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A TRANSLATION OF THE

DISSOI LOGOI

or

DIALEXEIS

as from Diels-Kranz⁶ (90, vol. II, 405-16)

by

Rosamond Kent Sprague

Note: There appears to be no English version of the Dissoi Logoi in print. Since the difficulties involved in achieving accuracy in the first rendering of a text are considerable, the translator asks for criticism from members of the Society. Corrections and suggestions may be sent to her c/o Department of Philosophy, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C., 29208, and will be duly acknowledged. She also requests that no citations be made from the present version as she does not regard it as a finished piece of work.

I Concerning Good and Bad

- (1) (1) Two-fold arguments concerning the good and the bad are put forward in Greece by those who philosophize. Some say that the good is one thing and the bad another, but others say that they are the same because a thing might be good for some persons but bad for others, or at one time good
- (2) and at another time bad for the same person. (2) I myself side with those who hold the latter opinion, and I shall examine it using as an example human life and its concern for food, drink, and sexual pleasures: these things are bad for a man if he is sick, but good if he is healthy
- (3) and needs them. (3) And, further, self-indulgence in these matters is bad for the self-indulgent but good for those who sell these things and prostitute themselves. And again, illness is bad for the sick but good for the doctors. And death is bad for those who die but good for the under-
- (4) takers and gravediggers. (4) Farming which produces good crops is good for the farmers but bad for the merchants. Again, if trading-vessels are staved in or smashed up, this is bad for the ship-owner but good for the ship-builders.
- (5) (5) And further, if a tool is corroded and blunted and broken, this is good for the blacksmith but bad for everyone else. And certainly if a pot gets smashed, this is good for the potters, but bad for everyone else. And if shoes are worn out and broken, this is good for the cobbler but bad for
- (6) everyone else. (6) And, further, take the case of various contests, athletic, musical, and military: in a race in the stadium, for instance, victory is good for the winner but bad
- (7) for the losers. (7) The same holds true for wrestlers and

boxers, and for all those who take part in musical contests:

for instance, victory in lyreplaying is good for the winner

(8) but bad for the losers. (8) In the case of war (and I shall

speak of the most recent events first) the victory of the

Spartans which they won over the Athenians and their allies

was good for the Spartans but bad for the Athenians and their

allies. And the victory which the Greeks won over the Mede

(9) was good for the Greeks but bad for the barbarians. (9) And

again, the capture of Ilium was good for the Achaeans but bad

for the Trojans. And the same is true of what happened to the

(10) Thebans and the Argives. (10) And the battle between the

Centauris and the Lapiths was good for the Lapiths but bad for

the Centauris. And, finally, the battle which is said to have

taken place between the gods and the giants (with the result-

ing victory for the gods) was good for the gods but bad for

(11) the giants. (11) And there is another argument which says

that the good is one thing and the bad another, and that as

the name differs, so does the thing named. I myself explain

the matter in this way: I think the nature of the good would

be indistinguishable from that of the bad if they were just

the same and one did not differ from the other; in fact such

(12) a situation would be extraordinary. (12) And I think a person

who says these things would be unable to answer if anyone

should question him as follows: "Just tell me, did your

parents ever do you any good?" He would answer, "Yes, many

great goods." "Then you are obliged to them for many great

(13) evils if the good is really the same as the bad." (13) "Well

then, did you ever do your kinsmen any good?" "Yes, many

great goods." "Then you were doing your kinsmen harm. And

again, did you ever do your enemies wrong?" "Yes, many great

(14) wrongs." "Then you did them the greatest goods." (14) "Come

and answer me this: do you have anything except pity for the poor, because they have many evils, and again do you count them lucky because they have many goods, if good and bad are really the same thing?" (15) There is nothing to prevent the Great King from being in the same state as a beggar. His many great goods are many great evils if good and bad are the same. We can consider that the same things have been said in every case. (16) Having begun with eating and drinking and sexual pleasures, I am going to use these particular examples again. These things are bad for the sick to do and again they are good for them to do, if good and bad are really the same. And for the sick it is bad to be ill and also good, if good is really the same as bad. (17) And this holds for all the other cases which were mentioned in the previous argument. And I am not saying what the good is, but I am trying to show that the bad and the good are not the same but that each is distinct from the other.

