniss 1944: 51 complains, “to recast into the terms of his own philosophy the statements of other philosophers and then to treat as their ‘real meaning’ the implications of the statements thus translated.” However, I will limit myself to the present issue, i.e. considering whether it is possible that he intentionally uses *δυσχέρεια* to allude to the *Fachsprache* of Speusippus.

²⁰ Schofield 1971, 13 first lists *Metaph.* 1086a2–5, 1090a7–10, 1091a33–b1, and 1091b22–25 as “accounts of Speusippus’ view”, and he adds 1091b1–3 and 1087b18–21 respectively as Aristotle's reply to Speusippus) and as an Aristotelian objection to the Platonists, which should be traced back to Speusippus as its originator (14–15).

the case of Aristotle, his analysis concentrates primarily on the substantive *δυσχέρεια*.²¹ Aristotle, however, also uses the adjective forms (*δυσχερῆ* and *δυσχερές*, 31.4% of the total objective usages of *δυσχερ*-words) and a variety of its verbal forms (14.3%) in referring to theoretical difficulties, philosophical puzzles, or objections.²² To claim that “X *δυσχεραίνει* about/to Y” (X makes the difficulty in Y; or X raises objections to Y) is equivalent to claiming that “X raises the *δυσχέρεια/δυσχερῆ/δυσχερές* in/to Y.” It is clear that we need a more comprehensive and precise account of the use of these terms in Aristotle. In addressing this question, it seems best to start with the *Metaphysics*, as it lends significant support for the Speusippus hypothesis.

Aristotle, in his famous methodological remark, tells us why a scientific research on ϕ first needs a clarification of the difficulties about ϕ (*Metaph.* B1. 995a31–36):

For in so far as our thought is in *difficulties* (*ἢ γὰρ ἀπορεῖ*), it is in like case with those who are tied up; for in either case it is impossible to go forward. Therefore, one should have surveyed all the *difficulties* beforehand (*διὸ δεῖ τὰς δυσχερείας τεθεωρηκέναι πάσας πρότερον*), both for the reasons we have stated and because people who inquire without first *working through the difficulties* (*ἄνευ τοῦ διαπορῆσαι*) are like those who do not know where they have to go.²³

This passage is found in the opening of the so-called *Aporienbuch* of the *Metaphysics*, in which Aristotle attempts to outline the nature and limits of the wisdom he seeks by laying out fifteen fundamental problems (*ἀπορίαι*). For our purposes, it is noteworthy that *δυσχέρεια* here is interchangeably used with *ἀπορία* and that the text itself provides an explanation for this usage. *Ἀπορία*, according to Aristotle, indicates an unpleasant and disadvantageous state, like the situation in which someone is tied up and cannot go forward (995a31–33). Such a state is well covered by the ordinary semantic scope of *δυσχέρεια* insofar as it can signify things that are unpleasant, embarrassing,

²¹ This leads Schofield to recognize only a few cases in which *δυσχέρεια* has no connection with Speusippus (e.g. *Metaph.* 1083b19 [which is mistaken as b9], 1085b17 and 1086b12). He claims that “Aristotle might very well be influenced in his selection of the word by its frequent use in Speusippus, even if he is not actually citing Speusippus’ objections” (1971: 15).

²² Cf. Table II in the appendix below.

²³ For the *corpus Aristotelicum*, I follow OCT when available. Exceptions are the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Susemihl), *Magna Moralia* (Susemihl), and *Rhetoric* (Kassel). All the translations of Aristotle are based on Barnes (1995), with modification where marked. All emphases in ancient texts are mine.

and annoying. In other words, the semantic connotation of *δυσχέρεια* fits Aristotle's intention to highlight the phenomenal or experiential dimensions with the theoretical *ἀπορία*, that is, what it feels like for a subject to be in an *ἀπορία*.²⁴ It is important to note that *Metaph.* 995a31–36 is by no means unique in associating *δυσχέρεια* with *unspecified* theoretical difficulty. The exordium of *Metaphysics* M offers another telling example (1076a12–15):

We must first consider what is said by others, so that, if there is anything which they say wrongly, we may not be liable to the same objections, while, if there is any opinion common to them and us, we shall not *make difficulties* merely for ourselves (τοῦτ' ἰδίᾳ μὴ καθ' ἡμῶν δυσχεραίνωμεν, modified).

At the prologue of Aristotle's study on the eternal substances, he demands that his audience should take the opinions of others into consideration. This is nothing but an application of his classical approach, which combines doxographical study with aporetic method. According to him, we should address difficulties of our opponents (first of all the Academics) and, more importantly, difficulties *common to them and to us* so as to find a solution without falling into the traps that threaten the theories of our adversaries. It is noteworthy that he directly employs *δυσχεραίνειν* in the sense of *ἀπορεῖν* as if they are obviously synonymous.

Since *δυσχερ*-words occur in Aristotle's methodological remarks on the significance of *ἀπορία* to his first philosophy in general and in MN, in particular, it comes as no surprise that other traces of this use are found in different places in the *Metaphysics*. In at least five passages of the *Metaphysics*, *δυσχέρεια* is associated with the pre-Socratics and functions as an objection raised by Aristotle to his predecessors. While Heraclitus, Anaxagoras and the Pythagoreans are explicitly addressed in *Metaph.* 1005b19–25, 1063b24–32, and 1083b8–10, the presence of the pre-Socratic views can be indirectly, yet unambiguously, discerned in *Metaph.* 984a25–29 and 1067b30–36 (= *Ph.* 225a25–32).²⁵

²⁴ I shall return to this aspect later, see section 6 below.

²⁵ The term *δυσχερῆ* is not found in *Metaph.* 1012a24–b18, the parallel passage of 1063b24–32. Whether a scribe uses this word or Aristotle himself, it does not affect my argument. In *Metaph.* 984a25–29, Aristotle complains that pre-Socratic monists do not even realize the difficulties (*ἐδυσχερανεν*) underlying their theories. According to *Metaph.* 1067b30–36, any attempt to identify *γένεσις* with *κίνησις* will lead to *δυσχερῆ*. This is one of the major mistakes committed by almost all the pre-Socratics in Aristotle's view (*Gen. corr.* 1.1; *Ph.* 191a27–33; *Metaph.* 983b6–18).

If Speusippus had nothing to do with the aporetic *δυσχέρεια* so far delineated, is there any story behind Aristotle's appeal to *δυσχερ*-words in the context of Academic debates? Before considering what kind of role these terms play here, it is useful to recall how Aristotle portrays the intellectual climate of the Academy with his dialectical art. First, although he does not always clearly distinguish between different Academic doctrines (and even sometimes appears to deliberately conflate them), he is accustomed—implicitly or explicitly—to dividing the Academics into Speusippus on the one hand and Plato and Xenocrates on the other. There are plenty of reasons in favor of this partition; a crucial one, I think, is that Speusippus denies the existence of the Platonic Forms and the identification of the Good with the One, which seems to indicate that he departs from the mainstream “dogma” of the Academy to a considerable degree.²⁶ Secondly, Aristotle's strategy in refuting the Academics is either to raise objections to their views directly, or to point out the *ἀπορία* that the Academics raise against one another. Thus, he dramatically informs us that Speusippus sees the difficulties in the assumption of the Forms (*ὁρῶντες τὴν περὶ τὰ εἶδη δυσχέρειαν*, *Metaph.* 1086a3–4), while those who presuppose the existence of the Forms also make trouble for Speusippus by asking how mathematical numbers—regarded by Speusippus as independent entities—could exist if there were no Forms at all (1086a6–10). This disagreement (*τὸ διαφωνεῖν*) is interpreted by Aristotle as a sign (*σημεῖον*) of the failure of all the Academic accounts of first principles (1085b36–1086a1).

Against this background, it is natural that Speusippus indeed sees, perhaps even raises, the difficulties of the Academic doctrine about the Forms and principles (*cf.* *ὁρῶντες τὴν περὶ τὰ εἶδη δυσχέρειαν* 1086a3–4; *δυσχερείας ὅραν* 1090a8), and that he also tries to avoid the difficulties besetting the Academy, no matter whether they are raised by himself or by someone else.²⁷ Yet with regard to the issue of first principles, Aristotle thinks that Speusippus's diagnosis of *δυσχέρεια* fails because, for Aristotle, the real difficulty (*δυσχέρεια* 1091b1) does not lie in making the good an attribute of the principle, but in making the One a principle in the sense of *element* and deriving numbers from this principle (*διὰ τὸ τὸ ἐν ἀρχὴν καὶ ἀρχὴν ὡς στοιχεῖον καὶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἐκ τοῦ ἑνός* 1091b2–3). The diagnosis indicates that Aristotle is bearing in mind a theoretical weakness to which *both* the mainstream Academic doctrines and

²⁶ For discussions of the metaphysical systems of Speusippus and Xenocrates, see Happ 1971: 208–56; Tarán 1981: 13–52; Dancy 1991: 63–178; Dillon 2003: 40–64, 98–136; Krämer 2004: 16–25, 40–43; Thiel 2006: 124–30, 243–64, 312–39.

