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PLATO'S HYPOTHETICAL DIALECTIC

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts,
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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

SEPTEMBER 1997
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To my parents Constanța and Stefan
ABSTRACT

In the Platonic exegesis, the topic of 'hypothesis and dialectic' has been covered by the works of many scholars, although, compared to some other topics, it has not been overinterpreted. To the best of my knowledge, however, there is only one book that deals extensively and systematically with it — Richard Robinson's *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford, 1953). This one book of Robinson has remained, according to many Plato scholars, unsurpassed as to the punctiliousness with which its author describes the *formal* structure of Plato's hypothetical methodology; that is why most of those who have dealt with this topic tended to take Robinson's book as the ultimate authority on the matter. Yet there is an aspect of this topic that Robinson (and, as far as I know, all the other scholars that wrote on it) explored less: the relation between Plato's hypothetical methodology and the Platonic metaphysics. This relation is the actual subject of my research.

Now my research has two main claims (which are actually exegetical claims).

(1) Whether with disappointment or with relief (to use Ryle's 1966, 17 phrase), we have to recognize that Plato's dialogues unfold a *philosophical search* rather than a *metaphysical system*. My attempt to determine what Plato's hypothetical dialectic is, follows in a way the *logical route* of his philosophical search. In the Introduction, I argue that this route started, very likely, from the results of Socrates' philosophy; and, in the seven chapters that follow, I analyze the two main 'areas' covered by it: first, that of the *metaphysical nature* of the objects that can be known (Chapters One, Two, Three, Four and Five); and, once the theory of *ἐπιστήμη* is established (which is Plato's answer to the question of the metaphysical nature of the objects that can be known), that of how a particular *ἐπιστήμη* can be known (Chapters Six and Seven). My first main claim (stated in the first part of the Conclusions — see 8.1.) is that the μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of *ἐπιστήμη*, as well as the μέθοδοι which aim at determining the *ἐπιστήμη* themselves, are (i) *dialectical*, in the sense that they are supposed to be undertaken through διάλεγμα, dialectic (because for Plato the *locus of certainty* is the *communion* of minds, and such a *communion* is possible only through the medium of λόγος, language); and (ii) *hypothetical*, in the sense that their results remain not fully justified.

(2) In Chapters Four and Five I argue that Plato made an attempt to prove that *reality* (i.e. the 'world of *ἐπιστήμη*', and, to some extent, its sensible copy) is a ἀρμονία (for the *ἐπιστήμη* form not a chaos, but a κόσμος) (although the very notion of ἀρμονία remains actually not fully determined); and, at the beginning of the second part of the Conclusions (8.2.1.), I argue that for Plato the human mind can know this ἀρμονία only insofar it is itself *harmonic*. My second main claim (stated in the middle section of 8.2.1.) is that the μέθοδοι which aim at determining the abstract *ἐπιστήμη*, as well as the μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of *ἐπιστήμη*, are *suitable* (to use Robinson's expression) because the *criterion* on which they are grounded, i.e. the 

There remains, however, two things that need to be clarified. One is the difference between the 'levels' at which the two groups of μέθοδοι function (i.e. the 'level of *ἐπιστήμη*' and the 'meta-*ἐπιστήμη* level'); and the other is the relation
between the methodological criterion of coherence and the metaphysical principle of coherence in the case of the μέθοδος that introduce and develop the theory of εἴδη. The first one, I think, can be clarified rather easily and I shall discuss it at the end of 8.2.1. The second one, however, raises a very difficult question: if Plato achieved his metaphysics — i.e. his theory of εἴδη — through a μέθοδος grounded on συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων, then he used the methodological criterion of coherence before reaching a justification of it, namely the beliefs that both reality an thinking are coherent. So, one may ask, what did justify, for Plato, this methodological criterion of coherence when it was first applied? To attempt to answer this question is, I am very well aware of it, to open a philosophical 'can of worms' (which would be, nonetheless, a fascinating thing to do; as Plato said in R. 435 c 8, χαλεπά τὰ καλά). As far as I am concerned, I shall propose at the end of 8.2.2 — tentatively, however — the sketch of a possible answer to this question.

