

*Charmides' First Definition of Sôphrosynê
Temperance Is a Kind of Quietness (159b1–160d4)*

At first he was hesitant and not very willing to answer. But presently he said that it seemed to him that temperance is doing everything in an orderly and quiet manner [*kosmiôs kai hêsychêi*] – walking in the streets, and talking, and doing everything else in a similar way. ‘So’, he said, ‘it seems to me that, in a word, what you are asking about is a sort of quietness or calmness [*hêsychiotês tis*]’. (159b1–6)¹

Despite the relaxed epistemic conditions of the ‘best method’ and the encouragement that he has received from Socrates, Charmides remains initially reluctant to state what he believes *sôphrosynê* to be. Another brush-stroke is added to his character, for the narrator makes us wonder why the youth still hesitates to answer. Perhaps he is intellectually idle² or thoroughly convinced that he is temperate, and does not really wish to enter the conversation. Or, more likely, he is disposed to react in a quiet and somewhat slow manner to the challenge that lies ahead. We may assume that he is following Socrates’ instructions and taking the time to attend to his own awareness of temperance in himself and articulate it in the form of a belief. And we may also assume that, because he perceives temperance as a kind of quiet self-restraint, he is trying to display this specific quality in the way he answers. For, as Socrates has suggested, if he has temperance, he can be expected to have an opinion about what it is, whereas if he has no opinion about the virtue, then it would seem that he does not possess it (158e7–159a4).³

¹ Καὶ ὃς τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ὄκνει τε καὶ οὐ πάνυ ἠθελεν ἀποκρίνασθαι· ἔπειτα μέντοι εἶπεν ὅτι οἱ δοκοῖ σωφροσύνη εἶναι τὸ κοσμίως πάντα πράττειν καὶ ἡσυχῇ, ἐν τε ταῖς ὁδοῖς βαδίζειν καὶ διαλέγεσθαι, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ὡσαύτως ποιεῖν· καὶ μοι δοκεῖν, ἔφη, συλλήβδην ἡσυχιότης τις εἶναι ὁ ἔρωτάς (159b1–6).

² The narrator says that Charmides ὄκνει (159b1) and the verb ὄκνειν can mean ‘to be hesitant’ but also ‘to be lazy’.

³ The sufficiency condition that Socrates mentioned earlier (158c3) suggests the following qualifications: one’s sufficient participation in temperance (158c3–4) entails the ability to express a true belief about its nature, whereas one’s inability to express an opinion about temperance will indicate insufficient participation in temperance or the total absence of it. Furthermore, it is possible that

Charmides' answer, that temperance seems to him (*dokei moi*: 159b5) to be a kind of quietness or calmness (*hêsychiotês tis*: 159b5), shows some cleverness and skill. In the first place, taking advantage of the 'best method', he advances that claim as a belief that he holds,⁴ not a piece of knowledge that he has. Thus, even if he is refuted, he won't feel terribly embarrassed about it. Furthermore, unlike, for example, Euthyphro or Meno who initially give the wrong kind of answer to the 'what is X?' question, the former by pointing to a particular instance of X and the latter by citing different Xs in different groups of people, Charmides understands at once what sort of answer he is required to give. Formally, his claim concerning the nature of temperance is correct and can become the object of a dialectical investigation.

I

Charmides states his belief about what temperance is in two different ways. The first is, so to speak, substantival: temperance is 'some sort of quietness' (159b5). The second is adverbial: 'temperance is doing everything in an orderly and quiet manner' (*kosmiôs kai hêsychêi*: 159b3). He treats these formulas as nearly equivalent, but suggests that the former may be inferred from the latter on inductive grounds. For first he gives the adverbial definition and illustrates it by means of examples ('walking in the streets, and engaging in dialogue, and doing everything else in a similar way': 159b3–5), and then summarises all this 'in a word' (*syllêbdên*: 159b5) as quietness of some sort (*hêsychiotês tis*: 159b5).⁵ Charmides appears to assume that all and only the possessors of temperance have that sort of quietness or the ability to accomplish everything they do (159b4) in an orderly and quiet manner. And he can be taken to refer, more broadly, to a calm, decorous, seemly, tactful, socially appropriate manner of behaving.

Why does Charmides think of *sôphrosynê* in that way? Is he right? And whom does Socrates have in mind when he retorts that people do indeed say that 'quiet persons are temperate' (159b8)? It is a commonplace that the Greeks associate *sôphrosynê* (literally, the possession of a sound and healthy mind)⁶ with quiet, calm, decorous behaviour, since sane people are

insufficient participation in the virtue (158c4) would cause one to have false beliefs about temperance or beliefs that are not really about temperance at all.

⁴ οἱ δοκεῖ: 159b2; μοι δοκεῖ: 159b5.

⁵ If Charmides meant that temperance is a species of ἡσυχιότης, this could invite the criticism that the ἡσυχιότης lacking in, for example, running or boxing is a different species than the quietness present in decorous behaviour.