²⁷ *Cf.* *εὐλαβοῦμενοι ἀληθινὴν δυσχέρειαν* 1091a36–37; *συμβαίνει γὰρ πολλὴ δυσχέρεια—ἦν ἔνιοι φεύγοντες ἀπειρήκασιν* 1091b22–23.

Speusippus's theory are subject (cf. 1088b32). *Metaph.* 1091b1, therefore, can hardly be taken as a *Speusippean* δυσχέρεια aimed at the other Platonists.

The δυσχέρεια in *Metaph.* 1087b18–21 cannot stand as an allusion to Speusippus either.²⁸ Here Aristotle is trying to refute those who take first principles as contraries, in particular the Platonists who identify them as the One and the Unequal (τὸ ἄνισον = the Indefinite Dyad), no matter whether they call the latter “the great and the small” (τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρόν), “the many and the few” (τὸ πολὺ καὶ ὀλίγον) or “the exceeding and the exceeded” (τὸ ὑπερέχον καὶ τὸ ὑπερεχόμενον). Aristotle indicates that their change of the label is motivated by the intention to avoid what he calls “dialectical difficulties” (λογικὰς δυσχερείας 1087b20, cf. 1005b22), presumably because they might either have tried to deduce their principles by means of a certain demonstration, or because they might have applied the principles in demonstrations for some other purpose.²⁹ Setting aside what the term “dialectical difficulties” means (see section 6 below), the claim of some Platonists—namely, that the term “the many and the few” is more suitable for the second principle than “the great and the small”—shows that within the supporters of the Indefinite Dyad, a group probably wanted to get rid of the material-spatial connotation of the latter pair. They then appeal to a more abstract expression, “the many and the few”, which, as a principle, is supposed to better satisfy their need to explicate the generation of mathematical objects and all kinds of beings that are supposed to be described mathematically. “The dialectical difficulties,” from this point of view, are followed by Theophrastus’s criticism of the Platonic notion of the Indefinite Dyad as “space, void and endless” (οἶον τόπος καὶ κενὸν καὶ ἄπειρον Thphr. *Metaph.* 6b1 Gutas). It is remarkable that, although the proponents of “the exceeding and the exceeded” disagree with the Platonists mentioned above, they equally rename this principle in order to guard against the same difficulties. They opt for “the exceeding and the exceeded” because, as Aristotle states, they believe that this pair represents something more universal (καθόλου ... μᾶλλον *Metaph.* 1087b24–25) than the other terms.

²⁸ διαφέρει δὲ τούτων οὐθὲν ὡς εἶπεν πρὸς ἓνια τῶν συμβαινόντων, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς λογικὰς μόνον δυσχερείας, ἃς φυλάττονται διὰ τὸ καὶ αὐτοὶ λογικὰς φέρειν τὰς ἀποδείξεις.

²⁹ My tentative translation of λογικαὶ δυσχερείαι follows Kirwan (1993). Ross translates the phrase in 1087b20 as “abstract objections”, but in 1005b22 as “dialectical objections” (e.g. “formal difficulties” in Annas 1976). As the term λογικός here is broader than “logical” in its strict sense, closely associated with dialectical inquiries in an Aristotelian sense, see Schwegler’s hitherto still relevant elaboration (1848: 48–51). For my further discussion of this phrase, see section 5 and section 6.

Aristotle does not spell out clearly whether, in his view, some Platonists actually succeed in avoiding “the dialectical difficulties,” nor what exactly they are. However, it is very unlikely that Speusippus raises the *δυσχερείας* that the other Platonists want to avoid. For, again, the *δυσχερείαι* do not seem to be problems *specific* to the theories of the Indefinite Dyad. They are rather a series of difficulties underlying the over-arching Platonic program insofar as all of the Platonists are inclined to derive the reality of different types from the combination of some pair of abstract principles.³⁰ Speusippus’s proposal is no less fraught with such difficulties, inasmuch as he follows the Platonic *Ableitungssystem* and tries to somehow derive different kinds of being from a few principles *qua* elements.³¹ It is especially unreasonable to assume that he brings the *δυσχέρεια* to the other Platonists in the same way the friends of “the many and the few” take issue with the friends of “the great and the small” (1087b16–17), because Speusippus labels the second principle with different names, some of which—*μέγεθος* (“magnitude”, *DCMS* IV. 16.15–16, 17.14) and *ὑποδοχή* (“receptacle”, 16.15, 16.20, 17.18, 17.29)—are equally geometrically colored and thus reminiscent of “the great and the small.”³²

In any case, it is beyond doubt that Speusippus is not the unique member of the Academy who raises or avoids *δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία* in Platonic theories of the Forms or principles. Xenocrates and many other Platonists do this as well. In Aristotle’s account, the Academics who name the second principle the Indefinite Dyad (Speusippus certainly not among them) make difficulties (*δυσχεραίνουσιν* 1088b30) for those who label it the Unequal. This seems to be a case in which Xenocrates and his followers raise *δυσχέρεια* to Speusippus (also see *Metaph.* 1082b32–36, 1087b18–21, 1090b21). Admittedly, Aristotle sometimes takes advantage of the difficulties raised by Speusippus to counter Xenocrates and his followers and then applies a similar criticism to Speusippus, so that the doctrines of the whole Academy fail. However, it is obviously *not* the only way in which Aristotle deploys his strategy against the Academics. Aristotle can and indeed does first attack Speusippus and then raise similar *δυσχέρεια* to the other Platonists.³³ Aristotle also criticizes both Speusippus

³⁰ Aristotle’s criticism of the determination of the second principle as *μέγεθος* or as the great and small by foregrounding the same difficulties shared by both trends (1185a35–b4).

³¹ Thiel 2006: 129; 222–3; How Speusippus and Xenocrates, as revisionists, improve the Platonic *Ableitungssystem* is also described by Dillon 2003: 111–12.

³² It is thus understandable that both Tarán and Isnardi Parente do not include *Metaph.* 1087b18–20 in their collections of the testimonies of Speusippus.

³³ Both in *Metaph.* M9.1085b4–7 and 1085b14–17, Aristotle first raises objections to Speusippus’ proposal (number or unit comes from the One and the Plurality), then either

and the other Platonists *at the same time* by raising the difficulties shared by all of them.³⁴ It is crucial to see that, even if Aristotle first attacks Xenocrates and then Speusippus, this order cannot guarantee that the *δυσχέρεια* in question—if it signifies the difficulty in the Academic doctrines of the Forms—can be safely used as a mark to distinguish the difficulties raised by Speusippus from those raised by the others.³⁵

It is clear that in the *Metaphysics* *δυσχερ*-words can refer to *ἀπορία* as such or to a concrete *ἀπορία*, which covers a wide range of topics discussed by a variety of people within or outside of the Academy. They indicate not only philosophical problems to be solved, but also theoretical difficulties or doctrinal incoherence, so that to raise a difficulty in X can often mean to raise an objection to X. In Aristotle's account of his battle against the Academy, *δυσχερ*-words refer to the theoretical difficulties raised by the Academics to each other, or raised by Aristotle to all of the Academics or to a particular group in the Academy (for an overview, see Table I). In this dialectical context, Speusippus, as a major figure in the Academy, can raise, or react to, some *δυσχέρεια*; yet this term alone cannot help us decide whether the difficulties in question are raised by him or to him. Even if the *δυσχέρεια* in

applies them (cf. ταῦτὰ συμβαίνει *δυσχερῆ* at 1085b6) or similar difficulties (ἄλλας ἔχει πολλάς *δυσχερείας* at 1085b17) to Xenocrates and his followers (number or unit comes from the One and the Indefinite Dyad). In these situations, the *δυσχέρεια/δυσχερῆ* cannot be raised by Speusippus himself (cf. *Metaph.* M7.1081b35–37). For a different understanding of 1085b14–17, see Annas 1976: 186.

³⁴ In struggling with the Academics who take numbers—mathematical or formal—as self-subsistent, Aristotle objects to the Platonic *Ableitungssystem* of the numbers from the One by questioning (ἀπορήσειε δ' ἄν τις) how exactly a number can be generated from the One and whether the number “two” or a unit in the “two” succeed the One as a principle in this generating process. He continues to apply his diagnosis to the things posterior to numbers, namely the line, the plane, and the body, pointing out that the same difficulties (τὰ *δυσχερῆ*) arise in their attempts to derive the line, the plane, and the body (*Metaph.* 1085a3–9). This is a criticism levelled at *all* of the Platonists who seek to undertake this task (cf. 1090b14–32).

³⁵ In *Metaph.* M9.1086b5–13, for instance, Aristotle holds that the difficulties in postulating the Forms (*δυσχερῶν περὶ τὰς ἰδέας*) lie in the separation, namely in postulating the existence of the Forms *qua* substances besides sensible substances. Without elaborating his criticism here, he refers the objections back to what he has explained (τις ἄν *δυσχέρεια* τῶν εἰρημένων), presumably M4 and A9. Although Aristotle here focuses exclusively on Xenocrates and Plato (*Metaph.* 1086a29–30), separation is nevertheless a difficulty to which Speusippus's proposal cannot be immune, because he *also* postulates mathematical numbers as *separate* entities, although he dispenses with the Platonic Forms.