II Concerning Seemly and Disgraceful

(1) (1) Two-fold arguments are also put forward concerning the seemly and the disgraceful. Some say the seemly is one thing and the disgraceful another, and that as the name differs, so does the thing named, and others say that the seemly and disgraceful are the same. (2) And I shall examine the matter by expounding it in the following way: for example, it is seemly for a boy in the flower of his youth to gratify a lover, but for him to gratify one who is not a lover is disgraceful. (3) And for women to wash themselves indoors is seemly, but for them to do so in the palaistra is disgraceful (although for men to do so in the palaistra and gymnasium is seemly.) (4) And to lie with a man in private

where the action will be concealed behind walls is seemly, but to do so outside, where someone will see, is disgraceful. (5) And for a woman to lie with her own husband is seemly, but to do so with another woman's husband is most shameful; and for a man to lie with his own wife is seemly, (6) but to do so with the wife of another is disgraceful. (6) And to adorn and powder and bejewel oneself is disgraceful (7) in a man but seemly in a woman. (7) And it is proper to do good to one's friends but disgraceful to do so to one's enemies. And it is disgraceful to run away from the enemy but seemly to run away from one's rivals in the stadium. (8) (8) To murder one's friends and fellow-citizens is wicked but to slaughter the enemy is admirable. And examples like (9) this can be given on all topics. (9) I go on to the things which cities and peoples regard as disgraceful. For instance: to the Spartans it is seemly that young girls should do athletics and go about with bare arms and no tunics, but to (10) the Ionians this is disgraceful. (10) And to the former it is proper not to instruct children in music and letters but to the Ionians it is disgraceful not to know all these things. (11) (11) Among the Thessalians it is seemly for a man to select horses and mules from a flock himself and train them, and also to take an ox and slaughter, skin and cut it up himself, but in Sicily these tasks are disgraceful and the work of (12) slaves. (12) Among the Macedonians it appears to be seemly for young girls, before they are married, to fall in love and to lie with a man, but when a girl marries it is a disgrace. (As far as the Greeks are concerned it is disgraceful at either time.) (13) Among the Thracians it is an ornament for young girls to be tattooed but with others tattoo-

marks are a punishment for those who do wrong. If a Scythian kills a man he thinks it proper to scalp him and to wear the scalp on his horse's bridle, and, having gilded the skull or lined it with silver, he drinks out of it and makes a libation to the gods. Among the Greeks, no one would be willing to enter the same house as a man who had behaved (14) like that. (14) The Massagetes cut up their parents and eat them, and they think that to be buried in their children is the most beautiful grave imaginable, but in Greece, if anyone did such a thing, he would be driven out of the country and would die a miserable death for having committed such (15) disgraceful and terrible deeds. (15) The Persians think it seemly that men should adorn themselves like women and that they should lie with their daughters, mothers and sisters, but the Greeks regard these things as disgraceful and a- (16) gainst the law. (16) And again, it strikes the Lydians as seemly that young girls should marry after having prostituted themselves for money, but no one among the Greeks would be will- (17) ing to marry a girl who did that. (17) Egyptians do not think the same things seemly as other people do: in our country we regard it as proper that the women should weave and work in wool but in theirs they think the men should do so and that the women should do what the men do in ours. To moisten clay with the hands and dough with the feet is (18) seemly to them but we do it just the other way round. (18) And I think that if someone should order all men to make a single heap of everything that each of them regards as disgraceful and then again to remove from the collection what each of them regards as seemly, not a thing would be left, but they would all divide up everything, because not all

(19) men are of the same opinion. (19) And I shall offer some verses on the subject:

And if you investigate, you will, in this way, see another law for mortals: nothing is always seemly or always disgraceful, but the right occasion takes the same things and makes them disgraceful and then alters them and makes them seemly.

