

Does Virtue Make Money or Make it Good?

How to Understand *Apology* 30b2-4

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At *Apology* 29c-31a, as Socrates nears the end of his defense speech, he reaffirms his commitment to the philosophical mission to which he has dedicated his life. He tells the jurors that, even if he were acquitted on the condition that he abandon philosophy, and threatened with death if he violates the condition, he would continue to live as he believes Apollo has commanded, examining the Athenians and exhorting them to virtue. This section of the speech contains, perhaps, Plato's most essentialized statement of Socrates' life work: "I go about doing nothing other than urging you, young and old, not to care for your bodies or your property more than, or even as much as, the perfection of your souls" (30a7-b2). Socrates then reports that he regularly tells the Athenians the following:

Οὐκ ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ. (30b2-4)

This sentence, and specifically its second clause, will be my subject in this paper. The first clause plainly tells us that "virtue does not come from money."¹ The second is more controversial. The verb γίγνεται is supplied from the first clause, but there is some controversy as to its subject. Most translators have taken the subject to be χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ.² Understood in this way, the clause says that "money and everything else good for men, both private and public, come from virtue." However, there is an alternative reading, popularized by Burnet, according to which "the subject is χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἅπαντα, and ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις is predicate."³ Construed in this way, the clause means "from virtue money and all other things come to be good for men both in public and in private."

If this is how the clause is to be read, Socrates' point is that an agent must be virtuous in order for money or anything else to be good for him.⁴ Since Plato has Socrates argue for variants of this thesis in the *Euthydemus* and *Meno*, it is just the sort of thing that we would expect the *Apology* to cite as a characteristic Socratic teaching.⁵ However, as is acknowledged even by most of its defenders, Burnet's construal of the clause is difficult and the traditional reading is far more natural.⁶ When the construal is adopted, it is always because it is thought that Plato's Socrates is more likely to say that virtue makes money good than that it makes money simpliciter.⁷ As Burnyeat insists throughout his lengthy defense of Burnet's construal, "the objection to the standard translation is philosophical, not philological."⁸ What Burnyeat and others argue is that Socrates *could not* have held what he seems (at first, at least) to be saying. Several arguments have been put forward as to why he could not hold this; I will address them each in turn and then offer reasons why it would have been a natural thing for him to hold. First, however, I will briefly consider Burnyeat's defense of the Burnet construal's grammatical merits. Doing so will give us a sense of how strong the arguments that Socrates could not have meant what he seems to say would need to be in order to make the Burnet construal preferable. If the two construals were on an even footing grammatically, Burnet's would be the more sensible, because it has Socrates espousing an unambiguously Socratic doctrine. However, the more strongly the grammar favors the traditional interpretation, the stronger the arguments that Socrates could not have meant what he seems to say would need to be in order to support Burnet's construal.

The Grammatical Issue

Burnyeat sets out “to offer a philological explanation of how ἀγαθά *can* be predicate.”⁹ He takes as his foil “the only reasoned opposition” to Burnet’s construal, that of De Strycker and Slings, who argue as follows:

[Burnet's] construction... cannot be accepted. The parallelism of the two pointedly antithetical members requires [...] that γίγνεται should in both members mean ‘comes from’. Besides, the collocation of ἅπαντα shows that ἀγαθά cannot be separated from τὰ ἄλλα and ἅπαντα. If Plato had wanted to say what Burnet makes him say, he would certainly not have said it in such an ambiguous and misleading way.¹⁰

Burnyeat interprets their point as follows:

They assume, that is, that the change of syntax postulated by Burnet (from γίγνεται without, to γίγνεται with, a complement) entails a change in the meaning of the verb. First γίγνεται means ‘comes to be’, then ‘becomes <good>’. The first meaning is existential, the second predicative.¹¹

Burnyeat devotes fifteen pages to the task of answering this objection by extending “recent scholarly work on εἶναι in Plato and Aristotle to γίγνεσθαι.”¹² The scholarly work in question is Kahn and Brown’s arguments that there are not distinct existential and predicative senses of εἶναι.¹³ I will not debate the merits of Kahn and Brown’s position on εἶναι or the wisdom of extending it to γίγνεσθαι, because I think Burnyeat is mistaken that De Strycker and Slings’ objection to the Burnet construal depends on γίγνεται’s having existential and predicative meanings. As we will see presently, it is easy using uncontroversially univocal verbs to construct sentences about which an objection like De Strycker and Slings’ would naturally arise against someone who was inclined to read them in a Burnet-like manner.