⁶ See Chapter 1, 3.

typically in control of themselves and do not behave like maniacs.⁷ This association may carry specific political connotations, insofar as it is part of a political and civic ideal advanced in classical Athens especially by the oligarchic faction and frequently related to pro-Spartan tendencies.⁸ It is noteworthy that, in addition to the value of *sôphrosynê* itself, the ideas of doing things ‘*kosmiôs*’, in an orderly or decorous way, and *hêsychêi*, in a quiet, dignified, unobtrusive manner, belong to the repertoire of Athenians engaged in aristocratic and pro-Spartan propaganda. The same holds for the notion of *hêsychiotês*,⁹ which became especially popular in the early 380s, close to the likely date of composition of the *Charmides*, at a time of revival of debates concerning the junta of the Thirty.¹⁰ Given Charmides’ family environment and his connection with Critias, it is reasonable to suppose that he endorses, if unreflectively, these values of oligarchic ideology and is bringing them to the fore on the present occasion.

However, one need not appeal to such specifically political factors to explain why Charmides believes that temperance amounts to doing things in a certain manner – calmly and decorously. For, regardless of the political affiliations of their families, well-bred Athenian youths were taught to value unobtrusive and decorous behaviour. They were expected to show themselves as dignified and composed and aware of their place in Athenian society; in short, to show themselves to be *sôphrones*, temperate, in a broad and quite ordinary sense of the term.¹¹ Thus, Charmides’ appropriation of the belief that temperance is a kind of quietness derives from his endorsement of a broadly shared social and cultural code rather than any specific political inclinations. If so, when Socrates refers to those who say that quiet men are temperate (159b8), he probably has in mind upper-class Athenians independently of the political party that each of them favours. Within the

⁷ See Santas 1973, 112. A contrast can be drawn between Chaerephon’s behaviour and the behaviour suggested by Charmides’ definition. For Chaerephon comports himself in something like a manic manner when he jumps up to greet Socrates upon his entrance into the gymnasium.

⁸ See above, 3–4.

⁹ See Witte 1970, 44 ff., especially the terminological parallels between the *Charmides* and *Lysias*, XXVI 3 and 5 (*On the Scrutiny of Evandrus*).

¹⁰ See Dušanić 2000, 60.

¹¹ E.g. Taylor 1926, 50, explicitly takes ἡσυχιότης in this sense: ‘As is natural in a mere lad, Charmides fixes first of all on an external characteristic of *sôphrosyne* in the form which would be most familiar to a boy – the form of decent and modest bearing towards one’s elders and “good behaviour” generally’. Moreover, he suggests that this aspect of temperance is closely connected with self-control: ‘There is a “hurry” which means that one’s limbs or one’s tongue are not really under control as they should be’. See also Tuckey 1951, 19: ‘This is the reply that might be expected from a noble young Athenian, for it describes the sort of conduct required of him by the conventions of Athenian society’.

frame of our dialogue, there is no special reason to tie Charmides' belief that temperance amounts to doing things in a quiet manner specifically with the ideology of the oligarchic party.

Philosophically, the adverbial version of the definition strongly suggests that, even though Charmides' definition of temperance need not entail crude behaviourism,¹² nonetheless it strongly suggests that he conceives of the virtue primarily in terms of a style of behaving.¹³ Temperance is not so much a matter of *what* we do as *how* we do it; not something that the temperate man *has* but rather a special feature of his manner of acting.¹⁴ In an important sense, then, Charmides appears to consider what one *does* prior to who one *is*. And (whether or not he realises this) he advances the very strong claim that every temperate action is done with a certain kind of quietness or calmness, and every action performed in that manner is temperate.

What does 'acting *hêsychêi*' actually mean? Both this adverb and the noun, *hêsychiotês*, as well as the verb *hêsychêin*, have a vast range of meanings which, nonetheless, share a common semantic core and exhibit family resemblances. Hence these terms are not, strictly speaking, ambiguous in the sense in which, for example, the noun 'cardinal' is ambiguous.¹⁵ In the elenchus that follows, Socrates will use examples that highlight the semantic richness of the adverb '*hêsychêi*' and the noun '*hêsychiotês*', but also raise questions about the legitimacy of certain dialectical moves. For instance, in addition to acting in a quiet or calm or unobtrusive manner, he will assume that acting *hêsychêi* is equivalent to acting in a slow, sluggish, absent-minded way as opposed to acting quickly, briskly, and with total concentration. He stretches semantic boundaries even further, when he contrasts, for example, boxing *hêsychôs*, in a spirit of friendliness and peacefulness, with boxing *oxeôs* or both *oxeôs* and *tacheôs*, in an intense and aggressive way (159d1–2), or when he assumes that performing certain mental activities *hêsychôs* implies intellectual laziness or deficiency or both

¹² Many scholars take Charmides' first definition to refer exclusively to behaviour and talk about a gradual movement from the outer to the inner, from behaviour to character or the state of one's soul. For instance, see North 1966, 156; Santas 1973, 112–13; Burnyeat 1971, 111–16; and, most recently, Tuozzo 2011, 157. However, I can find no decisive textual evidence of a consistent line drawn between one's disposition to behave in a certain manner and the corresponding behaviour.

¹³ There are no grounds to support the widespread view that Charmides' definition implies that temperance is *exclusively* a matter of behaviour, even though the focus unquestionably is on the behavioural aspects of the virtue.