(20) (20) To sum up, everything done at the right time is seemly and everything done at the wrong time is disgraceful. And what do I conclude from my examples? I said I would show that the same things are both disgraceful and seemly, and

(21) I have done so in all these cases. (21) But there is also an argument about the disgraceful and the seemly which says that each is distinct from the other. Since if anyone should ask those who say that the same thing is both disgraceful and seemly whether they have ever done anything good, they will also admit that they have done something disgraceful,

(22) if disgraceful and seemly are really the same thing. (22) And if they know any man to be handsome, they know the same man to be ugly. And if they know any man to be white, they know the same man to be black. And it is seemly to honor the gods and again disgraceful to honor the gods, if dis-

(23) graceful and seemly are really the same thing. (23) We can take it that I have made the same points in absolutely every case, and I shall turn my attention to the argument

(24) which they put forward. (24) If it is seemly for a woman to adorn herself it is also disgraceful for a woman to adorn herself, if disgraceful and seemly are really the same thing. And all the other cases can be treated in the

(25) same way. (25) In Lacedaemon it is seemly for girls to do

athletics; in Lacedaemon it is disgraceful for girls to

(26) do athletics, and so forth. (26) And they say that if some should collect from people everywhere their disgraceful customs and then should call everyone together and tell each man to take what he thinks is seemly, everything would be taken away as belonging to the group of seemly things. I would be surprised if things which were disgraceful when they were collected should turn out to be seemly and not what they were when they came.

(27) (27) At least if people brought horses or cows or sheep or men, they would not take away anything else. Nor, again, if they brought gold would they take away brass, nor if they brought silver would they take away lead.

(28) (28) Do they then take away seemly things instead of disgraceful ones? Come tell me: if anyone brings an ugly man, does he take him away handsome? They give as witnesses the poets- who write to give pleasure and not for the sake of truth.

III Concerning the Just and the Unjust

(1) (1) Two-fold arguments are also put forward concerning the just and the unjust. And some say that the just is one thing and the unjust another, and others that the just and the unjust are the same. And I shall try to support (2) this latter view. (2) And in the first place I shall argue that it is just to tell lies and to deceive. They would declare that it is right and just to speak this way to one's enemies but disgraceful and wicked to do so to one's friends. But how is it just to do so to one's enemies and not to one's dearest friends? And take the example of parents: suppose one's father or mother ought to drink or eat a medicine and

is unwilling to do so, isn't it just to give the medicine in some gruel or drink and to deny that it is in them?

- (3) (3) Therefore it is just to tell lies and to deceive one's parents. And, in fact, to steal the belongings of one's friends and to use force against those one loves most is just. (4) For instance, if a member of the household is in some sort of grief or trouble and intends to destroy himself with a sword or a rope or some other thing, is it right to steal these things, if possible, and, if one comes in too late and catches the person with the thing in his hand, to take it away by force? (5) And isn't it just to enslave one's enemies and to sell a whole city into slavery if one is able to capture it? And to burgle the houses of one's fellow-citizens appears to be just. Because if one's father has been imprisoned and is under sentence of death as a result of having been overthrown by his political rivals, then isn't it just to dig your way in to steal your father out and save him? (6) And what about breaking an oath: suppose a man is captured by the enemy and takes a firm oath that, if he is set free, he will betray his city: would this man do right if he kept his word? (7) I don't think so, but rather that he does right if he breaks it to save his city and his friends and the temples of his fathers. Thus it follows that it is right to break an oath. And it is right to defile a temple. (8) I'm not talking about the private temples of cities but about the ones common to the whole of Greece, that is the ones of Delphi and Olympia: when the barbarian was on the point of capturing Greece, and the safety of the country lay in money, wasn't it right to take the temple funds and use them for the war? (9) (9) And to murder one's nearest and dearest is right: in

the case of Orestes and of Alcmaeon, even the god answered
(10) that they were right to do as they did. (10) I shall turn
to the arts and to the writings of the poets. In the
writing of tragedies and in painting, whoever deceives the
most in creating things similar to the true, this man is
(11) the best. (11) I want also to present the testimony of
older poetry, of Cleobulina, for instance:

I saw a man stealing and deceiving by force

And to do this by force was an action most just.