Brown memorably analogized εἶναι to the verb “teach” in order to show how the verb could have to same meaning in its existential and predicative uses. As “teach” has the same meaning in the sentence “Jane teaches” as it does in the sentence “Jane teaches French”; so εἶναι has the same meaning in sentences of the form “x ἐστὶ” as it has in sentences of the form ‘x ἐστὶ F.’¹⁴ This is the reasoning that Burnyeat, using this same example, extends to the case of γίγνεται.¹⁵ If a sentence can be constructed using the verb “teach” over which we can recreate an analog of the debate over 30b2-4, then Burnyeat’s point about the univocality of γίγνεται sheds little light on the present debate. In fact such a sentence is easily constructed:

Allan did not teach Betty, but Betty taught Allan and everyone else who went on the expedition.¹⁶

The second clause of this sentence is most naturally read to mean that Allan and all the other expedition members were taught by Betty. However, someone who was convinced that the speaker could not have thought that Allan took part in the expedition, might read the clause along the lines of Burnet’s construal and interpret the speaker to mean that what Betty taught to Allan and everyone (not just the expedition members), and that what she taught them was who went on the expedition—that is, that Betty gave a very well attended class about the expedition’s personnel. This Burnet-like reading would be extremely unnatural, even if the clause were an independent sentence, because “everyone else who went on the expedition” forms a natural unit (as does “τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ” in Plato’s Greek). The reading is even more unnatural when we take the clause in the context of the whole sentence, which puts the focus on who taught whom rather than on what was taught. To see this, notice how much more natural the Burnet-like construal of the second clause would be if the first clause were modified as follows to include reference to the subject taught:

Allan did not teach Betty anything, but Betty taught Allan and everyone else who went on the expedition.

The “anything” in the first clause leads us to expect some reference to what got taught in the parallel construction in the second clause, and that makes it more natural (though still not entirely natural) to take “who went on the expedition” as what was taught rather than as qualifying “everyone else.”¹⁷ What this shows is that when a verb, like “teach” or γίγνεται, can either take or lack a complement, even if the verb has a single meaning in both uses, there is a still significant difference in the two usages such that when the verb occurs in parallel constructions in a sentence, it is unnatural for it to switch between usages.¹⁸ This is all we need for the objection to have force.

Even if Burnyeat is right that γίγνεται has a single sense, as “teach” does, he is wrong that the “ambiguity of which De Strycker and Slings complain would be lost on Plato,” and De Strycker and Slings are right that “if Plato wanted to say what Burnet makes him say” he did so in an extremely “ambiguous and misleading way.”¹⁹

If the Burnet construal is acceptable, it is for the reasons given by Taylor, who describes it as a case in which “an elaborate word order could induce the reader to take an entirely false and absurd meaning out of a statement if he pays no attention to the context.”²⁰ For such an argument to be persuasive, it must be the case not only that Socrates could not consistently hold what he seems to be saying, but that it would be obvious to his audience he does not hold it, and, therefore, that his words must be taken in some unusual manner. Let’s consider, then, the reasons that have been given to think that Socrates obviously could not mean what he seems to say.

First Objection to the Traditional Construal: Socrates is Poor.

Burnet himself gives the following as his reason for rejecting the traditional translation: “As Socrates was now ἐν πενίᾳ μισθία (29b9), he could hardly recommend ἀρετή as a good investment.” Taylor, reasoning along similar lines writes that “if riches proceeded from virtue [Socrates’] poverty would prove him to be a man singularly lacking in virtue.” Burnet’s version of this objection presupposes that Socrates claims to be virtuous, which he does not; he merely claims to be better than his accusers, not to be vicious, and to deserve good things.²¹ Taylor recognizes that Socrates is not “holding himself up as a model” in this manner, but it assumes that the degree of an effect must vary with the degree of its cause, so that if virtue produces money, more virtue will produce more money, and great poverty will be caused by lack of virtue. The causal principle he assumes is not unreasonable, but it is not obvious that Socrates is committed to it and, therefore, it is not obvious that he would see the proposition that “money comes from virtue” as implying that his extreme poverty must be the result of extreme vice.