¹⁴ See Burnyeat 1971, 211–15; Santas 1973, 112–13.

¹⁵ A cardinal is a songbird, but also a dignitary of the Catholic church.

(159e3–160b2). We should keep an eye on these shades of meaning and the ways they are interrelated in the refutation that follows.

2

The elenchus aiming to refute Charmides' first definition of temperance has been reconstructed in different ways and has received mixed reviews. On some accounts the argument is invalid¹⁶ and vitiated by a paralogism,¹⁷ while on others the argument is faulty but nonetheless has some persuasive force.¹⁸ In fact, I submit, the argument is better and more effective than it has widely been judged to be. It exploits the rich semantic nuances of 'hēsychēin' (primarily, to be quiet or calm or unobtrusive) and its cognates, as well as the different connotations of 'kalon', which, here, I render by 'admirable',¹⁹ in order to draw certain intuitively defensible inferences and reach the right conclusion.

We may begin by looking at two sketches of the logical skeleton of the argument drawn from the secondary literature. First: temperance or acting temperately²⁰ is always something *kalon*, admirable; temperance cannot be the same as quietness, unless quietness is also always something *kalon*; but it is not the case that quietness is always something *kalon* and, therefore, temperance cannot be the same thing as quietness.²¹ Or: all temperance is *kalon*, but some quietness is not *kalon* and, therefore, (some) quietness is not temperance.²² These sketchy reconstructions correctly suggest that the major premise of the argument does much work, since it attributes to temperance what we might call an essential characteristic (i.e. temperance is *kalon*) that quietness must also have if it is to define temperance. Socrates' counterexamples aim to demonstrate that, in fact, quietness does not have that characteristic: even though quietness may sometimes be *kalon*, it is not always or invariably *kalon*; or, even if some quietness is *kalon*, much of it is not. The above sketches, then, are defensible as far as

¹⁶ See, for instance, the scathing assessment by Beversluis 2000, 137–41.

¹⁷ Lutoslawski 1897, 203, attributes to Socrates this paralogism: from the premises 'temperance is *kalon*' and 'quickness is *kalon*', he infers that quickness is temperate. Tuckey 1951, 19, also holds that view.

¹⁸ So Santas 1973, 117: 'And since Socrates cannot perform miracles, his argument may perhaps remain convincing enough for activists, but not so convincing for people who put a high premium on quietness of behavior'.

¹⁹ On the meaning and connotations of *καλόν*, see below, 113–14.

²⁰ Henceforth, I treat these expressions interchangeably.

²¹ For example, see Santas 1973, 113, who subsequently offers a detailed and sensitive analysis of the comparative judgements constituting many of the premises of the argument.

²² Kosman 1983, 204.

they go. But they do not capture important features of this elenchus, notably the fact that several premises involve comparative judgements between, for example, acting more quietly and acting less quietly, or acting quietly and acting in an opposite or contrary manner.²³ Nor could schematic outlines convey the range of semantic nuances of '*hêsychiotês*' as well as of its cognates, near-synonyms, and opposites. It will be helpful, therefore, to lay out the argument in full detail and consider how it is supposed to work as a dialectical refutation. I propose the following reconstruction:

- (1) Temperance or acting temperately is a sort of quietness or acting quietly (159b2–6).
- (2) Temperance is a *kalon*, an admirable thing (159c1, d8, 11; cf. -160d1–2).²⁴
- (3) In fact, temperance is the greatest or one of the greatest *kala*, the most admirable things (cf. 157a5–b1).
- (4) Quietness or acting quietly²⁵ must be *kalon*.
- (5) Insofar as an action or manner of acting is *kalon*, it must be more or at least no less *kalon* than that same action performed in the contrary manner (e.g. 160d4–11).
- (6) Temperance or acting temperately is at least more *kalon* than its contrary.
- (7) A sort of quietness or acting quietly should be at least more *kalon* than its contrary.
- (8) A sort of quietness or acting quietly should be superlatively *kalon* in comparison to every action performed in a different or contrary manner.

However, Socrates' counterexamples suggest that:

- (9) Many types of actions exhibiting quietness are at least less *kala* than those types of actions exhibiting the opposite property.
- (10) Some types of actions exhibiting quietness are not *kala* but the opposite, namely *aischra*, disgraceful.²⁶

Therefore, 'at least according to this argument' (160b8):

²³ Santas 1973, 112–17, is attentive to that feature of the argument. On the other hand, Beversluis 2000, 138–9, views the comparisons as 'bizarre' contrasts and suggests possible reactions to them which, however, could not take place in a dialectical argument.

²⁴ On the meaning and connotations of '*kalon*', see below, 113–14. All emphases are mine.

²⁵ That is, the sort of quietness that Charmides deems identical with *sôphrosynê*: see note 5 in this chapter.

²⁶ See note 23 in this chapter.

- (11) It is not the case that temperance is a certain sort of quietness (160b7–8).²⁷
- (12) By implication, it is not the case that a temperate life is a quiet life (160b7–8).