Metaph. 1086a2–5, 1090a7–10, 1091a33–b1, and 1091b22–25 all refer to the Speusippean difficulties, the proportion of such references in MN is 4/17 (in contrast to Schofield’s result: 6/9) and in the *Metaphysics* 4/22 (in contrast to Schofield’s result: 6/15).³⁶ Therefore the evidence supporting the privileged status of Speusippus, based on the objective use of the *δυσχερ*-family in Aristotle, has been overstated.

3. ΔΥΣΧΕΡ-WORDS IN THE CORPUS ARISTOTELICUM

If we extend this analysis to the entire corpus of Aristotle, we observe a similar pattern in the use of *δυσχερ*-words, which lends powerful reinforcement to our preliminary conclusion and leads to a more substantial question unnoticed by earlier scholars.

In the prelude to a detailed discussion of *akrasia* in *Eth. Nic.* VII, a *locus classicus* for understanding Aristotle’s endoxic method (1145b2–7), Aristotle reminds his readers that, before developing one’s own ideas, one should first lay out the phenomena (τιθέντας τὰ φαινόμενα), work through difficulties (διαπορήσαντας), and show all reputable opinions (δεικνύναι ... πάντα τὰ ἔνδοξα). Only when “the *δυσχερῆ* are solved (λύηται) and the *endoxa* are left” can the relevant topic be regarded as “adequately (ικανῶς) proven” (1145b6–7). Here, once again, the assimilation of a *δυσχερ*-word with *ἀπορία* may be observed in his *general* methodological comment. For Aristotle, working through *ἀπορία/δυσχέρεια* is usually not a simple action. Rather, it is a complex task with different interconnected components, which can include identifying relevant questions to be resolved, distinguishing them from unnecessary or irrelevant difficulties based on misunderstanding or fallacy, raising objections to other people by disclosing the theoretical weakness or logical incoherence of their position, and guarding against objections to one’s own position.³⁷ Thus the positive use of *ἀπορία* (as a starting point of research) is interconnected with its negative use (as something to avoid or as an objection).

On the other hand, presumably due to its strong negative connotation, *δυσχέρεια* and its cognates are more frequently used in such a way in Aristotle than *ἀπορία* and its derivatives. In *Topics* VIII, for instance, Aristotle warns that the participants of a dialectical dispute should first clarify the concepts or propositions at issue, in order to avoid falling into unnecessary *δυσχερές*,

³⁶ For the references in MN see *Metaph.* 1076a15, 1081b37, 1083b9, 1085a8, 1085b6, 1085b17, 1086b7, 1086b12, 1087b20, 1088b30, 1088b31; 1091b1, 1091b22. For the evidence outside MN see *Metaph.* 984a29, 995a33, 1005b22, 1063b32, 1067b35.

³⁷ For discussions of this procedure, see Madigan 1999: xvi–xix; Rossi 2017.

namely disadvantage or defeat in discussion caused by the ambiguity of words (160a18–23). In the *Sophistic Refutations*, accordingly, he uses the verbal form *δυσχεραίνειν* as a synonym of the phrase *ψέγειν λόγους* in his criticism of Protagoras' fallacy based on confusing absolute propositions with relative propositions.³⁸ In a similar way, the activity of revealing the falsehood of Protagoras' view is identified with raising an objection (*ἔδυσχεραίνον*) to his position (cf. *Rh.* 1402a24–27). In the *De Anima*, *ἀπορία* and *δυσχέρεια* even constitute a rhetorical *hendiadyoin*, referring to the weakness of Empedocles' theory of like by like (*πολλὰς δ' ἀπορίας καὶ δυσχερείας*, *De an.* 410a27). In view of such a widespread use of *δυσχέρεια* and its derivatives, it is not astonishing that they are even built into a quasi-idiom in the Aristotelian tradition—*συμβαίνει/ἔχει δυσχερῆ/δυσχέρεια*—that expresses the weakness or the absurdity of a certain theory.³⁹

All of the evidence outside of the *Metaphysics*, unsurprisingly, does not imply any specific reference to Speusippus, either in the sense that the difficulties are raised by him or in the sense that they are difficulties against which he wants to take precautions. Such references are as common in Aristotle's other works as in the *Metaphysics*.⁴⁰ I illustrate the distribution of the references to the *δυσχέρεια* family in Aristotle's works in Tables I and II of the Appendix, which, together with my analysis of the evidence from the *Metaphysics*, indicates

³⁸ 175a12–16. Pickard-Cambridge in Barnes (1995) translates the statement—*ὑποψίαν δίδωσι τοῦ δοκεῖν δυσχεραίνειν οὐ διὰ τὰληθῆς ἀλλὰ δι' ἀπειρίαν* (175a15–16)—as “making it seem as though it were not the truth of the matter but inexperience that put him out of temper”. Apparently, he does not pay attention to the context in which the term *δυσχεραίνειν* is used, nor does he seem to realize that *δυσχεραίνειν* can denote theoretical difficulty in Aristotle.

³⁹ *Ph.* 225a30; *Cael.* 304a22; *Gen. an.* 740b15; *Metaph.* 1067b35, 1081b37, 1085a8, 1085b6, 1086b7, 1091b22; cf. *Pol.* 1261a10: *ἔχει δὴ δυσχερείας ἄλλας τε πολλὰς*. For *ἀπορία συμβαίνει/ἔχει* in Aristotle see *Ph.* 185a18, 189b29, 208a32–33; *De an.* 402a20–21, 410a27, 432b2; 432b12–13; *Gen. corr.* 315b19; *Gen. an.* 743b32, 759a8; *Metaph.* 997b13–14, 1039a14; *Eth. Nic.* 1137b6, 1146b6; *Pol.* 1284b26. It is interesting to see that Theophrastus, who follows Aristotle, uses the phrase *συμβαίνειν δυσχερῆ* and *δυσχερές* to express his objections to Parmenides and Anaxagoras (cf. *τὰ συμβαίνοντα δυσχερῆ* at *Sens.* 4.10 Stratton; *συμβαίνει δυσχερές* at 35.12) respectively.

⁴⁰ E.g., *Ph.* 225a30–32; *Cael.* 304a21–24, 309a27–29. *Δυσχερ*-words are at least three times used to represent the difficulties in Empedocles' theories, especially his theory of like by like, (*De an.* 410a27–29; *Resp.* 474a18–24; *Gen an.* 740b12–17). Outside the *Metaphysics*, see the *δυσχέρεια* of Plato's doctrines directed at his political utopia in the *Republic* (community of women, *Pol.* 1261a10; abolition of family, 1262a25; and community of property, 1263a21–22).

that the references to Speusippus in MN have nothing to do with Aristotle's deliberate allusion to his favorite metaphor or *Fachsprache*. In fact, what is striking is *not* that the objective use of δυσχέρεια is predominantly related to Speusippus, but that this particular use is so frequently present throughout Aristotle's entire corpus that it occurs as often as its subjective use.⁴¹ Thus, the crucial problem here is not to whom Aristotle is reacting in employing these terms, but how or why this aporetic use, which *prima facie* appears to involve an extraordinary semantic shift, has become quite usual for Aristotle.

4. ΔΥΣΧΕΡΕΙΑ AND PLATO'S APORETIC METHOD IN THE PHILEBUS

One might ask: if δυσχέρεια does not allude to Speusippus, then what motivates Socrates to label Philebus's enemies as δυσχερείς and encourage his partner Protarchus to consider (σκεψάμενος) their δυσχεράσματα (44d2) and investigate where their δυσχέρεια (44d8) leads? What a "mysterious" use of these words!⁴² If Plato does not merely dramatize his personal polemics against his opponents, we need a new account to explain this characterization of the anti-hedonists.

Admittedly, Schofield's hypothesis has heuristic aspects insofar as he realizes the equivocity and subtlety of the δυσχερ-words in Socrates' polemic. While Despite disagreeing with his hypothesis, I believe that Plato has something nuanced in mind. It is not a wordplay based on the philosophical and subjective uses of δυσχέρεια that is significant here; rather, the importance lies in one particular aspect of the subjective use of δυσχέρεια itself, which is closely related to the very subject of the *Philebus*: pleasure and pain. As Schofield noted, in earlier literature, δυσχερ-words were frequently used "in contexts of emotional shock and of physical distress or revulsion" closely associated with pain, grief, disgust or discomfort, in short, with a negation of joyful experience.⁴³ The echoes of this connotation are not absent in

⁴¹ Δυσχέρεια and its cognates are used 69 times in Aristotle's authentic works, 35 of which are associated with theoretical difficulties according to my statistics (see Table II). I do not take dubious or controversial works and the fragments into account (note that *Top.* 117b31–32 is excised by Brunschwig's edition).

⁴² Schofield 1971: 12.