There is a further premise behind Burnet and Taylor’s objections that I have thus far been granting. They take “money comes from virtue” to mean that virtue will *always* cause money and that this money will always accrue to the possessor of the virtue. But it needn’t mean this. Eggs come from chickens, but it is not the case that all chickens are always laying eggs or that, when they are, the eggs always remain in the hands of the chickens’ owners. It is quite possible for someone to have many chickens but no eggs. The eggs may have been taken or given away, or, because of any number of factors (old age, ill health, etc.) the chickens may fail to lay eggs at all. If this is so in the case of things, like eggs, that come to be by nature, it is all the more so in the case of things that come to be as a result of human agency. Surely a carpenter causes a house, but it is possible to be a homeless carpenter. Such a carpenter might lack some resource that would be needed to build a house for himself, and even if one had all the necessary resources, he might

choose for some reason not to build one. The most natural way to understand the claim that “money comes from virtue” is not that the virtuous will always simply find themselves well supplied with cash, but rather that virtue will enable a virtuous person to make money if he so chooses and, perhaps, if certain minimal conditions are met (e.g. the availability of certain resources, the absence of certain adverse conditions, etc.).

Socrates’ poverty, he tells us, is a result of his service to the god. Apollo has put him on a special mission, which has left him no leisure to attend either to the city’s affairs or to his own (24b). Socrates is poor because he dedicated himself so completely to this divine mission as to neglect his own affairs (31b). This is consistent with his being virtuous and with his virtue giving him the power to earn a fortune. He may simply have chosen to devote all his time to philosophy instead. (And it may even be that this devotion is in fact producing wealth, which is not accruing to Socrates himself.) Of course, Socrates thinks abdicating the post in which the god put him would be unjust, so there is a respect in which his virtue can be said to prevent him from making money, but this respect isn’t necessarily inconsistent with the claim that his virtue enables him to make money. Socrates may be like a builder whose expertise would enable him to build a house on a certain site, but also enables him to recognize that the site would be a poor location, and so decides not to build. Surely the fact that this expertise prevents him from building the house does not show that the expertise is not a source of houses.

Thus virtue can be both a source of money and also something that leads people sometimes (or even often) to forgo making money. It might be odd to describe money as coming from virtue if virtue mandated that one forgo money-making so often as to reduce most virtuous agents to abject poverty, but there is nothing in the *Apology* that would lead us to think that it

does so. Socrates never claims that others ought to neglect their own affairs as he has done; quite the contrary, he describes himself as on a special mission from Apollo.²²

Second Objection: Socrates wouldn't Praise Virtue as a Money-Maker

So much then for the objection that Socrates' poverty is inconsistent with his saying that money comes from virtue. A second objection in the literature is that the standard construal makes "Socrates recommend virtue as a money-maker."²³ This charge is made in one form or another by Vlastos, Burnyeat, Stokes, and Taylor.²⁴ Insofar as this is a distinct objection from the previous one, what is at issue is not whether virtue is able to produce money, but whether this ability is the grounds on which Socrates endorses virtue. If it is, then he would be saying that what is good about virtue is that it is a *means* to money, and this would imply that the money is better than virtue, since it is that for the sake of which virtue is valued.

To see whether the clause (as standardly construed) has this implication, let's consider a parallel case—a variant on a familiar fairy tale. A foolish young man whose only possession is a goose that lays golden eggs exchanges it for a handful of jelly beans. In the course of excoriating him, his irate (and now penniless) mother tells him that with the gold from the goose he could have purchased bushels of jelly beans as well as anything else that he might want to buy. Is the mother praising goose as a candy-provider? No: her statement does not imply that the goose's value stems from its ability to buy jelly beans or that its goodness is in anyway dependent on the goodness of the candy. Her statement is merely a way of making more dramatic the folly of the boy's exchange. Even if one were (foolishly) to take jelly beans as one's standard of value, the mother effectively says, the goose would supply all the jelly beans one could want, and, in addition to this, it would supply many other things worth having. That there are other things worth having shows that it is a mistake to take the beans as one's standard of value in the first

place. So the mother's argument certainly does not commit her to the view that the goose is valuable only or primarily for the sake of jelly beans. Does her making this argument show that she values the goose only instrumentally, for the sake of the golden eggs it lays and the material values she can buy with them? No, clearly she appreciates the financial rewards that stem from the goose, but she may also value it in other ways that are more important to her—for example, she may have affection for it as a pet, or worship it as divine. The point of her argument is that, even from a candy-centric perspective the goose is more worth having than the handful of jelly beans, because the goose not only provides the jelly beans but is valuable in other ways as well.