Summing up the argument, Socrates concludes that, according to the above reasoning, it seems to follow that:

- (13) Either in no cases or in very few cases are quiet actions more admirable than their opposites (160b9–c2).
- (14) In all events, even assuming that, of the actions that are most admirable, the quiet ones are no fewer than the actions performed in the opposite manner (160c2–4), since temperance is a most admirable thing, it follows that temperance is equivalent, equally, both to acting quietly *and* acting in an opposite manner (160c4–6).
- (15) By implication, it follows that the quiet life is no more temperate than the life that is not quiet (160c7–d1).

At the outset, Socrates' claim that temperance is a *kalon* and the use of adjectival and adverbial forms of that word throughout the argument require comment. As has been convincingly shown,²⁸ 'kalon' is an evaluative term that can signify something aesthetically beautiful or functionally useful or morally good, and also can carry more than one of these connotations. In the *Charmides*, 'kalos' and its cognates are used, first, in a visual sense bearing ostensibly on physical beauty. For example, Socrates asks about the *kaloi*, beautiful youths (154a3, b5); Critias describes Charmides as *kallistos*, supremely beautiful (154a5); Chaerephon calls him *pankalos*, adorned with every beauty (154d5); and Socrates relays that when the youth blushed he became *eti kallion*, even more beautiful than before (158c5). Moreover, the implicit comparison between Charmides and a statue that everybody gazes at (154c1–8) indicates that the young man is *kalos* in the manner in which an *agalma* or statue (154c8) is *kalon*: admirable on account of his beauty, which has a peculiar sort of value in its own right.

Does Socrates consider temperance *kalon* in that sense? Well, many of the activities of the body and possibly some of the activities of the soul that will be mentioned in the course of the elenchus can be appreciated from an aesthetic point of view. A person who reads beautifully (159c6), plays a musical instrument beautifully (159c8–9), is a beautiful athlete (159c11–d2), or has a beautiful mind (159e1–160a2) may well be a source of aesthetic

²⁷ See notes 5 and 24 in this chapter. ²⁸ Nehamas 2007.

pleasure. But such activities of the body or of the soul may be *kala*, admirable, in another sense of *kalon* as well: as manifestations of a well-functioning and prudentially useful mechanism, physical or psychic. The student who reads and writes well, the musician who plays well, the athlete who competes well, quick learners, and those endowed with a good memory – all of these are *kaloi* in the sense of being skilful in what they are doing and of acting in a manner well suited to their respective goals. Furthermore, and importantly, the tale of Zalmoxis illustrates that temperance and every temperate action is *kalon* in a moral sense as well: it is a supremely good thing. For, according to the Thracian doctor, temperance is tantamount to the health of the soul, which secures both goods related to the health of the body and moral goods (156e6–157b1). If we suppose, together with Charmides, that temperance essentially consists in a particular manner of doing things, then the claim that temperance is *kalon* entails that deeds accomplished temperately have moral worth. Socrates does not clarify in just what sense he means that temperance is *kalon*, but this is not important for the purposes of the argument. All we need to assume is that *kalon* represents a positive value and an object of praise, whereas something that is not *kalon* or is *aischron*, disgraceful, has negative value and is an object of blame.²⁹

We may now turn to the argument. Comparably to Laches' second definition of courage as '*karteria tis*', some sort of endurance (*Lach.* 192b–c), and the specification in the *Meno* that justice is '*aretê tis*', some sort of virtue (*Men.* 73e1), Charmides' definition of temperance is *hêsychiotês tis*: not every sort of quietness but a certain kind of quietness which, however, remains unspecified. We are never told exactly what kind of quietness Charmides has in mind. And although the counterexamples that Socrates brings illustrate different cases of actions which might count as temperate, nonetheless questions can reasonably be raised as to whether the defining concept has unity or the refutation is effective. (More on this later.) Premise (2) is repeated no fewer than five times in the argument³⁰ and is intended to provide grounding for it.³¹ Socrates underscores that (2) is hypothetical (160d1–2). Nonetheless, the contention that temperance (or any virtue for that matter) is a *kalon* receives support from the story of Zalmoxis, is corroborated by other dialogues (e.g. *Lach.* 192d7–8), and has intuitive plausibility in its own right. Socrates appears strongly committed

²⁹ See Nehamas 2007, 98–102. Also, Santas 1973 maintains that, in this argument, *kalon* primarily has the sense of praiseworthy.

³⁰ As Kosman 1983, 204, points out, the premise is mentioned at 159c1, d8, d11, 160b8, d11.

³¹ Santas 1973, 113.

to this view and, as for Charmides, he readily accepts it in this instance³² and will do so again later (160e8).

We should consider the objection that Charmides could have undercut the argument by raising a methodological problem. ‘Asked whether temperance is admirable, (Charmides) should have replied: “I have no way of knowing that, Socrates; for, as you yourself constantly imply, one cannot know what properties are predicable of a virtue until one knows what that virtue is. And we have not yet discovered what temperance is”’.³³ But this reply is completely at odds with Charmides’ portrayal and the dramatic representation of his encounter with Socrates. He is terribly young and has never conversed with Socrates before, and while he has probably heard some things about him, he won’t have heard something as specific as the issue of the priority of definition. Also, although he has already received sufficient dialectical training to give the right sort of answer to the ‘what is X?’ question, he does not have nearly as much experience as, for example, Polus (*Gorg.* 448e).³⁴ In short, Charmides is simply not in a position to challenge Socrates in the way mentioned above.