⁴³ Schofield 1971: 6. See Kleist 1884; Leumann 1944; Schofield 1971: 3–11. The question of how ancient authors use δυσχερ-words is *independent* of the controversial question of how they are etymologically derived. According to the traditional view, δυσχέρεια and its cognates come from χείρ (hand), and hence initially mean "hard to take in hand or manage" (e.g., "δυσχερής" in LSJ). An alternative view is suggested by Leumann (1944: 161–169), according to which they come from δυσ- and χαίρειν (to enjoy). This

Plato and Aristotle.⁴⁴ This link, I think, sheds new light on Plato's repeated emphasis on the *δυσχέρεια* of Philebus's enemies. Remarkably, as Socrates introduces them, he draws attention to their reputation in natural science (44b9). However, against the reader's expectations that he would continue to document a *naturalistic* justification of their anti-hedonism, Socrates dramatically underscores them as *seers* (ὡσπερ μάντεσι 44c5) who do not *argue* for their hostility to pleasure. Rather, they support their view merely with *prophecy* (μαντευομένοις 44c5–6): it comes not from any acquired knowledge (τέχνη), but from a *δυσχέρεια* in their nature. The contrast between scientist and seer and the tension between knowledge and character trait allude to a Freudian story imbued with paradox: the theory held by Philebus's enemies as scientists is supposed to be scientifically grounded, yet it is essentially psychologically (if not pathologically) driven, because they abhor (cf. λίαν μεμισηκότων 44c7), or are unable to enjoy, pleasure in their *nature*. The term *δυσχέρεια* does not merely signify an unpleasant state or a *simple* pleasure-hostile disposition; as documented in Theophrastus, it also refers to a *particular* attitude

hypothesis seems to better explain the frequent association of *δυσχερ*-words with painful and unpleasant experiences, which, then, is accepted by Frisk 1973, 427; Beekes and Beek 2010: 361 (Chantraine et al. 2009: 290 seems more skeptical). Schofield proposes a third (more speculative) hypothesis that *δυσχέρεια*, in parallel with *δύσ-κολος*, which means “hard to stomach”, deriving from “a lost noun meaning ‘stomach’ or some organ of the stomach or digestive system” (Schofield 1971: 6). No matter how *δυσχερ*-words should be interpreted etymologically, all scholars agree that “psychical or physical unpleasantness,” as its most basic sense, was frequently attested in their initial uses.

⁴⁴ Plato, *Tht.* 195b9–c1; *Leg.* 654c8–d3. It might not be an accident that Plato uses *χαίρειν* and its cognates much more frequently in the *Philebus* than in the other dialogues in referring to pleasure (cf. *Phlb.* 11d8, 16c7, 21b2, 21b4, 21b7, 21b8, 21c2, 21c4, 21c5, 21c6, 33a1, 33b1, 33b3, 35e4, 36a3, 36b5, 36b9, 36e7 (twice), 37b7, 40a12, 40c1, 40d7, 40d8, 43d5, 44a1, 44a4, 44a7, 44a9, 44a10, 45c4, 47c7, 48a6, 49d4, 49d7, 49e9, 50a1, 55a7, 55b5, 55b7, 55c1, 67b2). Aristotle establishes the contrast between being in the state of *δυσχέρεια* and being in pleasure: οὔτε γὰρ ἤδεται οἷς μάλιστα ὁ ἀκόλαστος, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον δυσχεραίνει, *Eth. Nic.* 1119a12–13; οὐδεις δυσχεραίνει, ἀλλ’ ἂν ἡ χαίρεις, *Eth. Nic.* 1162b10; ταῖς κατ’ ἀρετὴν πράξεσι χαίρει, ταῖς δ’ ἀπὸ κακίας δυσχεραίνει, *Eth. Nic.* 1170a8–10; τὰ δὲ τοῦτῳ δυσχερῆ εἶ τῷ φαίνεται ἡδέα, οὐδὲν θαυμαστόν, *Eth. Nic.* 1176a19–20. He also uses ἀπαθὴς πάσης θνητῆς δυσχερείας (“unaffected by any mortal pleasure”) as synonymous with ἄπνοος (“free from pain”), a central attribute of the divine in traditional thought (*Cael.* 284a14–15). The phrase οἱ ... τῇ ἡδονῇ δυσχεραίνοντες in [*Mag. mor.*] 1204a22 should also be interpreted in this way (*pace* Tarrant 2008, who regards this as another allusion to Spresippus's ἀπορία).

towards pleasure, pain and care of the body (cf. *Char.* 19). If so, *δυσχέρεια* does not need to be treated as an individual's character that puzzles scholars because it seems at odds with the plural used by Socrates in referring to the anti-hedonists; rather, it points to a personality *type*. The *δυσχερεῖς*, from this perspective, is the diametrical antipode to the indulgent hedonists who are portrayed by Plato as luxurious, unrestrained, profane, and particularly oversensitive to pleasure and pain (cf. *Phd.* 68e–69b; *Grg.* 493a–494c; *Rep.* 573d–574a, 583d–585b; 586a–d; *Phlb.* 45b–47c). Their ascetic and pessimistic attitude is a radical reaction to the oversensitivity of the hedonists, which (the anti-hedonists believe) drives the hedonists to constantly intensify the pleasure and pain they are undergoing, so that they cannot exit the vicious cycle of oscillating between the two evils.

Socrates wants to reveal to Protarchus that the pursuit of pleasure actually leads to a painful life for the hedonists, but he does not tell him directly. Rather, he presents the anti-hedonists as allies of the hedonists in a cooperative investigation into the *nature* of pleasure. As Socrates announces: “Now, it is your task, Protarchus, to answer these *δυσχερεῖς*!” (44e3–4).⁴⁵ Just at this point, Socrates' motivation for highlighting the anti-hedonists as experts in research on *nature* becomes transparent (also cf. *περὶ φύσεως ἡγείται τις ζητεῖν* 59a2). As he tells Protarchus, it is the *δυσχερεῖς* who provide a principle for researching the *nature* of any feature (*ὄτουσὺν εἶδους τὴν φύσιν ἰδεῖν* 44d9–e1), according to which we can understand X-ness by looking at the nature of an instance that realizes X-ness to the highest degree (44d7–e4). This principle is theoretically and dramatically significant, because it marks a turning point in Socrates and Protarchus's inquiry into the nature of pleasure.⁴⁶ Following the naturalists, they start considering the phenomena of pathological and sexual pleasures (*Phlb.* 45c1–47b7), which, as the strongest and most intensive kinds (*τὰς ἀκροτάτας καὶ σφοδροτάτας*) of pleasure, are supposed to realize and represent its essence in the highest degree.⁴⁷ This is the new approach that Socrates urges Protarchus to adopt by investigating the *δυσχέρεια* of the naturalists (44d8) in order to make sense of their *δυσχεράσματα*, i.e. everything relevant to their hostile attitude toward pleasure or, more precisely, the content of and the reasons for their anti-hedonistic tenet.

⁴⁵ For the use of the anti-hedonists as allies, cf. *τούτοις μὲν οὖν ταῦτα ἄν προσχρήσαιο* at *Phlb.* 44d1, and *ὥσπερ συμμάχους* at 44d7, cf. 47a3–9.

⁴⁶ Cf. *εἰ καὶ τὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς γένος ἰδεῖν ἦντινά ποτ' ἔχει φύσιν βουληθεῖμεν* 44e7–8.

⁴⁷ For the parallel between Socrates' description of pleasures here and pleasures in the Hippocratic treatises, see Peponi 2002.

Here Socrates is making a dialectical move. Just as Aristotle resorts to the *physiologi* in his discussion of the attractiveness of physical pleasure (*Eth. Nic.* 1154b7–13) and the therapy of *akrasia* (*Eth. Nic.* 1147b6–9), Plato appeals to Philebus’s enemies as assistants—who are also experts in the natural sciences and thus should be experts in *physical* pleasures—in order to show why pleasures of a particular kind are essentially impure and painful (44d7–46a11). The pain-dependent nature they discover and underscore in these pleasures offers Socrates a forceful tool in his attack against the hedonists, which he himself makes explicit (*Phlb.* 51a3–9):

Although I am not really in agreement with those who hold that all pleasures are merely release from pain (λυπῶν παύλαν), I nevertheless treat them as witnesses (μάρτυσι), as I said before, to prove that there are certain kinds that only seem to be pleasures, but are not so in reality, and furthermore, that there are others that have the appearance of enormous size and great variety, but which are in truth commingled with pain (συμπεφυρμένας ὁμοῦ λύπαις) or with respite from severe pains (ἀναπαύσεσιν ὀδυνῶν) suffered by soul and body.⁴⁸

Socrates’ advice to investigate the *δυσχέρεια* of the naturalists is not only intended to rebut two forms of hedonism: the radical version represented by Philebus and the moderate version represented by Protarchus. He also wants to take this opportunity to provide a deeper diagnosis of the problematic reasoning of the anti-hedonists. In particular, he wants to show that their *δυσχέρεια* is based on an incomplete understanding of pleasure, specifically their ignorance of the existence of pure pleasure, which is beyond the conception of pleasure exclusively as a release of pain (cf. *Phlb.* 51a3–53c2). Just as in the Academic debate, Aristotle takes advantage of the *διαφορά* between Xenocrates and Speusippus in his criticism of both groups (see section 2). Plato’s introduction of the *δυσχερεῖς* in his confrontation with the hedonists also aims at a middle path, via a dialectical play, namely, the examination of the potential and limits of both the hedonistic and anti-hedonistic trends.⁴⁹ During this dialectical process, it is remarkable that Socrates—regardless of whether he is treating the anti-hedonists as allies in his battle against the hedonists or as a polemical target in his attempt to save the reputation of pleasure—*never* mentions or uses philosophical *ἀπορία* that could be raised by the *δυσχερεῖς* or implied in their theories. The *δυσχέρεια* in which Socrates claims to be interested is rather a stubborn and radical naturalistic attitude

⁴⁸ All translations of Plato are borrowed from Cooper (1997), with modification when marked.

