Mornington Crescent

1. **Common or garden sophists?**
   a. The parade of villains: Protagoras, Prodicus, Critias, Gorgias, Hippias, Thrasymachus (e.g. *Protagoras* 315-6, 347-8)
      i. Well-attested historical figures, richly described (e.g. *Republic* 336b-354b)
      ii. Common culture (and money-making)
   b. Operate with two argumentative modes:
      i. A methodology, dilemmatic sequences to absurd conclusion (resting on acceptance of LNC) (compare *Dissoi logoi* or Gorgias' *Defence of Helen*)
      ii. A reductive challenge: show me that you are entitled to more!
      iii. → refutations often dialectical (*Theaetetus* 171; *Euthydemus* 287, 303-4).
   c. The sophists of the *Euthydemus*
      i. Poor independent evidence (but *Cratylus* 386d; Xenophon *Mem.* 3.1)
      ii. Hard to count (describe as 'a pair', via Greek dual)
      iii. Biography of states left behind and skills superseded (*Euthyd.* 271c-272b [REFS to *Euthyd.* henceforth unless specified; translations my own])
      iv. 'New-fangled sophists' (271b) who:

TEXT 1 '…have (completely) become wicked-clever at fighting in words [*logoi*, 'sayings'] and refuting whatever is said [what is always said] alike whether it is true or false.' [272a-b]

   d. Episodes of the *Euthydemus:*
      i. *first sophistic* (275d2-278d1) the sophists trap Cleinias into saying that both the wise and the ignorant learn.
      ii. *first Socratic* (278d1-282e6) Socrates offers a complex discussion of wisdom and the good.
      iii. *second sophistic* (283a1-288d4) the sophists get Soc. and co. to conceded that there is no such thing as falsehood nor contradiction.
      iv. *second Socratic* (288d5-293a7) Socrates' account of wisdom and the good runs into difficulties, frame dialogue interrupts.
      v. *third sophistic* (293a8-304c5) the sophists offer a motley series of arguments towards their final triumphant silencing of Socrates.
      vi. *epilogue* (304c6-307c4) set in the frame, Crito's encounter with an anonymous critic.

2. **Fallacy and other animals**
   a. What are these sophists doing?
      i. Focus on argument as such:
         1. A metaphysical commitment (as Megarians/Eleatics etc.)?
         2. To monger fallacies and enable us to <u>see</u> where they go wrong?
         3. Why else?
   b. How are they doing it?
      i. Seriousness or play?
      ii. Games and rules?

3. **Mornington Crescent**
   a. Some games are practices with explicit rules (whether or not spectator-sports)

      b. Some games have inexplicit or flexible rules and practices, discovered as we go along, and subject to development and change

      c. And there is Mornington Crescent:

         i. The appearance of a game

         ii. Reliant on the audience to whom it appears.

      d. Which, if any, are the sophists doing?

      e. Which, if any, is the dialogue doing?

4. Thinking about fiction: reading Plato.

      a. Mornington Crescent works because <u>we</u> are <u>not</u> playing but listening.

      b. Likewise we read a Platonic dialogue from the outside, and find it strange.

      c. And Socrates is strange too.

         i. Radical theses (about wisdom and the good, e.g., at 278-82)

         ii. His role as interlocutor is blurred, and his identity questioned

TEXT 2 CR: What are you saying, Socrates: did that youth utter those words? -- SOC: Do you think he didn't, Crito? -- CR: No, I certainly do not. For I think that if he did, he would not need educating at the hands of Euthydemus or of anyone else. – SOC: Well, by Zeus, perhaps it was Ctesippus who said this, and I have forgotten? -- CR: What sort of Ctesippus? --SOC: Well, I know for sure that it was not Euthydemus nor Dionysodorus who said that. But, my good Crito, maybe it was one of the superior beings who was present and uttered these words? For I know very well that I heard them. -- CR: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates --it seems to me that it was one of the superior beings, and very much so. And did you find what you were looking for, or not? (290e-291a)

         iii. He still ends up in a lot of trouble (292; 303).

      d. This turns us back to the elaborate fictionality of the dialogue. So what?

5. Rules and lumps

      a. Sophistic methodology again:

         i. Dialectical format, pressing to a contradiction (e.g. in the first sophistic)

         ii. Reductive demand: show me that you are entitled to more!

      b. In the second sophistic episode:

         i. no such thing as saying what is false;

         ii. no such thing as denying what someone else says, no disagreement or countersaying (*antilegein*)

         iii. Here saying the truth is perfected or complete, done just when it is done.

         iv. → truths are <u>lumpish</u>,

TEXT 3 'Is it in saying [*legein*] the thing about which the saying [*logos*] is, or not saying it? ' 'Saying it,' he said. 'Surely if indeed he says it, then he says none other of the things that are than the thing he says?' 'So what?' said Ctesippus. 'That which he says is some one of the things that are, distinct from the others.' 'Certainly.' 'So he who says it says what is?' 'Yes.' 'But he who says what is and the things that are says the truth? So that Dionysodorus, if indeed he says what is, says the truth and in no way gives the lie to anything about you.' 'Yes,' Ctesippus said, 'but the person who says these things does not say the things that are.' And Euthydemus said, 'The things that are not, surely they are not?' 'They are not.' 'So the things that are not, aren't they things that are nowhere?' 'Nowhere.' 'So is it possible for anyone whosoever to do anything at all in respect of these things that are not, so as to make them be those and to be nowhere?' 'I don't think so,' said Ctesippus. 'Well, then: When orators say [speak] before the people, do they do nothing?' 'No, they do something.'