Similarly, in saying that “virtue does not come from money, but money, from virtue,” Socrates would be taking virtue's status as a money-maker as evidence of its value and perhaps as one good thing about it, but he needn't be making its goodness subordinate to that of money in any way. Likely he would regard it as belonging to the class of goods that are good both in themselves and for their consequences. In *Republic II*, Socrates classes justice among such goods, describing them as “the finest.”²⁵ If he takes this same view of justice and the other virtues in the *Apology* then it would be quite natural for him to say what the traditional construal of 30b2-4 has him saying.

Socrates is not arguing that virtue is good because it makes money; he is not even addressing himself to the question of whether it is good; he takes it for granted that it is. The question at hand is which of two things generally acknowledged to be good—money and virtue—is *better* and should be one's priority.²⁶ The majority opinion (as demonstrated by the way most people live) is that money is better, whereas Socrates contends that virtue is. Of the two goods, virtue is the better, says Socrates, because it is a source of money, whereas the reverse is not the case.

Notice that the contrary view that money is a source of virtue had great currency. In the *Apology* itself we are told of Evenus from Paros, who is supposed to be able to teach virtue for five minas, and in other dialogues we meet others who claim or are claimed to be able to make young men virtuous for a fee.²⁷ If virtue could be acquired from a paid teacher, then money would be a source of it. And, if money did bring about virtue (whether through hired teachers or in some other way) and everything else that is good for men (e.g., perhaps, health, honor, and political power), then someone who acknowledged that both wealth and virtue were good would reasonably prioritize moneymaking; for he would think that, by becoming rich, he would also be enabling himself (and his sons) to attain virtue and the other human goods. If, by contrast, as Socrates maintains, virtue is the source of whatever other goods there may be, then it is virtue that should be one's priority in life.

Third Objection: Socrates Wouldn't Call Money Good

Burnyeat's central objection is somewhat different from those that we have considered thus far. He is scandalized by the prospect of Socrates describing money as good.

If χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ is a unitary phrase, it implies that Socrates thinks money a good. But where else does Socrates, speaking in *propria persona* as he does throughout the *Apology*, call money or wealth a good?²⁸

The first thing to notice in response to Burnyeat's rhetorical question is that, even if we accept Burnet's construal, the contested clause does acknowledge that money is good under certain conditions: it is a good when made so by virtue. Thus, however we read the clause, Socrates holds that money is good for certain people in certain conditions. And if we interpret the clause in its traditional manner, we need not take it to commit Socrates to the view that money is good in any stronger sense than this.

The relevant sense in which money qualifies as good is so weak that it applies to poverty as well, since poverty can also be good for some people at some times. Indeed, according to Burnyeat, Socrates holds that, even “poverty, disease, and the like” end up being good for the virtuous people, since “Virtue will have *made* something good of their trials and tribulations.”²⁹ However, the claim that money is good for some people is not trivial, since there are things that (according to Socrates at least) are never good for anyone—for example, committing injustice, believing oneself to be wise when one is not, and in general being vicious.

However, if this is the best that can be said for money on Socrates’ view, then 30b2-4 as traditionally construed is misleading (though less so than the clause is as Burnet construes it). Moreover, if as Burnyeat argues, Socrates has a very negative view of money, then, even if there is some non-trivial sense in which it qualifies as good, it would be extremely strange for Socrates to refer to it as good at this point in the *Apology* without adding any qualifications. Conversely, if Socrates’ attitude towards money is more positive, and he thinks that it is good in a more robust sense than the minimal one described just above, then the traditional reading of the contested clause is unproblematic.

Burnyeat surveys the corpus’ discussions of money to establish that Socrates’ view of money is very negative, and that he never in his own voice calls it good without immediately qualifying the remark. Before considering the view of wealth that emerges from the passages Burnyeat cites, however, we should note how much weaker the argument for Burnet’s construal becomes once we start looking beyond the *Apology* for evidence that Socrates cannot have meant what he seems to be saying in the contested clause. There is some debate over the extent to which Plato’s portrayal of Socrates in different dialogs is meant to be consistent, and the *Apology* is a special case. First, it is the only one to depict what Socrates said on a specific, real occasion

at which Plato himself was present.³⁰ Many of the other dialogs are often set in historically impossible circumstances, or include cues that we are not to take them as reports of actual conversations; none of the others include Plato among Socrates' audience—indeed, the *Phaedo*, which is set during an occasion that Plato might have attended makes a point of telling us that Plato was absent.³¹ Moreover, there are clear points of conflict between the *Apology* and some of Plato's other dialogs. Most notably, the *Apology*'s Socrates claims to not know what happens after death, and to have never been interested in natural science (things in the heavens and below the earth), whereas in the *Phaedo*, Socrates speaks of his keen interest as a youth in natural science, and in both that dialog and the *Phaedrus* he gives proofs of the soul's immortality.³² Socrates argues for immortality in the *Gorgias*, *Meno*, and *Republic* as well, though somewhat more tentatively.³³ If Socrates says that money is good in the *Apology* and denies it elsewhere, this would just be one of many points on which the *Apology* and (certain) other dialogs disagree—or, at least, on which they have been widely and reasonably thought to do so.