⁴⁹ Cf. ἐξ ἄμφοῖν τοῖν λόγοιν σκεψάμενοι τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῆς (sc. pleasure), 44d4.

that is the foundation of their idiosyncratic anti-hedonism. Since no aporetic method is employed here in Socrates' attempt to provide a proper evaluation of pleasure, his advice to pay attention to the *δυσχεράσματα/δυσχέρεια* cannot be interpreted as a desire to pursue all of the *theoretical difficulties* associated with the anti-hedonists of this type.

Accordingly, it is worthwhile to revisit the argumentative strategy of the *Philebus* as well as the entire Academic debate over pleasure. I am not claiming that the *Philebus* cannot allude to the intra-Academic controversy. Rather, my argument aims to show that, even if this debate affects Plato's treatment of pleasure in this dialogue, the dialectical play he designs is not a mirror image of what some have found in *Eth. Nic. X*, namely, the binary antagonism between Eudoxus and Speusippus.⁵⁰ In fact, this is even an incorrect presentation of Aristotle's account of the hedonistic debate in the Academy. Although in *Eth. Nic. X* Aristotle focuses on these two prominent figures in developing his own view, he also includes a more moderate anti-hedonist group, I call them the pragmatists, who do not regard pleasure as essentially bad, but believe that a negative evaluation of pleasure is *practically* better for living a better life (1172a29–33). In *Eth. Nic. VII*, Aristotle provides a more systematic account of the hedonistic debate; it seems to include but is not confined to the Academic views and moves from the radical anti-hedonists, who think pleasure is in no way good, via a less radical group of anti-hedonists, who believe pleasure is rarely good, to the non-hedonists, who only exclude pleasure from the best things (1152b8–12).⁵¹

In short, the constellation of the intra-school controversy over pleasure—in which Xenocrates, Heraclides of Pontus, and Philippus of Opus might have also participated—is much more fruitful and complex than the picture that focuses narrowly on the hedonistic Eudoxus and the anti-hedonistic Speusippus. Aristotle is at liberty to present different aspects of the Academic debate and even go freely beyond this controversy. Whereas *Eth. Nic. X* seems to be chiefly concerned with individuals in the Academic debate, the *Eth. Nic. VII*, by contrast, discusses more diversified groups including those with Academic and non-Academic views. From this angle, Plato's presentation of his interlocutors in the *Philebus* is more like *Eth. Nic. VII* than *Eth. Nic. X*.

⁵⁰ For criticisms of Eudoxus as the main target of the *Philebus*, see Philippson 1925: 460–68; Karpf 1933: 23–25; Frede 1997: 390–402.

⁵¹ In the same treatise, Aristotle also mentions a group of hedonists who seem to reconcile the Platonic determination of pleasure as *γένεσις* with Aristotle's determination of pleasure as *ἐνέργεια* by classifying *ἐνέργεια* as subordinated to, or synonymous with, *γένεσις* (*Eth. Nic.* 1153a15–17).

Rather than looking for specific historical people behind Plato's characters, it seems better to assume that, just as Protarchus and Philebus embody different *types* of hedonists, the δυσχερεῖς symbolize a particular *type* of anti-hedonist. In fact, it is characteristic for Plato to portray collective groups in such a vivid way, as if they shared a single ethos.⁵²

5. Δυσχέρ-WORDS IN GREEK LITERARY TRADITION

If it is not Speusippus who fixes or popularizes the objective/metaphorical use of δυσχέρεια, the remaining question for a perceptive reader is how to account for its frequent occurrence in Aristotle. To address this, I offer an evolutionary account of this shift. This account will further support the conclusion above and shift away from the question of how Plato and Aristotle use this family of terms to the broader question of how the change of semantics reflect changes of thought in the rhetorical/philosophical discourses of Athens in the fifth and fourth century B.C.E.

In fact, Schofield has paid attention to a few traces of the objective use of δυσχερ-words prior to Aristotle, yet these uses, together with the other unacknowledged instances, are eclipsed by the more dramatic story surrounding Plato, Speusippus and Aristotle.⁵³ Nor can the standard lexica (LSJ, DGE, BrillDAG) address questions concerning the origin of the δυσχέρεια as a philosophical term.⁵⁴ In order to gain a reliable view of the semantic

⁵² Placing the δυσχερεῖς aside, such a list at least includes the subtlers (κομψοί) in *Phlb* 53c6, the misologues in *Phd.* 90b4–d7 and the materialists called δεινοὶ ἄνδρες in *Soph.* 246b4. The parallel between δεινοὶ ἄνδρες in the *Sophist* and δεινοῦς λεγομένους τὰ περὶ φύσιν in *Phlb.* 44b9 confirms, from another point of view, the identity of Philebus's enemies as a particular group of naturalists while evincing Plato's similar ironic attitude towards their belief.

⁵³ Schofield (1971: 7) mentions Plato's *Republic* (δυσχέρειαν, 502d5), *Hippias Minor* (δυσχερέστατον τοῦ λόγου, 369b9), and Isocrates' *Philipp.* 29, *Panath.* 117; *Ep.* 1.3, 4.8.

⁵⁴ All the dictionaries underrate the frequency of the objective use of δυσχερ-words in classical antiquity, especially philosophical uses. BrillDAG seems to adopt the sporadic references to the objective use in LSJ, but excludes a few instances of their philosophical use already found in LSJ (e.g. δυσχέρεια in Arist. *Metaph.* 995a33 and 1005b22). DGE includes more instances of the objective use, yet most of them are post-classical (e.g. Luc. *Dom.* 32; Plu. 2.654b; Plot. 4.8.2; Gr. Naz. M. 35.1025B). Moreover, it is misleading to group Arist. *Part. An.* 645a15 (μὴ δυσχεραίνειν... τὴν περὶ τῶν ἀτιμοτέρων ζώων ἐπίσκεψιν, "not be disgusted at the research of the humbler animals") with *Metaph.* 984a29 (ἐδυσχέραναν ἑαυτοῖς, "raise difficulties to themselves / puzzle themselves") in the sense of "difícular, hacer difícil, poner reparos" in DGE. In addition to *por-* as path, ἀπορία can also etymologically come from *por-* as supply or abundance. So ἀπορία denotes a lack or scarcity (*cf.* LSJ s.v.). This aspect is only loosely related with philosophical ἀπορία in Aristotle.

development of these terms, we need a more thorough examination of the available evidence, taking into consideration the semantic nuances in different genres and contexts.

The assimilation of *δυσχερ*-words with *ἀπορία* was actually much more present in classical antiquity than the moderate references of the lexica suggest. The *δυσχερ*-terms are also seen in conjunction with notions of hindrance or obstacles (as in Euripides *Or.* 605–6, with the word *ἐμποδών* which denotes nothing but the literal sense of *ἀπορία*, referring to an impasse).⁵⁵ The same association occurs in Demosthenes, who states (*Olynthiaca* 3.7.5):

ἐπράξαμεν ἡμεῖς κάκεινοι πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἰρήνην· ἦν τοῦθ' ὥσπερ ἐμπόδιμά
τι τῷ Φιλίππῳ καὶ δυσχερές, πόλιν μεγάλην ἐφορμεῖν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ καιροῖς
διηλλαγμένην πρὸς ἡμᾶς.

We had negotiated a peace with them. This, just as some sort of hindrance, annoyed Philippos (ὥσπερ ἐμπόδιμά τι τῷ Φιλίππῳ καὶ δυσχερές), for here was a powerful state, reconciled to us and watching for him to give them an opening (trans. by Vince, modified).⁵⁶

Since Demosthenes uses *δυσχερές* and *ἐμπόδιμα* interchangeably, it comes as no surprise that he also couples *δυσχερής* with *χαλεπός* (*Epitaphius* 24).⁵⁷ The same configuration is found in Isocrates as well.⁵⁸ It is interesting to see that in his lost play *Hypsipyle* Euripides uses *δυσχερές* in reference to a series of disasters a traveler might face when one goes abroad, including *ἀπορίαν ἔχων ὅπη τράπηται* (“being at loss about however he should turn,” Fr. 752h Kannicht). Again in Isocrates, we encounter a close parallel: *ἀποροῦντες ὅποι τραπώμεθα, καὶ πάσας τὰς οἰκήσεις δυσχεραίνοντες* (“we are at loss about where to turn, and in trouble about wherever we dwell,” *Plataicus* 46). Similarly, when the sophist Alcidas wants to draw attention to the huge gap between recitation of a written text and impromptu speech, he couples the term *δυσχεραίνειν* with *ἀπορίας* in referring to the difficulties someone

⁵⁵ ἀεὶ γυναῖκες ἐμποδῶν ταῖς συμφοραῖς/ ἔφυσαν ἀνδρῶν πρὸς τὸ δυσχερέστερον
Women are always a hindrance to the affairs/ of men and make life harder to manage
(trans. by Kovacs, modified).