(12)(12) These lines were written a long time ago. The next
passages are from Aeschylus:

God does not stand apart from just deceit
and

There are times when god honors the season for lies.

(13)(13) An argument opposite to this is also put forward:

that the just and the unjust are different things, and that
as the name differs, so does the thing named. For instance,
if anyone should ask those who say that unjust and just are
the same whether they have done anything just for their
parents, they will say yes. But then they have done some-
thing unjust, because they say that unjust and just are

(14) the same thing. (14) Just take another case: if you know
some man to be just, then the same man is also unjust, and
again if you know a man to be large, he is also small, by
the same argument. And if the sentence is pronounced, "let
him die the death for having done many acts of injustice,"
then let him die the death for having done many acts of

(15) justice. (15) Enough on these topics: I go on to what is
said by those who hope to prove that just and unjust are the
(16) same. (16) To steal the enemy's possessions is just, and it
is possible to show that the same action is unjust if their

(17) argument is true, and so in the other cases. (17) And they bring in the arts, to which just and unjust do not apply. As for the poets, they write their poems to give men pleasure and not for the sake of truth.

IV Concerning Truth and Falsehood

- (1) (1) Two-fold arguments are also put forward concerning the false and the true, concerning which one person says that a false statement is one thing and a true statement another, and again, others say the true statement is the same as the (2) false. (2) And I hold the latter view: in the first place because they are both expressed in the same words, and secondly, because whenever a statement is made, if things turn out to be as stated, then the statement is true, but if they turn out not to be, then the same statement is (3) false. (3) Suppose the statement accuses a certain man of temple-robbery: if the thing actually happened, the statement is true, but if it did not happen, it is false. And the argument is the same with regard to a man defending himself against such a charge. And the law-courts judge (4) the same statement to be both true and false. (4) And again suppose we are all sitting in a row and each of us says "I am an initiate," we would all utter the same words, but I would be the only person making a true statement (5) since I am the only person who is one. (5) From these remarks it is clear that the same statement is false when falsehood is present and true when truth is present (just the way a man is the same person when he is a child and a (6) young man and an adult and an old man.) (6) It is also said that a false statement is one thing and a true statement another, and that as the name differs, so does the thing

named. Because if anyone should ask those who say that the same statement is both false and true whether their own statement is false or true, if they answer "false" then it is clear that the true and false are two different things, and if they answer "true", then this same statement is also false. And if anyone ever says or bears witness that certain things are true, then these same things are also false. And if he knows some man to be true, he (7) knows the same man to be false. (7) As a result of the argument they say this, that if a thing comes to pass, its statement is true, but if it does not, then it is false. In these cases, then, it isn't the name that differs but (8) the thing named. (8) And, again, if anyone should ask (9) jurymen what they are judging (because they are not pre- (9) sent at the events), (9) even they themselves agree that that in which falsehood is mingled is false, and that in which truth is mingled is true. This constitutes a total difference....

V (No Title)

(1) (1) "The demented and the sane and the wise and the foolish (2) both say and do the same things. (2) And in the first place they use the same names for things, such as "earth" and "man" and "horse" and "fire" and all the rest. And they do the same things: they sit and eat and drink and (3) sleep, and so forth. (3) And, furthermore, the same thing is larger and smaller and greater and less and heavier and (4) lighter. Thus all things are the same. (4) A talent is heavier than a mina and lighter than two talents; therefore (5) the same thing is both heavier and lighter * * * (5) And the same man both lives and does not live, and the same