The central point concerning money and virtue that is made in the passages outside of the *Apology* that Burnyeat references is that neither money nor anything else other than virtue (or, in some texts, specifically wisdom) is good without qualification: the things normally considered good are good only for the virtuous man, and they are harmful for the vicious.³⁴ In all cases, money is given as an example of something that is ordinarily considered good, but which, in the absence of virtue (or wisdom), is actually either worthless or positively harmful. Burnyeat gives the impression that these passages issue a “warning” about wealth in particular.³⁵ However the passages make this point about *everything* other than virtue (in the *Gorgias* and *Laws*) or wisdom (in the *Euthydemus* and *Meno*) that might be considered good.³⁶ In addition to wealth, the *Meno* and *Euthydemus* name health, strength, beauty, and even such (putative) virtues as courage and

moderation (if they are not to be identified with wisdom) as things that harm their possessors when not directed by wisdom.³⁷ What we find in these passages is not any particular antipathy towards wealth, but simply the point that only virtue or wisdom is good without qualification. Wealth and all the other items conventionally considered good are good only for the virtuous (or wise) and are bad for the vicious (or foolish):

With respect to all the things we called good at first [viz., such things as health, beauty, noble birth, political power, and wealth], it is not that in themselves they are good by nature; rather it is as follows: if directed by ignorance, they are greater evils than their opposites, to the extent that they are more capable of complying with a bad master; but, if directed by good-sense and wisdom, they are greater goods. In themselves, however, neither sort is of any worth. (*Euthydemus* 281de, cf. *Laws* II 661ad)

Notice that the point of this passage is not merely that the relevant items are good or bad, depending whether they are controlled by virtue or vice; rather the point is that each of the relevant items is *better or worse than its opposite*, depending on whether it is controlled by virtue or vice. Wealth, then, is not just good for a virtuous person, but it is *better than poverty*. This is a more robust endorsement of money than the minimal one considered earlier. Virtue is not only among the things that (unlike vice) can be good for people, it is *better* for the relevant people than other things (in particular its opposite), which may also be good.

Moreover, it is not merely the case that money is good for certain people and not for others. The people for whom it is good are the only people for whom anything at all is good, other than virtue (or wisdom), which is the precondition of anything else's being good for one.

To the extent that one is virtuous and therefore capable of having things be good for one, money, health, strength and the like are good for one and better than their opposites.

The passage also indicates what it is about these qualified goods that makes them better than their opposites for virtuous people and worse than the opposites for the vicious. Money, strength, health and the rest increase the scale on which one can act; this makes them good for those who act well, and bad for vicious agents who act badly, and whether one acts well or badly depends on whether one is virtuous or vicious.³⁸

Thus Socrates' view in the *Meno* and *Euthydemus* at least (and the stranger's view in *Laws* II) is that money, as a facilitator of action, is good for any person insofar as that person is virtuous and thereby capable of having things (other than virtue itself) be good for him.³⁹ Though money is not good *without qualification*, and though it is overvalued by most people, there remains a robust sense in which it qualifies as good—the only sense in which anything other than virtue itself qualifies as good. If the Socrates of the *Apology* shares this position, then I see no reason why he should have hesitated to refer to money as “a good” at 30b4. Any scruple that might have prevented him from calling it good without qualifying the remark would prevent him from ever using the word “good” for anything other than virtue without launching into a digression on the factors conditioning its goodness.

Moreover, there is something else in the *Apology* that Socrates unambiguously describes as good, though its value would surely be no more unconditional than money's. When called upon to propose a sentence for himself, Socrates says that he deserves “something good” (36d2), and so proposes “maintenance in the Prytaneum” (37a1). Thus he describes this maintenance as good. The maintenance is both a material value (measurable in money) and an honor, and so (at least by the lights of the *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, and *Gorgias*) is good only on the condition that it is attained and used wisely and virtuously. However, Socrates doesn't (and needn't) bother to add

this qualification to the claim that it is good. Burnyeat's argument that Socrates would not, speaking in *propria persona*, refer to money a good would also exclude Socrates from referring to this maintenance as a good.