⁵⁶ For Demosthenes' works I follow OCT (Dilts).

⁵⁷ ὥσπερ γάρ, εἴ τις ἐκ τοῦ καθεστηκότος κόσμου τὸ φῶς ἐξέλοι, δυσχερής καὶ χαλεπὸς ἅπας ὁ λειπόμενος ἂν ἡμῖν βίος γένοιτο (“Just as, if the light of day were removed out of this universe of ours, all the remnant of life would be harsh and difficult,” trans. Witt, modified).

⁵⁸ He uses *δυσχέρεια* to signify what he just describes as *χαλεπὸν* (*Philip.* 11–12). For Isocrates, I follow the Budé edition (Mathieu/ Brémond).

has to face in providing an *extempore* presentation to which he has not been accustomed.⁵⁹

Although the objective use of *δυσχέρεια* in rhetorical practices usually has a broader semantic scope than its usage in Plato and Aristotle (i.e. not limited to epistemological or metaphysical issues), this word family, like *ἀπορία*, can equally function as objection or defense in any kind of debate. Euripides, who was considerably influenced by contemporary sophistic thought, mentions—“τί σοι τὸ δυσχερές” (“what is the difficulty for you?”) or “μὼν οὐ πέποιθας” (“surely you trust [my words]?”)—in the quarrel between Jason and Medea, contrasting *δυσχερές* with the effect of persuasion (cf. *πέποιθας*), one of the most significant concepts in the rhetorical tradition.⁶⁰ This kind of *δυσχέρεια* does not only refer to difficulties concerning a concrete topic, but also, in Plato and Aristotle, involves various kinds of dilemmas, in particular, paradoxes involving equality of contrary reasoning (see section 6 below). Demosthenes (*Lept.* 121.1–2), for example, raises *δυσχερές* about the policy of Leptines (*Lept.* 121.1), which results in a dilemma (εἰς τοιαύτην ἄγειν ἀνάγκην 121.3) of choosing between *two equally unpalatable* options for the polis: either demolishing the gradation of honors or being blamed for ingratitude (121.4–5).⁶¹ In the *Panathenaicus*, Isocrates uses the same *topos* applying τὰς δυσχερείας to the dilemmas faced by the Athenians between two disadvantageous options (δυοῖν πραγμάτων): either doing something bad or suffering it; either ruling unjustly or being subject to the Spartans (*Panath.* 117). Similarly, Andocides criticizes the Athenians because they are inclined to entangle themselves in a variety of suspicions and dilemmas (ὑπονοεῖν εἰώθατε καὶ δυσχεραίνειν, 35.4).

In the context of political and rhetorical rivalry, the *δυσχέρεια* involved are of course mainly concerned with legal, political or ethical issues. To raise a *δυσχέρεια* means to establish a humiliating argument that compels your opponent to face an embarrassing dilemma. Its subjective dimension ap-

⁵⁹ Fr. 16 Avezzi: “For whenever someone has been accustomed to work out speeches in detail and to construct sentences paying attention to both precise wording and rhythm and puts over his interpretation making use of a slow mental process, it is inevitable that, whenever this man comes to extempore speeches, doing the opposite of what he is used to, he should have a mind *full of helplessness* (ἀπορίας) and panic and should *find difficulty in everything* (πρὸς ἅπαντα μὲν δυσχεραίνειν), as those with speech impediments, never using a free readiness of wit to execute his speeches with flexibility and in a way that people like.” (trans. by Muir, modified).

⁶⁰ Eur. *Med.* 733–4 Diggle: {Αι.} μὼν οὐ πέποιθας; ἢ τί σοι τὸ δυσχερές;/ {Μη.} πέποιθα.

⁶¹ For the rhetorical *topos* called *dilemmaton* here, see Kremmydas 2012: 393.

pears more palatable in such contexts than in philosophical texts, because to stimulate and manipulate emotions, I venture to claim, is usually allowed in arguments of this type, which differ from what a good argument is supposed to be in the Academic tradition. It is presumably the emotional unpleasantness raised by such dilemmas that elicits discussion—laudatory or hostile—about the practice of making an objection by creating a paradox. Those who raise a *δυσχέρεια* are thus degraded as twisting empty words in their dilemma-producing arguments, a charge levelled in particular against the sophists and their followers. In fact, Kleist, in a paper rarely discussed today, noticed the subtle relation between *δυσχέρεια* and sophistry in Demosthenes' *Against Leptines*.⁶² In his criticism of the law supported by Leptines that abolishes all exemptions from liturgies, Demosthenes characterizes his opponents as *δυσχερείς*, that is, those who *twist words* to misrepresent reality (*ἐπὶ μὴ προσήκοντα πράγματα τοὺς λόγους μεταφέρῃ*, *Lept.* 112–13). The adjective *δυσχερείς*, as Kremmydas (2012: 385) points out, is notably employed as synonymous with *δεινοί*, a popular term in the sophistic movement denoting someone endowed with outstanding rhetorical skill. In a similar way, in the speech *Against Sophists*, Isocrates describes the sophists of the early generation (*οἱ πρὸ ἡμῶν γενόμενοι*) as those who “promised to teach law court skills and picked out *the most difficult terms* (*τὸ δυσχερέστατον τῶν ὀνομάτων*), which the enemies, not the supporters, of this education ought to have used” (*C. soph.* 19).⁶³ It is interesting to see that Aristotle, in the *Sophistic Refutations*, also points out that participants in a dialectical debate should guard against the *δυσχέρεια* caused by the equivocality of words (*Soph. el.* 175a16). All the scenes can be well summarized by Demosthenes' aphorism-like expression: *πολλὰ καὶ δυσχερῆ διὰ τοῦνομα συμβέβηκεν* (“many problems come about due to word”, *Contra Boeotum I.* 19.5, my translation).

The above references offer an insight into the significant role that the sophistic tradition played in the formation of the objective sense of *δυσχέρεια* and its cognates. In Plato's *Euthydemus*, we see that Euthydemus and Dionysodorus deliberately push their interlocutors into a helpless aporetic state by overwhelming them with paradoxical, even nonsensical, reasoning, a sophistic technique presumably traceable to the *antilogia* of Protagoras (DL 9.51). Such practices explain why the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander* can twice associate *δυσχέρεια* with *ἀντιλέγειν* (18.2; 18.3 Fuhrmann), using *τοὺς τῶν ἀντιλέγειν μελλόντων* (“those who are about to raise objections”) as a

⁶² Kleist 1884: 598–9.

⁶³ Trans. by Mirhady and Too 2000, modified.

synonym for τῶν μελλόντων δυσχεραίνεσθαι (“those who are about to raise difficulties,” 18.3). His expression, λύσεις τὴν ἐπιφερομένην δυσχέρειαν (“you will untie the δυσχέρεια that is imposed on you,” 18.3) seems to be nothing but a rhetorical counterpart to the Aristotelian λύσις of ἀπορία (“untying of ἀπορία”).⁶⁴

Phenomenologically considered, the sophistic ἀπορία/δυσχέρεια does not appear much different from the philosophical ἀπορία/δυσχέρεια, as Aristotle tells us:

In a sophistic ἀπορία, “mind (διάνοια) is bound fast (δέδεται) when it will not rest because the conclusion is displeasing (ἀρέσκειν), and cannot advance (προϊέναι) because it cannot refute the argument” (*Eth. Nic.* 1146a24–27, modified).

Due to their affective overtone, δυσχερ-words are suitable for expressing the embarrassing and uncomfortable state of someone who is puzzled by sophistic arguments in which semantic polysemy and ambiguity play a considerable role. In accordance with Isocrates’ and Demosthenes’ criticisms of the sophistic δυσχέρεια, it might not be coincidental that both Plato and Aristotle—perhaps deliberately—use δυσχέρεια and its cognates when they take issue with Gorgias and Protagoras. Leaving aside the above-mentioned δυσχερείας raised by Aristotle to Protagoras (*cf.* δυσχεραίνειν *Soph. el.* 175a16; ἐδυσχεραίνον *Rh.* 1402a25), Socrates likewise questions Gorgias in examining the sophist’s definition of rhetoric: “somebody might take you up, if he wanted to make difficulties (δυσχεραίνειν) in the *logoi*?” (*Grg.* 450e6–7). The δυσχέρεια in question forces Gorgias either to give up his definition of rhetoric as the craft which exerts the influence through *logos* (ἢ διὰ λόγου τὸ κύρος ἔχουσα *Grg.* 450e5–6), or to classify arithmetic also under his definition, which is obviously absurd. The same strategy is employed by Socrates in the *Theaetetus* to criticize (δυσχεραίνειν 169d4) Protagoras’ *Homo-Mensura* doctrine (169d2–8). The difficulties he reveals aim to compel the sophist either to acknowledge the equal authority of each individual with respect to truth or to withdraw his pretension of expertise in wisdom.

