PRESBYOPIC CORRUPTION: PLATO, *SYMPOSIVM* 219A

Alcibiades relates Socrates' warning on his proposal for a reciprocal exchange of beauty; he should take a better look (ἄμεινον σκόπει) in case he is mistaken about Socrates' beauty and true worth: ἥ τοι τῆς διανοίας ὄψις ἄρχεται ὀξὺ βλέπειν ὅταν ἡ τῶν ὀμμάτων τῆς ἀκμῆς λήγειν ἐπιχειρῇ· σὺ δὲ τούτων ἔτι πόρρω, 'the sight of the mind, you know, begins to see sharply when the sight of the eyes attempts (?) to fade from its prime—but you (are) still far from these (developments).'

Renehan[1] appears to have been the first to question the veracity of the manuscripts' λήγειν ἐπιχειρῇ. Recalling that the radical sense of ἐπιχειρεῖν is conative, he rejects the older editors' assumption that ἐπιχειρῇ here is the equivalent of ἄρχηται ('*begins* to fade').[2] Rather, he says, λήγειν ἐπιχειρῇ must mean, nonsensically, 'attempts to fade', or 'puts its hand to fading', and we should therefore emend, either to λήγειν ἄρχηται or, more naturally, to λήγῃ alone;[3] ἐπιχειρῇ should be deleted 'without hesitation' as an 'intruder', following as it does the two instances of ἐπιχειρεῖς in the preceding six lines of the Oxford text: 218e4, ἐπιχειρεῖς καὶ ἀλλάξασθαι κάλλος ('you are striving to exchange beauty'); 218e6, ἀλήθειαν καλῶν κτᾶσθαι ἐπιχειρεῖς ('you are striving to get the truth of beautiful things'). Other proposals may be mentioned. Dover[4] prints † λήγειν ἐπιχειρῇ † and suggests that λήγειν perhaps should be deleted, with ἐπιχειρῇ emended to ἐπιλείπῃ ('fail in', 'fall short of'). Waterfield[5] also would delete λήγειν and also emend ἐπιχειρῇ, to ἀποχωρῇ ('when your eyesight goes into decline'). Rowe[6] obelizes ἐπιχειρῇ, noting Dover's ἐπιλείπῃ in his critical apparatus.

Renehan's λήγῃ (with ἐπιχειρῇ deleted) is simple and neat but summarily dismissive of the manuscript tradition. What would seem to be needed is a reading which will account for the presence of both verbs, λήγειν and ἐπιχειρῇ, in the received text. In light of the two preceding occurrences of ἐπιχειρεῖς cited above, I would suggest that Socrates may have drawn an emphatic contrast between Alcibiades' persistent 'blind' *striving* and the sharp-sighted mental discernment which comes only with age and the fading of physical sight; Plato then may have written:

[1] R. Renehan, 'Plato, *Symposium* 219a2–4', *CR* 19 (1969), 270–1.

[2] So, for example, with explicit translation, G. Stallbaum, *Platonis opera omnia*, vol. 1 *Symposium* (Gothae, 1828), 'wann die Schärfe der Augen aufzuhören beginnt'; L. Robin, *Platon*, t. IV *Le Banquet* (Paris, 1929), 'quand celle des yeux se met à perdre de son acuité'; W.R.M. Lamb, *Plato III*, *Symposium* (Cambridge, Mass. & London, 1925/1983), 'when the visual [sight] is entering on its wane'. For tacit acceptance of ἐπιχειρῇ = ἄρχηται vel sim., see R.G. Bury, *The* Symposium *of Plato* (Cambridge, 1932[2]) and many others, including J. Burnet, *Platonis opera*, vol. II (Oxford, 1901).

[3] He compares [Plat.] *I Alc.* 131e11 τὰ δὲ σὰ λήγει ὥρας, σὺ δ' ἄρχῃ ἀνθεῖν ('the things that are yours are fading from their prime, while you are beginning to bloom').

[4] K. Dover, *Plato:* Symposium (Cambridge, 1980).

[5] R. Waterfield, *Plato:* Symposium. *A New Translation* (Oxford, 1994).

[6] C. Rowe, *Plato:* Symposium (Warminster, 1998).

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ὅταν ἡ τῶν ὀμμάτων τῆς ἀκμῆς λήγηι· σὺ δὲ ἐπιχειρῶν τούτων ἔτι πόρρω

when the sight of the eyes fades from its prime—but you, in your present striving, are still far from these (developments).

Two steps to corruption may be imagined. That σὺ δὲ ἐπιχειρῶν was miscopied as ἐπιχειρῶν σὺ δέ would scarcely surprise, for transpositions such as this are common in the manuscripts; we may compare, for example, the respective readings of B and TW at 183e1, μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐρῶν] μᾶλλον ἐρῶν ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς.[7] With λήγηι and ἐπιχειρῶν now juxtaposed, a syntactical 'correction' was obviously needed. Hence λήγειν ἐπιχειρῆι—acceptable syntax, unacceptable sense.

Let me end on a subjective note, on tone. An anonymous referee, whose helpful comments I gratefully acknowledge, wonders if the 'emphatic contrast' (between Alcibiades' striving and the attaining of true discernment) which I claim for the emended text is not already present 'in the structure of the discourse'. It is, probably, yet a culminating ἐπιχειρῶν may hold a hint of impatience in Socrates' warning, 'you're *striving* to exchange beauty … you're *striving* to get the truth … but *in all of this striving of yours* …'; for such impatience, compare the immediately preceding vocative address, ὦ μακάριε, which is 'capable of conveying correction, rebuke, or even indignation'.[8]

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TIPPLING BUT NOT TOPPLING: EUBULUS, *PCG* FR. 123*

Eubulus, fr. 123 K.–A. = fr. 126 Hunter is incompletely preserved in the epitome of Ath. *Deipn.* 1.23b:

εἴρηται δὲ τὸ βρέχειν καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πίνειν. Ἀντιφάνης·
δεῖ γὰρ φαγόντας δαψιλῶς βρέχειν.
Εὔβουλος· Σίκων ἐγὼ
βεβρεγμένος ἥκω καὶ κεκωθωνισμένος.
Α. πέπωκας οὗτος; Sikon: <– ∪ –> πέπωκ' ἐγώ,
μὰ <τὸν> Δία τὸν Μενδαῖον.

The word *brechein* [lit. 'moisten'] has also been used of drinking. Antiphanes:
'After all, those who have eaten must drink [*brechein*] greedily.'
Eubulus: 'I, Sikon,
am here—sloshed [*bebregmenos*] and in my cups.' …
A: 'Hey, are you drunk?' Sikon: '[…] *I* am drunk, not by Zeus of Mende.'

[7] Cf. G. Boter, *The Textual Tradition of Plato's* Republic (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1989), 107.
[8] S.H. Halliwell, 'Forms of address: Socratic vocatives in Plato', in F. de Martino and A.H. Sommerstein (edd.), *Lo Spettacolo delle Voci*, vol. 2 (Bari, 1995), 87–121, at 107, cited by Rowe (n. 6), ad loc.

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