Why Socrates Might Think that Virtue is a Money-Maker

If we grant that Socrates regards money as a good, it is not difficult to see why he would think that it is caused by virtue. Virtue for Socrates is or is closely connected with wisdom, and non-virtuous agents, far from being shrewd operators adept at attaining the ends they seek, are “like runners who [...] who leap away sharply at first, but become ridiculous by the end and go off uncrowned, with their ears drooping on their shoulders like those of exhausted dogs.”⁴⁰ The vicious cannot reliably achieve even their stated goals (money, reputation, etc.). It is only by luck that they manage to secure the things they seek and to hold on to them for as long as they do. By contrast, Socrates says in the *Euthydemus*, “wisdom makes man fortunate in every case.”⁴¹ The implication is that there is no goal that can be reliably attained in any way other than by wisdom. Thus if one is to reliably attain money (or anything else)—to attain it in some way other than by accident—it could only be through wisdom. In this sense, virtue is a money-maker.⁴²

Indeed it is the only fundamental money-maker. Anything else that might seem to be a money-maker—for example, a farm, a mine, a portfolio of investments, or even a skill—can be mishandled in a manner that causes it loose money rather than to make it. A fool may, by luck, eke out a profit from his resources in the short term, but to consistently profit form a resource over time, one must use it well, and this requires wisdom and virtue (even if virtue leads us to forgo opportunities for profit, when they are unjust). This is not, however, why virtue is good; and *Apology* 30b2-4, when construed in the traditional manner, does not tell us that it is in order

to get rich that we should become virtuous. Rather it cites virtue's status as the source of money and other goods as a *sign* of its greater goodness.

We have seen, then, that there is nothing to prevent Socrates from saying what he seems to have said and that he had some reasons for saying it. Although I agree that Burnet's construal has Socrates saying something that is more characteristically Socratic and more philosophically insightful, this is not sufficient reason to prefer this construal over the traditional and more natural way of reading the clause. I conclude, then, that Socrates does say that virtue makes money, but that this neither commits him to the view that it invariably does so, nor amounts to recommending virtue as a money-maker.

¹An anonymous reviewer asks for “some support for the absolute usage of γίγνεσθαι to mean ‘come into being.’” The reviewer suggests that a “native reader” might “always expect a complement for the verb,” in which the reader would supply ἀγαθὰ from the second clause when reading the first and so interpret the first clause as meaning that “It is not from money that virtue comes to be good.” To my knowledge the clause has never been interpreted this way, and it is mysterious why Socrates would want to deny that money makes virtue good, since no one affirms this position. (I discuss why he would want to deny that money makes virtue below.) In any case, evidence of the “absolute usage of γίγνεσθαι” is very easy to come by; several unambiguous examples are cited in the relevant *LSJ* entry. See also Aristotle’s discussion of γίγνεσθαι ἀπλῶς in *Physics* I.7 and *Generation and Corruption* I.4. Example of this usage in Plato can be found at *Protagoras* 322a1 and *Philebus* 26e2-3, among other places. I don’t mean to take a position here on the question of whether there is an “absolute” or “existential” sense of γίγνεσθαι, which is distinct from its meaning in other contexts. All that is relevant for my immediate purposes is the superficial observation that there are many Greek sentences in which γίγνεσθαι occurs and does not take an object or serve as a copula.

² English translators who construe the clause in this way include: Jowett (1892), Church (1886), Green (1897), More (1898), Fowler (1914), Livingstone (1938), Lane Cooper (1941), Tredennick (1954), Grube (1978), and Allen (1984). Agreeing translators in other languages include Müller (1851), Marasso (1938), and Croiset (1963).

³ Burnet 1924 204. The construal can also be found in Williamson (1908), and Burnyeat (2005) speculates that it is due ultimately to J.A. Smith. The only published translation I know of to adopt this construal unequivocally is Stokes 1997. Cooper’s (1997) revision of Grube’s

translation is ambiguous between the two readings: “Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men.” Rowe (2007 66-80) maintains that the clause is intentionally ambiguous.