To go back to Robinson. Philosophically, I share his views, that "if a method is suitable, that must surely be because the reality sought to be known is such and such, and the human mind that seeks to know it is such and such" (p. 178). (And, like him, I do not discuss, philosophically, this view.) Exegetically, however, my position differs from his, for I do not construe Plato's hypothetical methodology as he does, and I argue that this methodology (as I construe it) is linked with the Platonic metaphysics. Yet, I regard my research more like a possible completion of Robinson's work on this topic, rather than a contention of it; for, even if my answers differ from his, they were 'called for' by questions that he first raised, in unfolding so brilliantly the topic of Plato's dialectic.
CONTENTS

Chapter Outlines
Preface
   a. The subject
   b. The claims
   c. The approach
   d. Miscellaneous
Acknowledgements
List of Abbreviations

Introduction: Socratism and Platonism

Chapter One: Plato's way of putting the question of knowledge

Chapter Two: The μέθοδος toward theories

Chapter Three: The μέθοδος toward theories and the theory of εἴδη (I)

Chapter Four: The theory of εἴδη (II): ὡς ἀγαθόν as the ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη of the theory of εἴδη

Chapter Five: The theory of εἴδη (III): σοφία as δύναμις κοινωνίας

Chapter Six: The notion of ἀλήθεια

Chapter Seven: The μέθοδος that ἀληθεύουσι τί ποι' ἐστιν ἐκαστὸν εἴδος

Conclusions: Hypothetical dialectic and metaphysics

Epilogue

Annex I: Three figures regarding the geometrical problem in the Meno 86 ε ff.
Annex II: Hypothesis and metaphysical topography

Notes
Literature Cited
Select Bibliography
Index
CHAPTER OUTLINES

Preface
a. The subject
b. The claims
c. The approach
d. Miscellaneous

Acknowledgements

List of Abbreviation

Introduction: Socratism and Platonism
0.1. The Socratic matter
0.1.1. The Socratic παράξενημα: the escape from pseudo-certain knowledge
0.1.2. συμφωνία as the Socratic locus of certainty. The dialogue as the condition for achieving certain knowledge
0.1.3. How can certain knowledge be achieved. διδασκαλία and ἔλεγχος
0.1.4. Conclusions: the Socratic problem ('How can certain knowledge be achieved?'), μέθοδος (διδασκαλία and ἔλεγχος) and unsolved difficulty ('What is the nature of that one in the many which is the object of certain knowledge?')
0.2. The Socratic matter as the starting-point of Platonism

Chapter One: Plato's way of putting the question of knowledge
1.1. 'To know' as 'to know what remains the same'
1.2. Perceiving and speaking
1.3. Knowledge and causality
1.4. The puzzle brought forward by the given way in which our knowledge works

Chapter Two: The μέθοδος toward theories
2.1. Finding and hypothesizing the most plausible theory
2.2. Hypothesizing as true what συμφωνεῖ with the most plausible theory
   2.2.1. Robinson's interpretation
   2.2.2. Plato's notion of συμφωνία
2.3. Testing the theory
   2.3.1. Testing the theory by seeing whether its implications συμφωνοῦν
   2.3.2. Including the theory into a wider one

Chapter Three: The μέθοδος toward theories and the theory of εἰδή (I)
3.1. The theory of εἰδή
3.2. The puzzle that the theory of εἰδή explains best
3.3. Hypothesizing as true what συμφωνεῖ with the theory of εἰδή
   3.3.1. The theory of recollection
   3.3.2. The theory of soul's immortality
3.4. Testing the theory of εἰδή by seeing whether its implications συμφωνοῦν
3.5. Testing the theory of εἰδή by including it into a wider one
   3.5.1. The failed tentative of the Phaedo
   3.5.2. The successful attempt of the Timaeus

Chapter Four: The theory of εἰδή (II): τὸ ἀγαθὸν as the ἀναπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of εἰδή
Chapter Five: The theory of ἐἶδη (III): οὐσία as δύναμις κοινωνίας

5.1. Τὸ κοινωνία τῶν ἐĭδῶν

5.2. The μέγιστα γένη

5.2.1. ἐν, ταύται and θάτερον as the ἐĭδη that are in κοινωνία with all ἐĭδη

5.2.2. οὐσία as δύναμις κοινωνίας. Whatness as caused by θάτερον

5.2.3. ἔτερον as μὴ ἐν

5.2.4. The two kinds of ἔτερον: the ἄλλο τί and the ἀντιτιθέμενον

5.2.5. The ἐĭδη of κίνησις and στάσεως

Chapter Six: The notion of ἀλήθεια

6.1. The two fields of knowledge: τὸ ἀλήθητον and τὸ ἀναίσθητον

6.2. ἀλήθεια within τὸ ἀλήθητον

6.2.1. The ἀλήθεια that occurs in seeing

6.2.2. ἀλήθεια and speaking in general. The ἀλήθεια that occurs in speaking about τὸ ἀλήθητον