Another objection also bears on (2), namely that the argument would be valid if (2) stated not merely that temperance is *kalon*, admirable, but that it is the most admirable thing or one of the most admirable things. For, in that case, even if doing things quietly were still admirable, provided that Socrates could prove that doing things quietly is *less* admirable than doing things in the contrary manner, he could validly infer that doing things quietly is not the same thing as temperance.³⁵ In fact, the story of Zalmoxis provides strong grounds for supplying (3), i.e. the premise that temperance is the greatest or one of the greatest *kala*, admirable things. For, according to the Thracian doctor, temperance amounts to the health of the soul, from which every other good can derive (157a5–b1). It is clear that Socrates assumes (3), for instance at 159c3–d12, where he infers that quickness is more temperate than quietness on the grounds that quickness or nimbleness is *kalliston*, a most admirable thing. For the record, Socrates reasserts this claim towards the end of the dialogue, when he declares that *sôphrosynê* is *kalliston pantôn*, the most admirable thing of all (175b).³⁶

The implicit premises (3) and (5), taken together, underpin the comparative judgements that Socrates makes in his counterexamples. It has been objected against (5) that, although Socrates does show that quiet

³² πάνυ γε, ἔφη (159c2). ³³ Beversluis 2000, 140–1. ³⁴ Compare Beversluis 2000, 141 n. 13.

³⁵ So Santas 1973, 115.

³⁶ Santas 1973, 115, mentions this passage but, since it comes much later than the elenchus of the first definition, he considers it irrelevant to the validity of that elenchus.

actions are frequently less admirable than their contraries, he fails to establish that they are not admirable or not temperate at all;³⁷ in fact, quiet actions can still be temperate, albeit less than their contraries and, therefore, the definition of temperance as some kind of quietness has not really been refuted. However, premise (5) postulates a special relation between the property of being *kalon* and the action bearing that property: minimally, insofar as an action performed in a certain manner is *kalon*, it must be more or at least no less admirable than that same action performed in the contrary manner. This requirement seems to me defensible. It is not unreasonable to assume that an action that is admirable and praiseworthy is a virtuous action. And it is not asking much to infer that any such action will be *more* admirable than its contrary. This minimal concession suffices for present purposes. Of course, one could opt for the stronger thesis that 'if calmness is treated as the essence of *σωφροσύνη*, it seems legitimate to treat its contrary (e.g. vehemence, in the terms of this argument) as the essence of intemperance'; then, showing that 'intemperate (vehement) actions are sometimes more beautiful than temperate (calm) ones would, indeed, be a decisive refutation of the definition'.³⁸ Socrates, I think, takes it for granted that premise (5) is implied by (4) and implies (6). But since, according to (6), temperance is at least more admirable than its contrary, and supposing that quietness or acting quietly is equivalent to temperance, it follows (7) that quietness or acting quietly must be at least *more kalon* than its contrary. However, (8) makes a stronger claim on the basis of (3): supposing that quietness or acting quietly is equivalent to temperance, and supposing that temperance is supremely admirable, acting quietly must be supremely admirable as well: it should be more *kalon* than acting in any other manner, let alone in the contrary manner.

We should now examine the counterexamples intended to secure inferences (9) and (10).³⁹ They fall into two groups explicitly identified by Socrates (160b3–5), one consisting of activities supposed primarily to concern the body (159c3–d12), the other of activities supposed primarily to concern the soul (159e1–160b1). Writing, reading, playing the lyre, and also wrestling, boxing, fighting in the *pankration* (wrestling-and-boxing), running, and long-jumping belong to the first group. Learning, teaching, remembering or recollecting, discernment, learning ability, and also enquiry, deliberation, and discovery belong to the second. This

³⁷ Santas 1973, 114–16. ³⁸ Tuozzo 2011, 158 n. 6.

³⁹ Compare Santas' inference (9) in Santas 1973, 114: 'so, in all that concerns either our soul or our body, actions of quickness and nimbleness are found to be *more* praiseworthy than those of slowness and quietness'. Also, compare Benson's inference (7) in Benson 2000, 72.

categorisation may look arbitrary and also misleading. For, on the one hand, activities such as writing, reading aloud, and playing an instrument surely involve the mind as well as the body. On the other hand, the psychic activities mentioned above, arguably, cannot take place without the engagement of the body at some level. However, it seems to me that the distinction can be defended on the grounds that every activity in the first group is centred on some physical adroitness, whereas every activity in the second group crucially is centred on a mental or psychic faculty. Moreover, it may be of significance that the former can be taught and, indeed, Socrates emphasises their educational context,⁴⁰ whereas the latter are by and large natural endowments which contribute to a greater or a lesser extent to the acquisition of knowledge or the performance of action. In both categories the examples concern types of activities as well as instances of them: types of activities, e.g. reading, wrestling, and learning, are such that many instances of them are less admirable when they are performed quietly than when they are performed in the contrary manner.⁴¹ Finally, all examples in both lists should be taken in a perfective sense, entailing completion or success.⁴² This last point is important for the interpretation of the comparative judgements contained in the counter-examples, and also for the detection of the common theme underlying them, namely that actions that have in any degree the property of being *kalon* are those that exhibit the possession of the relevant expertise or skill (*technê*).⁴³ We should be especially attentive to the semantic nuances of the adverbs that Socrates employs for purposes of comparison, and also to the uses of *kalon*, ‘admirable’, in the positive, comparative, and superlative forms.⁴⁴ First, let us look at the cases of activities primarily concerning the body.