⁴ Burnyeat, who construes the clause as Burnet does, interprets it somewhat differently. He takes Socrates’ point to be not only that an agent’s virtue is a precondition of anything being good for him, but that virtue can make anything whatsoever good for an agent. “Virtue will make not only money, but lack of money and everything else that happens in your life or after death, good rather than bad for you.” (Burnyeat 2003 4) I see no justification for attributing this position to Socrates (in the *Apology* or elsewhere). Certainly there are texts (such as *Apology* 41d, which Burnyeat cites) in which Socrates says that no bad things can befall a virtuous agent, but this does not mean that whatever befalls them (e.g. being poor or unjustly executed) is positively good for them, nor does Socrates claim that they are.

⁵ The argument is made about wisdom in *Euthydemus* 280a-281e, and again in *Meno* 87e-89a. In the *Meno*, the claim is retracted when it is recognized that correct opinion 96e-97c can serve the role of wisdom, but since the result of this retraction is a new account of virtue as a type of correct opinion, the dialog as a whole supports the claim that virtue (if not specifically wisdom) is a precondition for being benefitted by other things. In *Laws* II 661ad, the Athenian stranger argues that the things conventionally called goods are good only for the just.

⁶ Taylor 1973, Stokes 1997 150, Burnyeat 2003.

⁷ An anonymous reviewer objects that I and the other parties to this debate are wrong to equate the claim that “virtue comes from money” with the claim that “money makes virtue.” The reviewer contends that, in the formula “ἐξ A B γίγνεται,” A does not refer to the “efficient cause” of B, but rather to a “sine qua non” for B. It is not clear if the reviewer means this point to apply

to the formula generally or only to the occurrences of it in *Apology* 30b2-4. If the more general point is intended (as is suggested by several of the reviewer's formulations) then the reviewer is simply mistaken; for the formula is a familiar way of expressing the thought that *A fathered B*, and a father is the paradigm case of an efficient cause. (Examples of this use of the formula include Il.2.866, Hes.Op.175, A.Eu.347, Hdt.7.11, E.IA406, cf. Isoc.5.136, and A.Th. 142, all of which are cited by the LSJ. Examples of Plato using the formula to unambiguously denote efficient causation include: *Symposium* 188b3-5, *Protagoras* 322a1, *Gorgias* 504c8.) Of course there are other uses of the formula as well. Most notably, it can mean that B comes to be from A in the way in which a sculpture comes to be from marble or in the way an expert comes to be from a layman. To use the Aristotelian jargon, A can refer to either the matter out of which B is generated or to the contrary (or privation) of B that obtains prior to the generation. (See *Physics* I.7 and *Generation and Corruption* I.4; for Platonic examples of these two usages, see *Phaedo* 70d-72e and *Philebus* 27a11.) Either the matter or the privation could be described as a *sin qua non* for the coming to be of B, but neither the notion of matter nor that of a privation is identical with the notion of being a *sin qua non*, and I know of no evidence that the formula is ever used to express the relation of being a *sin qua non*, as opposed to one or the other of these specific relations. (The reviewer points to no such evidence in his comments.) Both of the specific relations are clearly inapplicable in the case of 30b2-4: neither money nor virtue is the matter from which the other comes to be, and neither is the privation of the other. It is with excellent reason that everyone who has written on 30b2-4 has interpreted the formula “ἐξ Α Β γίγνεται” along efficient causal lines: of the various relations the formula can express, the relation of efficient causation is the only one that makes sense in the context. Moreover, the thesis that virtue is a *sin qua non* of wealth acquisition is extremely implausible on its face: it would imply

that no one vicious could ever get rich (even accidentally), surely Socrates could not have meant this.

⁸ Burnyeat 8, cf. 1, 3.

⁹ Burnyeat 2003 9.

¹⁰ De Strycker and Slings 1994 334. The same criticism seems to have been made by Tredenick in a 1966 letter from which Taylor (1973, notes 13 and 22) quotes.

¹¹ Burnyeat 2003 10.

¹² Burnyeat 2003 1.

¹³ Kahn 1973, 1976, 1981, 2003; Brown 1986, 1994.

¹⁴ Brown 1986 54.

¹⁵ Burnyeat 2003 9-10.