6.3. ἀλήθεια within τὸ ἀναίσθητον

Chapter Seven: The μέθοδοι that ἀλήθειώσθη τί ποτέ ἐστιν ἕκαστον ἐĭδος

7.1. ὀρίζειν τὰ ἐĭδη: the quest for definitions

7.2. The μέθοδοι from the Meno

7.2.1. The geometrical analogy (86 e-87 b)

7.2.2. Socrates' application of the μέθοδος (87 b-89 e)

7.2.3. Testing a hypothetical statement

7.3. The μέθοδος from the Parmenides

7.4. The μέθοδος from the Sophist

7.4.1. ὑν, ταύται and θάτερον as that which is primarily spoken. The συμμετοχή and διαίρεσις of speaking

7.4.2. διακρίνειν τὰ γένη τῶν ἐĭδῶν

7.5. νοεῖν τὰ ἐĭδη

CONCLUSIONS

HYPOTHETICAL DIALECTIC AND METAPHYSICS

8.1. Plato's hypothetical dialectic

8.1.1. A synopsis of the μέθοδοι

8.1.2. The dialectical character of the μέθοδοι

8.1.3. The hypothetical character of dialectic

8.2. Hypothetical dialectic and metaphysics

8.2.1. The correspondence between the συμμετοχή τῶν λεγόμενων and the ἀρμονία τῶν ἐĭδῶν
8.2.2. From συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων τῷ ἄρμονίᾳ τῶν εἰδών and from ἄρμονίᾳ τῶν εἰδών to συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων

8.3. Dialectic, metaphorical language and metaphysics

8.3.1. The philosophical use of myth
8.3.2. The philosophical use of metaphorical language and its metaphysical justification: the 'participation' of τὸ άλοθήτων in τὸ ἀναίσθητον

Epilogue

Annex I: Three figures regarding the geometrical problem in the Meno 86 e ff.

Annex II: Hypothesis and metaphysical topography

1. The literal sense of ὑπόθεσις
2. The philosophers's ὑποθέσεις
   2.1. The grounded world. The ontological ἀρχή as 'that which lies or stands under as a foundation of the world'. ὑποκείμενον and ὑπόστασις
   2.2. ὑπόθεσις as the θεμέλιον of reasoning. The epistemological ἀρχή as 'that which is put under as a foundation of reasoning'. Geometers' and Aristotle's ὑποθέσεις
3. Plato's ὑποθέσεις
   3.1. The suspended world. Physical and metaphysical topography in Plato
   3.2. The ascension towards the intelligible
3.3. Ascension and ὑποθέσεις

Notes

Literature Cited
Select Bibliography
Index
   a. Index Nominum
   b. Index Verborum
   c. Index Locorum
PREFACE

According to Cherniss' and Brisson's bibliographies (see *Lustrum* — 1959, 1960 and 1977, 1983, 1994 respectively), between 1930 and 1985 alone there were published over 8127 titles on Plato. Any scholar then, who decides to increase this inflationary, 'endemic' exegesis and write yet another book, article or doctoral thesis on Plato, needs a good excuse.

The most honourable excuse, that at stake is something still unexplored, is, now, completely out of question. For every single line of the Platonic corpus was taken into account; each relevant term has been analysed with fastidious pedantry; every significant passage has been overinterpreted; and every topic, from ἔθος to φάρμακον, has been discussed with ultimate ἀκριβεία (and in connection with all imaginable subjects (1)). Confronted with this situation, any Plato scholar of today must feel like a passionate explorer who was born 'too late', that is, long after everything was discovered, explored and classified. And yet, a few aspects of some otherwise well studied topics have remained less explored. So, one can still invoke a fairly good excuse for writing yet another Platonic study, namely that at stake is the examination of an aspect which has been less discussed and analysed. This is also my excuse (2).

a. The subject

In the Platonic exegesis, the topic of 'hypothesis and dialectic' has been covered by the works of many scholars (see the select bibliography), although, compared to some other topics, it has not been overinterpreted (cf. Skemp 1976, 35: "one may hope that more will be said on this issue"). (The expression 'Plato's method of hypothesis' is sometimes used in the scholarly circles; yet very few scholars have attempted to impose it through their writings, because this expression implies more than Plato actually said; as far as I am concerned, I have avoided it, for this reason, and have used instead a less hazardous, yet more ambiguous one, namely 'Plato's hypothetical dialectic', which I shall justify in the Conclusions — see 8.1.3.)

To the best of my knowledge there is only one book that deals extensively and systematically with this topic — Richard Robinson's *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford, 1953). This one book of Robinson, however, has remained, in the eyes of many Plato scholars, unsurpassed as to the punctiliousness with which its author describes the *formal* structure of Plato's hypothetical methodology, and it has often been taken as the ultimate authority on the matter. Yet there is an aspect of this topic that Robinson (and, as far as I
know, all the other scholars who have written on it) explored less: the relation between Plato's hypothetical methodology and the Platonic metaphysics. This relation is the actual subject of my research.