- (a) In the grammar class, writing similar letters⁴⁵ quickly (*tachy*) is most admirable (*kalliston*), whereas writing them quietly or in a laidback way (*hêsychêi*) is less admirable (159c3–4). In this example, the

⁴⁰ See Tuozzo 2011, 158–9.

⁴¹ Van der Ben 1985, 27, discusses this issue specifically with regard to *Charm.* 165c1–2. As he points out, some interpreters assume that οὐδαμοῦ and ὀλιγαχοῦ refer to instances of actions (e.g. Lamb 1927 *ad loc.*), whereas others believe that the terms refer to types of actions (e.g. Croiset 1921 *ad loc.*, and also van der Ben 1985 *ad loc.*).

⁴² See van der Ben 1985, 24–5; also Dieterle 1966, 157, cited also by van der Ben.

⁴³ See also Kosman 1983 and Tuozzo 2011, 157–61.

⁴⁴ Santas 1973, 114–16, mentions both these features in relation to two main faults that he finds in the argument: first, the comparisons are unfair; and second, the uses of *kalon* in its different modes render the argument invalid.

⁴⁵ That is, letters of the same quality: see the relevant comment in van der Ben 1985, 24–5.

principal factors which determine the admirability of the action are speed and facility: of students copying letters of the same quality, those who copy⁴⁶ them quickly and easily deserve *more* praise than those who write them slowly and with difficulty. Taken in that sense, 'quickly' and 'quietly' are contraries: one cannot copy letters both quickly and slowly, both smoothly and clumsily, both with ease and with difficulty. The former member of these pairs is supremely *kalon*: it indicates the optimal manner of performing that kind of activity. On the other hand, the latter member is certainly less *kalon* or even not *kalon* at all. A first-grade student who writes with some difficulty is, to be sure, less praiseworthy than a classmate fluent in writing, but still merits some praise. An Economics major who has done nothing to improve his verbal expression and under-performs in all written exams gives no cause for admiration.

- (b) That this is the meaning of 'quietly' above is confirmed by the second counterexample, which is very similar to the first: it is also most admirable (*kalliston*) to read quickly (*tacheôs*) rather than slowly (*bradeôs*). In this case, quickly and slowly are treated as contraries. Moreover, as in the previous case, the claim that reading quickly is *supremely* admirable implies that acting in the contrary manner must be *less* admirable, or indeed not admirable at all.
- (c) Playing the lyre and wrestling are far more admirable (*poly kallion*) when performed quickly (*tacheôs*) or quickly and keenly (*oxeôs*) than when performed quietly and slowly (*hêsychê*) or sluggishly and slowly (*bradeôs*). The same holds for boxing and fighting in the *pankration*. These examples are quite complicated. The contrary of playing an instrument quickly is not playing it quietly but playing it slowly. Yet, the primary sense of '*hêsychê*' is 'quietly' and the reason Socrates uses it, I take it, is to indicate not so much the speed with which the notes are produced as the musician's sedate manner of playing. Something similar holds for wrestling: the contrary of *oxeôs*, 'keenly', is not *bradeôs*, 'slowly', but the relevant contrast is implied in the assumption that, typically, keen wrestling is also quick, while slow wrestling is also sluggish.⁴⁷ Once again, the comparisons are supposed to show that acting quietly in the senses specified above is clearly less *kalon*

⁴⁶ For a different view, see Santas 1973, 115.

⁴⁷ In the next set of examples, Socrates draws an explicit contrast between acting keenly and quickly on the one hand, and [slowly and] quietly on the other (159d1–2).

than the contrary manner of acting; but nothing precludes that acting quietly is also *kalon* to some degree.

- (d) Running, leaping, and, generally, all such bodily activities belong to the class of admirable things (*tou kalou esti*) if they are accomplished keenly and quickly (*oxeôs kai tachy*), but to the class of disgraceful things (*tou aischrou*) if they are slow and quiet (*[bradea] te kai hêsychia*). The contrast implicit in the previous group of examples here becomes explicit, and the corresponding judgements are not comparative but positive: of such bodily actions, every quick action is a *kalon*; and every quiet action is something *aischron*, i.e. the contrary of *kalon*. Unlike the previous cases, which allow that a quiet action *can* be *kalon* (though less so than its contrary), this set of examples is supposed to demonstrate that certain quiet activities of the body are, in fact, disgraceful. This seems to be a lethal counterexample to Charmides' definition but, nonetheless, in his partial summary of the argument (159b4–5) Socrates chooses to weaken his claim. For, in the first place, he concludes that, regarding activities which have to do with the body, the *most* admirable (*kalliston*) are not the quieter ones but the quickest and keenest (159d4–5). Again, this is comparative: the quickest and keenest actions are incomparably more admirable or praiseworthy than those that are less quick and keen, but, nonetheless, it is possible that certain quieter actions too may deserve lesser praise. In the second place, Socrates appears to reason that, since temperance is *kalon* and since quicker bodily actions are more *kala* than their opposites, it follows that quickness is more temperate than quietness (159d10–11). This is often regarded as a particularly bad mistake on Plato's part: from the claims that temperance is admirable and that quickness is admirable it does not follow that quickness is temperate.⁴⁸ But I think that this criticism can be met by paying close attention to the context. Immediately after commenting on the activities of the body, Socrates turns to the activities of the soul and argues that, in these cases too, quickness is more *kalon*, admirable, than slowness. The quickness with which Charmides assents to the aforementioned fallacy, however, undercuts that claim. Had he taken the time to carefully consider the proposed argument and had he been slower in responding, he might not have fallen into the trap. Indeed,