6. Δυσχέρεια AND ἀπορία: FROM SOPHISTRY TO PHILOSOPHY

It is reasonable to assume that the assimilation of δυσχέρεια and ἀπορία in Aristotle is also indebted to the activities of the sophists, who are notori-

⁶⁴ See *Gen. corr.* 321b11–12; *Met.* 354b22; *De an.* 422b28; *Metaph.* 1045a22; *Eth. Nic.* 1146b7–8; *Pol.* 1281b22, 1282a33.

ously skilled at manipulating emotion in terms of paradox and wordplay. Alexander of Aphrodisias seems to have prepared the way for my hypothesis when he used “the sophistic annoyance” (τὰς σοφιστικὰς ἐνοχλήσεις at *Int.* 17a36–37) to gloss over the dialectical difficulties (τὰς λογικὰς δυσχερείας) in Aristotle (*In Met.* 269.30–31 Hayduck). This is not the whole story, however. It is more important to see that what is playful among the sophists can be transformed into something serious in philosophy. Just as Plato and Aristotle manage to “purify” the sophistic eristic, they seem also to “purify” the sophistic δυσχέρεια, bringing it from the field of *antilogia* to the Socratic *elenchus* and the Aristotelian dialectic.⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, Plato had already used the δυσχερ-family frequently in an objective way (14 occurrences, see Table III in the appendix below) to cover a wide range of issues: epistemological and metaphysical questions as well as practical issues such as legislation.⁶⁶

In the eponymous dialogue, for instance, Meno asks Socrates why he feels the need to question (δυσχεραίνεις) the thesis that virtue is knowledge (89d1–2). In the *Statesman*, the problem of the division of weaving, the story of the reversal of the universe, and the expression of the being of non-being are all characterized as involving δυσχέρεια (*Pol.* 286b7–10). Remarkably, the question of how non-being is/exists is a problem with a clearly paradoxical nature. A similar echo is found in both the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*. After having explained the possibility of false judgment by appealing to the metaphor of the aviary, Socrates claims: “the things we found troublesome (ἐδυσχεραίνομεν) before stand no longer in our way” (*Tht.* 199c1–2). The δυσχέρεια in question is the not knowing what one knows (199c5–6), which is reminiscent of the above δυσχέρεια: the change is the same and not the same (*Soph.* 256a10–11; cf. 257a8–9). This characteristic lends a clue for making sense of the so-called dialectical difficulties (λογικὰς δυσχερείας) in *Metaph.* 1005b19–22 and 1087b18–20, mentioned above. For to meet the challenge from a δυσχέρεια of this kind, a basic principle seems to be tacitly presupposed, that is, an attribute *x* cannot belong and not belong to the same subject simultaneously in the same respect. *Metaph.* K6.1063b24–32 tells us that the δυσχερῆ affects the question of whether and in what sense contraries would be predicated of the same subject and the thesis that all statements cannot be

⁶⁵ Cf. the noble sophist in *Pl. Soph.* 231b7–8.

⁶⁶ In his authentic works, δυσχερ-words in Plato occur 53 times. Thus, their objective uses occupy 26.4% of their total occurrences. The dominance of its verbal form (57%) suggests that he seems to use the word-cluster in a less technical way than in Aristotle, where the nouns (54.3%) and the substantivized forms of adjective (31.4%) prevail (see Table II below).

both false and true. In other words, due to its paradoxical nature, to raise and avoid δυσχέρεια amounts to a battle over the coherence of a certain thesis or doctrine. From this point of view, I claim, Plato's metaphysics (in the *Sophist*) and epistemology (in the *Theaetetus*) include a careful treatment of these δυσχερείας, while Aristotle's establishment of the law of non-contradiction seems also somehow to be indebted to their solution. If this is on the right track, then Ross's contention—that the λογικὰς δυσχερείας in Aristotle denotes non-sense “quibbling” (Ross 1924: 471)—does not seem to pay due attention to the extent to which Aristotle is influenced by tradition and in which respect he recasts the concept to suit his own purposes.

In Plato, just as δυσχέρεια and άπορία can signify that an argument has been driven into straits, interruption and even failure, both can also play a positive role in dialectical discussions by signaling a turning point in a dispute or acting as a catalyst for further inquiry. For if any δυσχέρεια in X is revealed, it implies that either the proponent of X in the debate fails, or it forces the participants in the conversation to change their arguments or the subject matter in question. Thus, because of the δυσχερῆ, Protagoras was not willing to answer Socrates' questions any more (*Prt.* 333d1–3). In the *Politicus*, on the contrary, the δυσχέρεια experienced by the young Socrates in political issues urges him and his interlocutor to engage in a new inquiry on whether it is possible and even better to rule without laws (294a1–2). Like άπορία, δυσχέρεια often has an epistemic and a psychological component. It not only signifies a state of being at loss, it also includes the awareness of such an ignorance or lack. In the *Lysis*, accordingly, Socrates and his partner set out to challenge the thesis that the essence of friendship is based on likeness only when they come to realize the difficulty (δυσχεραίνω 214e2) implied in the Homeric notion that “God always draws the like unto the like” (*Od.* 17. 218).

We should not forget that both άπορία and δυσχέρεια are somehow metaphorically employed when they refer to theoretical difficulties in philosophical context. Whereas the former literally denotes an impasse in walking or the absence of a path, which is a characterization of a state of action rather than a property of some objects, δυσχέρεια originally refers to a negative psycho-physical state: revulsion, disgust and abhorrence towards somebody or something. The affinity between the two terms lies essentially in that both Plato and Aristotle admit that there is a correlative negative experience when someone succumbs to theoretical difficulties in conversation.⁶⁷ When

⁶⁷ For the association of άπορία with physical pain or emotional discomfort, see Pl. *Men.* 79e7–80b7; also cf. λύπαις and όδυνών, *Phlb.* 51a7–9; άπορίας τε και άλγηδόνας *Rep.* 465c2; νόσους *Ti.* 91c6; also see *Soph. Phil.* 900: δυσχέρεια του νοσήματος; *Eur. Hip.*

someone is in *δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία*, such a state is caused by an awareness of the *δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία* with which one's stance is fraught. Hence, I believe that the semantic transformation of *δυσχέρεια*—a process from a negative emotional state to theoretical difficulty—is paralleled by the semantic transformation of *ἀπορία*, namely from impasse in walking to theoretical difficulty. The only difference between the two groups is that the sense of *ἀπορία* depends on the sense of being perplexed or at a loss, while the phenomenology of the mental state corresponding to *δυσχέρεια* as theoretical puzzle has been constrained by the ordinary meaning of *δυσχέρεια*. In other words, we are more at liberty to conceive of the phenomenal feeling of one who falls into *ἀπορία* than of someone experiencing *δυσχέρεια*.

Although *ἀπορία* and *δυσχέρεια* have undergone a similar process of semantic objectivization, the shift from psychological states to objective puzzles/difficulties should not (as many scholars assume) be viewed as an either-or shift, nor should it be teleologically understood as a conceptual progression from Plato to Aristotle or from early Plato to late Plato. It is not the case that the early Plato used *ἀπορία* in its psychological sense, namely as a confused and embarrassed mental state elicited by Socrates' *elenchus*, whereas the later Plato or Aristotle then fixed this expression as a *terminus technicus* in argumentation, applying it exclusively to an objective problem to be discussed, analyzed or resolved in theoretical research, divorced from its initial psychological connotations.⁶⁸ This hypothesis touches upon some truth, yet is in general misleading. Both in the case of *δυσχέρεια* and of *ἀπορία*, as this article has shown, the objective use of the word is not opposed to, or isolated from, its subjective use; rather, the two aspects are interconnected with each other in such a way that both the Platonic and Aristotelian dialectics—for which the aporetic method is indispensable—are closely bound up with the oral discussions within the Academy. In such a situation, throwing a *δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία* at your interlocutor also often means putting your interlocutor into a psychological *δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία*. Conversely, the reason for being in *δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία*, distress or paralysis of mind, is that the subject is puzzled about a *δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία* in which some dilemmas are involved. The objective use of these words can be seen in early Plato (see Table III in ap-

484–85: *δυσχερέστερος ... καί σοι μᾶλλον ἀλγίων*. The *δυσχέρεια* describes the psychological state of Socrates when he deals with the problem (*δυσχέρεια*, cf. also *Tht.* 199c) of the possibility of false judgments (*Tht.* 195c1–4). In Aristotle's *Aporienbuch*, *ἀπορία* in 995a30, 996a5, 996a12, 998a20, 1001a30 are associated more with psychological states, whereas the other instances more denote objective difficulties (cf. Madigan 1999: xx).