The following is a description of the system under consideration. It is a system of particles in a container. The particles are identical and are subject to a potential energy $V(x)$ which is zero for $x < 0$ and increases for $x > 0$. The particles are initially distributed in the region $x < 0$ and are allowed to move towards the region $x > 0$. The system is observed at a certain time t and the position of each particle is recorded. The distribution of particles is then compared with the distribution at the initial time. It is found that the distribution of particles in the region $x > 0$ is not the same as the distribution in the region $x < 0$. This is due to the fact that the particles in the region $x > 0$ have a higher potential energy than the particles in the region $x < 0$. The system is therefore not in equilibrium. The distribution of particles in the region $x > 0$ is given by the Boltzmann distribution. The Boltzmann distribution is a probability distribution that describes the distribution of particles in a system at thermal equilibrium. It is given by the equation $P(x) = \frac{e^{-\beta V(x)}}{\int e^{-\beta V(x)} dx}$, where $\beta = 1/(k_B T)$ is the inverse temperature, k_B is the Boltzmann constant, and T is the temperature. The Boltzmann distribution is a function of the potential energy $V(x)$ and the temperature T . The Boltzmann distribution is a probability distribution that describes the distribution of particles in a system at thermal equilibrium. It is given by the equation $P(x) = \frac{e^{-\beta V(x)}}{\int e^{-\beta V(x)} dx}$, where $\beta = 1/(k_B T)$ is the inverse temperature, k_B is the Boltzmann constant, and T is the temperature. The Boltzmann distribution is a function of the potential energy $V(x)$ and the temperature T .

away, what about those in which someone does add or take away something? And this next case I shall show to be of (14) this sort. (14) If someone takes one from ten, or adds one to ten, the result is no longer either ten or one, and (15) so forth. (15) With respect to the assertion that the same man both is and is not, I put the following question: "Does he exist with respect to some particular thing, or just in general?" Then if someone denies that the man exists, he is mistaken, because he is treating the particular and universal senses as being the same. Because everything exists in some sense.

VI Concerning Wisdom and Virtue, Whether they are teachable

(1) (1) A certain statement is put forward which is neither true nor new: it is that wisdom and virtue can neither be taught nor learned. And those who say this use the following proofs:
(2) (2) That it would not be possible, if you were to transmit a thing to someone else, still to have this same thing; this
(3) is one proof. (3) Another proof is, that, if they were teachable, there would be acknowledged teachers of them, as
(4) in the case of music. (4) A third proof is, that the men in Greece who became wise would have taught their art to
(5) their friends. (5) A fourth proof is, that some have been
(6) to the sophists and derived no benefit from it. (6) A fifth proof is, that many who have not associated with the
(7) sophists have become notable. (7) Now I think this statement is very simple-minded: I know that teachers teach precisely the letters they happen to know, and that lyre-players teach lyreplaying. In answer to the second proof, that there are no acknowledged teachers, whatever else
(8) do the sophists teach except wisdom and virtue? (8) And

what were the followers of Anaxagoras and Pythagoras?

With respect to the third point, Polycleitus taught his

- (9) son to be a sculptor. (9) And even if a particular man did not teach, this would not prove anything, but if a single man did teach, this would be evidence that teaching
- (10) is possible. (10) With respect to the fourth point, that some do not become wise in spite of associating with the sophists, many people also do not succeed in learning their
- (11) letters in spite of studying them. (11) There does exist also a natural bent by means of which a person who does not study with the sophists becomes competent, if he is well-endowed, to master many things easily after learning a few elements from the very persons from whom we learn our words. As for our words, one man learns more from his
- (12) father, another from his mother. (12) And if someone is not persuaded that we learn words but thinks we are born knowing them, let him consider the following points: if someone should send a new-born child immediately away to the Persians and should bring him up there, hearing nothing of the Greek tongue, he would speak Persian. And if one were to bring a Persian child here, he would speak Greek. We learn words in this fashion and we don't know who our
- (13) teachers are. (13) Thus my argument is complete, and you have its beginning, middle and end. And I don't say that wisdom and virtue are teachable, but that these proofs do not satisfy me.