⁴⁸ See Lutoslawski 1897, 203, who claims not only that the argument is vitiated by a paralogism, but also that such paralogisms are characteristic of Plato's state of logical development at the time of writing the *Charmides*. Beversluis 2000, 138–9, has a similar approach.

Socrates' methodology is not meant to show that *sôphrosynê* is speed. It is an elenchus aiming to examine whether Charmides doesn't know what he believes he knows.

In the next phase of the argument, Socrates turns to certain activities of the soul or the mind.

- (e) In the cases of learning, teaching, recollecting, and remembering, it is *more* admirable (*kallion*) to function quickly (*tacheôs*) or quickly and intensely (*tacheôs kai sphodra*)⁴⁹ than quietly and slowly (*hêsychêi kai bradeôs*).⁵⁰ Here 'quickly', I take it, means primarily getting the job done without delay⁵¹ and with mental vigour. On the other hand, 'quietly and slowly' indicates difficulty⁵² in accomplishing these types of actions, but also, I think, a sort of mental idleness or haziness or weakness. Although the comparative use of *kalon* leaves open the logical possibility that this latter manner of acting could occasionally attract praise, pragmatically this possibility is almost nil: even when we praise a slow learner, we do not do so because we deem admirable that manner of learning but rather for some other reason, e.g. to encourage the student to try harder.
- (f) *Anchinoia*, readiness or incisiveness of mind, is a sort of nimbleness⁵³ or sharpness (*oxytês tis*), not quietness (*hêsychia*). In this example, Socrates designates the contrasted manners of acting by using nouns, not adverbs. The suggested conclusion is that responding readily is *kalon*, whereas responding quietly, in the sense of hesitantly or dully, is not *kalon*. It is not clear whether this latter manner of acting is actually the opposite or the contrary of *kalon*. Like the previous group of cases, this case too supports the contention that engaging in such activities quietly (in a broad sense of the term, as indicated above) is at least less admirable than engaging in them in the contrary or opposite manner. Furthermore, like the previous examples, this one lends plausibility to the claim that acting quietly can be downright disgraceful.
- (g) Apprehending what is taught, whether it is writing or music or anything else, is *most* admirable (*kallista*) when it is accomplished *most* quickly (*tachista*), not *most* quietly (*hêsychaitata*). 'Moreover, in enquiries of the soul'⁵⁴ and especially in deliberation it is not the most

⁴⁹ In the case of learning, *ταχέως* alone is used (159e3), whereas both adverbs are used in the cases of teaching, recollection, and remembrance (159e9–10).

⁵⁰ Both adverbs are used in varying order in all four cases.

⁵¹ A different reading is proposed by Santas 1973, 114. ⁵² Santas 1973, 114. ⁵³ Santas 1973, 114.

⁵⁴ The phrase ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ζητήσεσιν τῆς ψυχῆς can be rendered in different ways, e.g. 'in the operations of thought' (Sprague) or 'in the searchings of the soul' (Lamb). My own translation 'in enquiries of

quiet (*hēsychiôtatos*) person, I think, or he who deliberates and discovers with great difficulty (*mogis*) that is considered praiseworthy (*epainou axios*), but the person who does this most easily and most quickly (*rhaista te kai tachista*)' (160a8–b1). Again, in the case of apprehension, 'most quietly' and 'most quickly' designate contrary ways of acting, and the same holds for the way in which 'the most quiet person' deliberates (i.e. most quietly and with difficulty) which is contrasted with deliberating most quickly and most easily. Both in the educational environment of the classroom and in activities involving deliberation and enquiry, thinking 'most quietly' is a damning description: it points to a weakness of the mind, whether this is a student's slowness to understand and assimilate what he is being taught, or an adult's difficulty to think things through and find the truth or the right course of action. On the other hand, as Socrates suggests, doing these things 'most easily and most quickly' typically exhibits highly valued mental qualities: good mental reflexes as well as intellectual power, thoroughness and incisiveness, an adequate grasp of means and ends related to the process of deliberation, and effectiveness in forming correct judgements or making good decisions. Such features are as praiseworthy as they are rare to find and, on many accounts, they require an optimal understanding of both facts and values. Socrates' repeated use of superlatives is significant: the capabilities under discussion are of the utmost importance. Those who have them and exhibit them in their manner of acting deserve great praise, whereas those who can't act in that manner get no praise. Again, Socrates does not state whether, in the aforementioned cases, acting 'most quietly' is actually disgraceful, but it seems likely that it may be.