⁶⁸ For this traditional view, cf. Matthews 2003: 125–36; Geiger 2005: 66–67.

pendix), while its subjective connotation does not disappear in the later Plato and Aristotle.⁶⁹ In his general methodological remarks in *Metaph.* 995a31–36, as mentioned, Aristotle already underlines the subjective experiential aspect of *ἀπορία* and *δυσχέρεια*, borrowing Plato’s classical depiction of the psychological *ἀπορία* in the *Meno*; moreover, he explicitly criticizes those who simply define *ἀπορία* as “equality of contrary reasonings” (ισότης ἐναντίων λογισμῶν *Top.* 145b2) on the grounds that they do not attach due weight to its subjective and experiential dimension (145b2–20).⁷⁰ Thus, Aristotle has no scruple about playing with the double aspects of *δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία*. In *Metaphysics* N, for instance, he declares that those who are not easily pleased (τις μὴ λίαν εὐχέρης, *Metaph.* N3. 1090b14) could investigate (ἐπιζητήσκειν ἅν) all kinds of mathematical objects. Against the dialectical background of MN, this is another way of stating that after someone has realized or fallen into the difficulty (*δυσχέρεια/ἀπορία*) concerning X, he would further consider the issues about X.

7. EPILOGUE

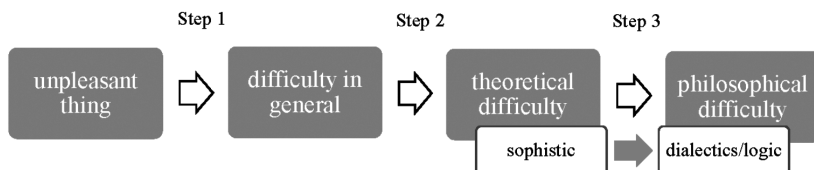
To conclude, the philosophical use of *δυσχέρεια* in Aristotle, as I have shown, can be explained by a continuous semantic development on the one hand, and by the impact of the sophists and the Academy on the other. This development reflects a well-known process of semantic objectivization, which presumably included three steps. First, from a subjective experience to something that can give rise to such an experience: because of this shift, it was possible to use *δυσχερ*-words to characterize the feature of an object itself. A *δυσχέρεια* of an object consisted in being able to arouse the corresponding negative feeling in a particular subject, which then closely associated *δυσχέρεια* with difficulty of any kind. They are difficulties insofar as they can cause those who are facing

⁶⁹ Politis (2006: 88–109) has argued for a similar view by examining Plato’s use of *ἀπορία*. My discussion of *δυσχέρεια* in Plato and Aristotle reinforces his conclusion even if we cannot draw a clear-cut distinction between cathartic and zetetic *ἀπορία* in Aristotle as he suggests.

⁷⁰ The context of Aristotle’s criticism is remarkable (*Top.* 145b1–20). He does not only criticize the definition of *ἀπορία*, but couples it with other theses that commit a similar mistake in his eyes, namely neglect of the soul, the understanding of pain as violent disruption of naturally conjoined parts, or the definition of health as a balance of hot and cold elements. This criticism echoes Plato’s attack on the naturalistic understanding of pleasure and pain in the *Philebus*, probably an Academic reaction to early Greek thought. One can speculate further that the definition of *ἀπορία* might be held by Plato’s predecessors, perhaps the sophists. For pleasure in the early physical tradition cf. Gosling and Tylor 1982: 16–25; Wolfsdorf 2013: 29–39.

them discomfort, no matter if their theoretical potential is being realized or not. In this sense, the boundary between the subjective and objective aspects of δυσχερ-words is not always clear-cut. In these cases, δυσχερ-words could refer to something unpleasant as well as something, from a more objective point of view, difficult, troublesome, or objectionable.⁷¹

Since δυσχερ-words could denote difficulty of any kind or difficulty in an unspecified sense, it could be reasonably used as *theoretical* ἀπορία, a particular type of difficulty. This was step two, namely from difficulty in general to a specific one. By the same token, since it can refer to theoretical difficulties, it is possible to constrain its semantic scope further, that is, in the sense of a particular theoretical difficulty such as a *philosophical* ἀπορία in a dialectical context. In this narrower sense, it referred not only to an intricate question to be solved, but also to a logical inconsistency or doctrinal objection. Making δυσχέρεια, therefore, can amount to offering a demanding task or laying out the theoretical weakness of your opponents. This was the third step. Since we have seen that the objective use of δυσχέρεια was frequently found in rhetorical and philosophical texts, where it was often associated with paradoxical reasoning or even the sophisms built on the ambiguity of items, it is reasonable to assume that the third phase might involve a shift from rhetoric/sophistic δυσχέρεια to philosophical/dialectical δυσχέρεια in a Platonic or Aristotelian sense. Hence the whole process can be illustrated by the following schema:



⁷¹ Demosthenes complains that anyone who attempts improper enterprises for the sake of aggrandizement is accustomed not to thinking of the δυσχερέστατα of his task, but to what he will achieve if successful (*In Aristocratem* 114.7–9). The superlative δυσχερέστατα seems to oscillate between things unpleasant and things difficult/problematic. For some similar uses of δυσχερ-words, see *Lys.* 24.6: “ὑπὸ τῇ δυσχερεστάτῃ γενέσθαι τύχῃ”; see also *Aeschin.* 3.18: “πολλὰ καὶ δυσχερῆ κατὰ τῆς πόλεως διεξήει”; [*Rh. Al.*] 36.3; Demosth. *Contra Eubulidem* 15.7; *In Aristogitonem I*, 77.4–5 and *Epist.* 3.7: “ἀκριβῶς δὲ διεξιέναι δυσχερὲς κρίνω; Pittacus’ saying: “Συνετῶν μὲν ἀνδρῶν, πρὶν γενέσθαι τὰ δυσχερῆ, προνοῆσαι ὅπως μὴ γένηται· ἀνδρείων δὲ, γενόμενα εὖ θέσθαι” (DL 1.78 Dorandi).

From a linguistic point of view, *δυσχέρεια* underwent a natural development from something psychophysically unpalatable, via something figuratively unpalatable, to something unpalatable in a technical sense. This process fits into a regular semantic-change mechanism as depicted by Traugott and Dasher in 2002, according to which the change of the meaning of words can be initiated by pragmatic factors in communicative processes, which then leads to a semantic polysemy due to conventionalization. In other words, a word with the meaning α can obtain the meaning β , which, as a pragmatic implication, is associated with the meaning of α in a certain way (as its cause, its part, its effect, etc.). Although, from a historical point of view, such a process might take a long time, nevertheless in the present case, the intellectual revolution in classical antiquity seems to have accelerated, and substantially contributed to, the semantic transformation.

APPENDIX

Table I: Thematic Distribution of *δυσχερ*-words in Aristotle

Reference	Texts
Unspecified	<i>Top.</i> 160a23; <i>Soph. el.</i> 175a16; <i>Metaph.</i> 995a33, 1076a15; <i>Eth. Nic.</i> 1145a2–7; <i>Pol.</i> 1335a2
Naturalists	Atomists: <i>Cael.</i> 309a29 Empedocles: <i>De an.</i> 410a27; <i>Resp.</i> 474a24; <i>Gen an.</i> 740b15 Heraclitus: <i>Cael.</i> 304a22; <i>Metaph.</i> 1005b22 Heraclitus and Anaxagoras: <i>Metaph.</i> 1063b32 Monists: <i>Metaph.</i> 984a29 Protagoras: <i>Rh.</i> 1402a25 Pythagoreans: <i>Metaph.</i> 1083b9 Unspecified: <i>Ph.</i> 225a30; <i>Metaph.</i> 1067b35
Specified	Academics
	Plato: <i>Pol.</i> 1261a10, 1262a25, 1263a22 Plato and Platonists: <i>Cael.</i> 304a22; <i>Metaph.</i> 1085a8, 1085b6, 1085b17, 1086b7, 1086b12, 1091b1 Theorists of the Form Numbers: <i>Metaph.</i> 1081b37, 1086a4 (seen by Speusippus); 1090a8 (seen by Speusippus) Theorists of the Indefinite Dyad: <i>Metaph.</i> 1087b20, 1088b30, 1088b31 Theorists of the first principle: <i>Metaph.</i> 1090a37 (avoided by Speusippus), 1091b22 (avoided by Speusippus)

Table II: Linguistic Distribution of the objective use of *δυσχερ* words in Aristotle

Treatises	Noun	Verb	Adjective	Total
<i>Cael.</i>	1		1	2
<i>De. An.</i>	1			1
<i>Eth. Nic.</i>			1	1
<i>Gen an.</i>	1			1
<i>Metaph.</i>	11	3	7	21
<i>Ph.</i>			1	1
<i>Pol.</i>	4			4
<i>Rh.</i>		1		1
<i>Resp.</i>	1			1
<i>SE</i>		1		1

Top.			1	1
Total	19	5	11	35
Ratio	54.3%	14.3%	31.4%	100%

Table III Linguistic Distribution of the objective use of duscher-words in Plato

Dialogues	Reference	Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb	Total
<i>Ly.</i>	214e2		1			1
<i>Prt.</i>	333d2			1		1
<i>Grg.</i>	450e7		1			1
<i>Hip. Min.</i>	369b9			1		1
<i>Men.</i>	89d1		1			1
<i>Rep.</i>	502d5	1				1
<i>Tht.</i>	169d4 199c1		2			2
<i>Pol.</i>	286b7, b10; 294a2		1	1	1	3
<i>Soph.</i>	156a11; 157a8		2			2
<i>Leg.</i>	780c6			1		2
Total		1	8	4	1	14
Ratio		7%	57%	29%	7%	100%

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