VII (No Title)

- (1) (1) Some of the popular orators say that offices should be
- (2) assigned by lot, but their opinion is not the best. (2)
- Suppose someone should question the man who says this as

follows: Why don't you assign tasks to your household slaves by lot, so that if the teamster drew the office of cook, he would do the cooking and the cook would

- (3) drive the team, and so with the rest? (3) And why don't we get together the smiths and cobblers, and the carpenters and goldsmiths, and have them draw lots, and force each one to engage in whatever trade he happens
- (4) to draw and not the one he understands? (4) The same thing could also be done in musical contests: have the contestants draw lots and have each one compete in the contest he draws; thus the flute-player will perhaps play the lyre and the lyre-player the flute. And in battle it may turn out that the archers and hoplites will ride horseback and the cavalry-man will use the bow, with the result that everyone does what he does
- (5) not understand and is incapable of doing. (5) And they say that this procedure is also not only good but exceptionally democratic, whereas I think that democratic is the last thing it is. Because there are in cities men hostile to the demos, and if the lot falls to them they will sell the
- (6) demos down the river. (6) But the demos itself ought to keep its eyes open and elect all those who are well-disposed towards it, and suitable people ought to be in command and others should guard the laws, and so on.

VIII (No Title)

- (1) (1) I think it belongs to the same man (and to the same art) to be able to converse in the brief style and to understand the truth of things and to know how to give a right judgment and to be able to make public speeches and to understand the art of rhetoric and to teach concerning

the nature of all things, their state and how they came

- (2) to be. (2) And, first of all, how will it not be possible for a man who knows about the nature of all things to act rightly in every case and teach the city to do so too?
- (3) (3) And, further, the man who knows the art of rhetoric will also know how to speak correctly on every subject.
- (4) (4) Because it is necessary for the man who intends to speak correctly to speak about the things which he knows.
- (5) It follows that he will know everything. (5) The reason for this is that he knows the art of all forms of speech, and all forms of speech have for their subject matter
- (6) everything that exists. (6) It is necessary for the man who intends to speak correctly to know the things concerning which he might speak and to give the city correct instruction in doing good things and thus prevent it from
- (7) doing bad ones. (7) If he knows these things he will also know the things which differ from them, because he will know everything. For the same things are the elements of
- (8) tion will do what he ought if occasion arises. (8) And if he knows how to play the flute, he will always be able to
- (9) play the flute, if it should be necessary to do this. (9) And a man who knows how to give a judgment ought to have a right understanding of the just, because this is what cases are about. And if he knows the just, he will also know
- (10) its opposite and the different elements of these. (10) It is also necessary for him to understand all the laws; if, on the other hand, he is not going to understand what goes
- (11) on, he won't understand the laws either. (11) The same man who understands the rules of music is the one who understands music, but if he doesn't understand music he won't understand

(12) its rules. (12) If a man understands the truth of things, the argument readily follows that he understands everything; (13) and so he is also able to converse in the brief style on all subjects, if he has to answer questions. Therefore it must be that he knows everything.

IX (No Title)

(1) (1) Memory has been found to be the greatest and fairest discovery; it is useful for everything, for thought as well as for the conduct of life. (2) This is the first step: if you focus your attention, your mind, making progress by this means, will perceive more. (3) The second step is to practice whatever you hear. If you hear the same things many times and repeat them, what you learn is present to your memory as a whole. (4) The third step is: if you hear something, connect it with what you know already. For instance, suppose you need to remember the name "Chrysippos", you must connect it with chrusos (gold) and hippos (horse). (5) Or another example: if you need to remember the name "Pyrilampes" you must connect it with pyr (fire) and lampein (to shine). These are examples for proper names. (6) In the case of things, do this: if you want to remember courage, think of Ares and Achilles, or metal-working, of Hephaistos, or cowardice, of Epeios....