¹⁶ Also consider the following sentence (grammatically closer to *Apology* 30b2-4) with the verb “learn”: “Betty did not learn from Allan, but Allan learned from Betty and everyone else who went on the expedition.” In both of my English example sentences the (implausible) ambiguity involves the function of a relative clause. Someone might worry (as an anonymous reviewer did) whether the ability to construct ambiguous sentences with verbs of learning depends on the fact that they can take such clauses as objects. It does not. Consider the following sentence: “Plato, Aristotle, and Speusippus were all members of the Academy; Aristotle did not teach Plato, but Plato taught Aristotle and the other Greek.” Someone who objected to calling Aristotle a Greek might interpret the last clause to mean that Plato taught “Aristotle and the other [viz. Speusippus] Greek [viz. the Greek language].” Of course, the specific ambiguities that one can construct in any case will depend on the grammar of the language one is working in and the sorts of complements the relevant verbs can take, so one can find numerous differences between the

relevant sentence in Plato and any (Greek or English) sentence that uses a different verb. But these differences are not germane to the point of my example, which concerns how (putative) ambiguities concerning the number of complements a verb takes are most naturally resolved in sentences with certain sorts of parallel constructions.

¹⁷ I think something analogous would be the case in the *Apology*, had Plato written the following:

Οὐδεν ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδία καὶ δημοσία.

¹⁸ The point can be formulated more generally as follows: When a verb can take different numbers of complements, even when the several usages (each with different numbers of complements) are not homonymous, they are still different enough that readers naturally expect that the number of complements will remain constant when the verb appears in parallel clauses where at least some of the complements change place. In such cases, if the second clause contains material that may either be part of one of the complements or an independent complement, that material is most naturally interpreted in the manner that makes the verb have the same number of complements as it did in the preceding clause.

¹⁹ Of course, if the two usages really were distinct meanings of the verb, such that γίγνεται were a mere homonym, then there would be no doubt that the verb couldn't have different meanings in two clauses of the sentence, whereas, given that it is not a homonym, the argument against Burnet's construal might be less than conclusive. So, Burnyeat might be thought to have made some headway against the De Strycker-Slings objection. But I don't think this is case, because it is clear that De Strycker and Slings were not interpreting the existential and predicative usages of γίγνεται as merely homonymous. Had they been, they would not have needed to appeal to the "parallelism of the two pointedly antithetical members" to establish that the two clauses use

γίγνεται in the same way; the fact that the word is supplied from the first clause to the second would have been sufficient to establish that its usage in the two clauses could not be homonymous.

²⁰ Taylor 1973 51.

²¹ These three claims are made, respectively, at 30cd, 39b, 36b.

²² 28e, 30e.

²³ Vlastos 1991 220 n. 73.

²⁴ Taylor 1973 50, Stokes 1997 149, Burnyeat 2003 1-4.

²⁵ *Republic* II 358a1.

²⁶ Recall that just before telling us that money comes from virtue, Socrates says that he urges the Athenians “not to care for your bodies or your property more than, or even as much as, for the perfection of your souls.” A few lines earlier he speaks of rebuking people for “scorning the things that are most important and caring more for things that are worth less” and says that the people should be ashamed to “care for the acquisition of wealth and for reputation and honor, when [they] do not care or think about wisdom and truth and the perfection of [their] soul.” (29e-30b)

²⁷ 20b.

²⁸ Burnyeat 2003 3.

²⁹ Burnyeat 2003 6.

³⁰ It is worth recalling that Plato twice calls attention to his own presence (34a1 and 38b6).

³¹ *Phaedo* 59b.

³² *Phaedo* 100b-107a, *Phaedrus* 245c-246a.

³³ *Gorgias* 524a8-d7, *Meno* 85b9-86c2 (cf. *Phaedo* 72e-77a), *Republic* 608d3-611a9. Other Platonic protagonists argue for the immortality of the soul at *Timaeus* 41a-d and *Laws* 904a-b.

³⁴ *Meno* 87e-89a, *Euthydemus* 280b-281e, *Laws* II 661ad, *Gorgias* 460e.

³⁵ Burnyeat 2003 1.

³⁶ The *Meno*'s position is complicated by the fact that the *Euthydemus*-like arguments made at 87e-89a concerning wisdom are partially retracted at 97a-c, where we are told that correct opinion can play the same role as wisdom. However, this point is not germane to assessing the Plato's position on money in the dialog.

³⁷ *Meno* 87e6-7, 88a1-b8; *Euthydemus* 281b-d.

³⁸ *Euthydemus* 281b-c

³⁹ To put the point in Aristotelian jargon: money is *good by nature*, though it will fail to be good for a particular agent if that agent is lacking in virtue. (See, e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.9 1170a14-15.)

⁴⁰ *Republic* 613b.

⁴¹ *Euthydemus* 280a.

⁴² Cf. Brickhouse and Smith 2012 172-189, who defend the attribution to Socrates of a more modest version of the principle that virtue produces good things in addition to making things good for us.

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