So far, different groups of examples have led, on inductive grounds, to three different conclusions. First, quickness of all sorts⁵⁵ is *more kalon*, admirable, than quietness of all sorts or, equivalently, quietness of all sorts is *less* admirable than quickness of all sorts. Second, in many cases, quickness is *most* admirable – which leaves open the issue of whether, in these same cases, quietness is *less* admirable than quickness or rather not admirable at all. Third, in some cases, quickness is admirable, whereas

the soul' is closer to Lamb's translation. I take καὶ τῷ βουλευέσθαι as one of the soul's enquiries: the soul is the subject that enquires, deliberates, and discovers.

⁵⁵ According to the rules of antilogic, Socrates is entitled to make this generalisation, all the more so because he examined a fairly large number and variety of examples.

quietness is disgraceful. On these counts, I conclude, the counterexamples that Socrates adduces lend considerable support to (8) as well as the tentative inferences (9) and (10).⁵⁶

As many have noted, however, in his final conclusions (13–15), Socrates understates the results of the elenchus. Claim (13) has the form of a dilemma: either in no case or in very few cases have quiet actions appeared to be (*ephanêsan*: 160c) *more* admirable (*kallious*) than their contraries. According to (14), of the more admirable actions (*kallious*), there are no fewer quiet actions than their contraries; that is, quick and forceful ones. While Socrates had earlier concluded that quiet actions are *less* admirable than their contraries and some of them are not admirable at all, he now allows that *some* quiet actions may be *more* admirable than their contraries. A modern critic remarks: 'He [sc. Socrates] is, of course, wrong about this. The foregoing argument did not demonstrate that at all. What it purported to demonstrate was not that quick actions are *no less* admirable, and, therefore, *no less* temperate than quiet ones, but rather that they are *more* admirable, and, therefore, *more* temperate, than quiet ones. In addition to arguing fallaciously, Socrates has misrepresented the conclusion of his own argument'.⁵⁷ The structure of Socrates' final claims might appear to play into the critics' hands. For, first, he states that acting quietly is *no more* temperate than acting quickly, whereas the elenchus aimed to show that acting quietly is actually *less* temperate than its contrary; and, second, he declares that the quiet life is *no more* temperate than its opposite,⁵⁸ whereas the elenchus suggests that, in fact, it is much *less* temperate.

Nonetheless, it seems to me that Socrates' decision to soften the final claims of the refutation can be justified. In the first place, to refute Charmides' definition, Socrates does not need to establish that quickness (or some other, closely related property) is *more* temperate than quietness. All he needs to show is that, very frequently, quietness is just as admirable as its contrary; therefore, quietness is no better candidate than quickness in order to define temperance. This goal is compatible with Socrates' implicit suggestion that there can be some cases of acting quietly which, coincidentally, may also be cases of acting temperately, just as there can be some cases of acting quickly which, coincidentally, are temperate actions. In

⁵⁶ Socrates underscores the dialectical nature of the argument and the provisional or tentative character of the conclusion by noting that the latter follows ἐκ γε τούτου τοῦ λόγου, at least according to this reasoning (160b8). The use of the optative mood both in this instance (ἐν εἴῃ: 160b7) and throughout the argument may also serve that purpose.

⁵⁷ Beversluis 2000, 140.

⁵⁸ This is the only time that ἡσύχιος, quiet, is contrasted with μὴ ἡσύχιου, not quiet: 160c7.

the second place, Socrates' strategy is pedagogically very astute. On the one hand, he shows to Charmides that quietness or doing things quietly cannot serve to define temperance, while, on the other, he leaves room for the possibility that, in some cases, acting temperately may exhibit a sort of *hésychiôtês*. Thus, the young man does not feel completely discouraged, but remains willing to pursue the search.

In the end, what are the effects of this elenchus on Charmides? And what effects does it have on ourselves? Charmides seems now quite convinced that temperance is not identical with quietness or any other related manner of acting. However, we cannot be sure whether or to what extent he was able to follow the argument and grasp its central point. As for ourselves, I think that we have gained valuable insights into the relations that might obtain between virtue and some specific manner of acting and, in particular, between temperance and dignified conduct. The take-home lesson is a correct one: such relations are at best contingent and can be deceitful as well. Furthermore, some of Socrates' counterexamples may serve to direct us to other dialogues of the Platonic corpus. For instance, recollection and memory (159e9–10) are topics occurring in the *Meno*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Phaedrus*, while the mental and psychic activities of the second group of Socrates' examples partly overlap with the qualities of the Guardians in the *Republic*. Not only must the Guardians love wisdom, but they also must be good at learning (486c) and remembering (486c), and must excel in practical deliberation as well as theoretical enquiry. In the context of the *Republic*, it would be defensible to claim that the optimal performance of these activities requires a kind of mental quickness: e.g. sharpness, incisiveness, precision, mental agility, intellectual concentration, and the ability to easily spot connections and draw inferences. But this is not our present concern. Rather, we should follow Charmides in his next attempt to determine the nature of temperance.