'And if they do something, they make something?' 'Yes.' 'So saying is doing and making?' He agreed. 'Therefore no-one says what is not, for that would be already to make something and you have decisively agreed that no-one can make what is not. So according to your saying, no-one says falsehoods, but if indeed Dionysodorus says, he says truths and what is.' (283e-284d)

     c. In the third sophistic episode
        i. A similarly lumpish position on saying.
        ii. Qualifications ruled out of order.

TEXT 4 'Well, then, answer me,' he said. 'Is there something you know?' 'Yes, indeed,' I said, many things, but small ones.' 'That'll do,' he said. 'So now do you think it is possible for any of the things that are not to be that very thing which it happens to be?' 'No, by Zeus, I don't.' 'And you know something?' he said. 'I do.' 'Then if you know, you are knowing?' 'Certainly, of that very thing.' 'It makes no difference; but surely, if you are knowing, you must know everything?' 'Zeus, no,' I said. 'For there are many other things which I do not know.' 'But then if there is something you do not know, you are not knowing.' 'Of that, my friend,' I said. 'Will you be any less not knowing? Yet just now you said that you were knowing. And so you turn out to be yourself this very same person who you are, and again you are not, in the same respects at the same time.' (293b-d)

6. **Perfection and imperfection**
     a. So sophistic episodes have a perfected or closed character, with a lumpish conception of truth.
     b. Socrates' argument keeps going, indefinite to beyond the dialogue.
     c. Compare the (single) diagnosis in the first sophistic episode:
        i. Problem with the central term 'learning'

TEXT 5 'First, as Prodicus says, you should learn the correctness of names. This is what our visitors are showing you, that you don't understand that learning is the name men use for cases when someone from the beginning has no knowledge about some matter, and then later gets knowledge of it; but they use the same name for cases when someone already has the knowledge, and with this same knowledge considers that very same matter either in action or in saying. They more often call the latter understanding than learning, but they sometimes call it learning, too. But you had forgotten this, as they have demonstrated, that the same name is used for people in quite opposite conditions, for someone who knows, and for someone who does not. Pretty much the same thing was going on in the second question, too, when they asked you whether men learn what they know or what they do not know.' (277e5-278b2)

        ii. A difference of aspect: is 'learn' perfective or imperfective?
        iii. Arguments of the sophists occlude the imperfective.
        iv. The same applies to the theme of the dialogue, 'saying'
           1. the sophists treat it as perfective (lumpish)
           2. Socrates allows for saying to be imperfective, large scope, and capable of succeeding or failing.

7. **Contexts and qualifications**
     a. The reductive strategy and lumpism disallow qualifications and context.
     b. But how to justify the qualifications instead?

TEXT 6 It is impossible that the same thing should belong and not belong to the same thing, at the same time and in the same respects (we should assume to be added all those additions which are needed for the logical difficulties. (Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1005b19-22)

      c. The slow process of acquiring wisdom, gradual and with failure as well as success → a way to come to a (skill in) understanding context.

8. Oh Sir Jasper

      a. 'Bravo Heracles'

TEXT 7 Well, Crito, as though struck by the saying (argument, *logos*), I lay speechless. Ctesippus sought to come to my aid, and said, 'Bravo, Heracles, what a fine saying (argument, *logos*)!' And Dionysodorus said: 'is Heracles a bravo or the bravo a Heracles?' And Ctesippus said 'O Poseidon, what terrifying arguments! I give up, this pair is invincible'. (303a4-9)

      b. The same strategy for Killing Cleinias

TEXT 8 'Well then,' he [Dionysodorus} said, 'you say you want him to become wise?' 'Absolutely' 'But now,' he said, 'is Cleinias wise or not?' 'He says he is not yet, because he is not a boaster.' 'But you,' he said, 'want him to become wise and not to be ignorant?' We agreed. 'So you want him to become who he is not, and who he is, you want him no longer to be.' And as I heard this I was troubled; he realised that I was troubled and said, 'Surely, if you want him no longer to be who he is now, you want him, as it seems, to perish? Fine friends and lovers you are, who want above all for their beloved to die.' (283c5-d8)

      c. Is this a matter of an equivocation on 'is', or between 'who' and 'what'?

      d. Or a matter of syntax:

          i. On the lumpish view, saying is complete as soon as it is truth-evaluable.

          ii. On the non-lumpish view saying may be imperfective → dynamic syntax.

      e. A reverse Sir Jasper.

9. Mornington Crescent?

      a. How many games, and whose are they?

          i. Sophists play MC, Socrates plays a real game?

          ii. Sophists play Academic game, Socrates a different one?

          iii. Sophists play an Academic game, Socrates insists on the importance of process and failure: rejects game altogether?

MMM
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