In a lecture Wittgenstein gave in Cambridge (known now as "A Lecture on Ethics"), he told his auditors that the hearer of a lengthy philosophical discourse is "incapable of seeing both the road he is led and the goal which it leads to" (1965, 4). That is to say, continues Wittgenstein, that the hearer "either thinks: 'I understand all he says, but what on earth is he driving at', or else he thinks 'I see what he's driving at, but how on earth is he going to get there'" (p. 4).

At the beginning of his lecture, Wittgenstein asked his auditors to be patient, promising them that in the end they will see both 'the way and the goal'. As far as I am concerned, I shall state, in what follows (yet very briefly), my goals, i.e. the main claims of my research; but, as regarding my way toward them, I also have to ask the reader to be patient; for, being a μακρὰ καὶ τραχεῖα ὄρος, its summarizing would turn this preface into too lengthy a piece.

b. The claims

Since Robinson's book became a reference book in this subject of Plato's hypothetical methodology, I cannot state my claims without contrasting them with his.

About Plato's hypothetical methodology Robinson has three main claims (which are actually exegetical claims). He argues, to put it more or less roughly, that:

(1) there are two main methodological stages in Plato: (i) that of the Socratic elenchus (prominent in the early dialogues); and (ii) that of the Platonic dialectic, which contains two distinct methodological devices: hypothesis (prominent in the Meno, Phaedo, Republic and Parmenides), and synthesis and division (prominent in the Phaedrus, Sophist, Politicus and Philebus) (see p. v); that
(2) the explicit accounts of the use of hypothesis from the Meno, Phaedo, Republic and Parmenides, in spite of their differences, allow us to speak of a 'certain procedure' that may be called his [Plato's] hypothetical method' (p. 105); and that
(3) the Platonic hypothetical method (as he, Robinson, construes it) is not linked with the Platonic metaphysics. Here, Robinson's argument is not very clear (or so I find); the way I understand it is, however, this.

(i) "If a method is suitable," — claims Robinson — "that must surely be because the reality sought to be known is such and such, and the human mind that seeks to know it is such and such. That a method is good ought to be derivable from the situation to which it applies" (p. 178). But he does not actually discuss,
philosophically, this view; he only implies that its truth ought to be endorsed by any rational person, and claims that "Plato's insight did not go as far as that" (p. 178); he claims, that is, that Plato was not aware of this obvious idea, that a good method ought to be derivable from the situation to which it applies. For he, says Robinson, although strongly recommended his hypothetical method, "[did] not give us a reasoned derivation [of it]" (p. 178); in other words, although Plato believed that his hypothetical method is a 'good method', he did not ask, claims Robinson, "what it is in the nature of things and the nature of men that makes [...] desirable" (p. 178).

(ii) As regarding the use of the hypothetical method, Robinson claims that this method is actually very little used (pp. 202-4); and that Plato, at least in the Republic, uses mostly some methods which he considers to be fully inferior to the method of hypothesis and to dialectic in general, namely 'the methods of analogy and imagery' (p. 222). So, concludes Robinson, "We tend to assume that a successful man must know the causes of his success; but the spectacle which we have just contemplated [i.e. Plato's using 'the methods of analogy and imagery', instead of the recommended hypothetical method] suggests that a man might discover important new truths and yet be widely mistaken about the method by which he did so" (p. 222).

(iii) To sum up; regarding the topic of the relation between the Platonic hypothetical method and the Platonic metaphysics we may, Robinson seems to imply (see pp. 178, 202-4, 222.), ask two questions; either: 'Did Plato derive this method from his metaphysics?' or: 'Did he achieve his metaphysics through this method?' Now Robinson answers negatively to both of them, implying thus very clearly that for him the Platonic hypothetical methodology is not linked with the Platonic metaphysics. In other words: Robinson does not deny that there is a metaphysical 'construction' in Plato (i.e. a way of conceiving the nature of things and the nature of man); but he thinks that the Platonic hypothetical methodology is not linked with it, for he neither derived this methodology from his metaphysics, nor he achieved his metaphysics through this methodology.

Robinson would not admit then that he explored less fully the question regarding the relation between the Platonic hypothetical methodology and the Platonic metaphysics; the way he puts things suggests rather that he believed there is not much to explore about it, for the Platonic hypothetical methodology and the Platonic metaphysics are obviously not linked.

In my view he was wrong; and, I believe, he was wrong because he explored less Plato's metaphysics and its relation with the Platonic methodology in general. As I said, this is precisely what my research deals with. But my research has not been done within a Robinsonian framework; that is, I do not operate with the distinction he makes between the two methodological stages, and I do not construe the hypothetical methodology as he does.
Now my research has two main claims (which are actually exegetical claims).

(1) Whether with disappointment or with relief (to use Ryle's 1966, 17 phrase), we have to recognize that Plato's dialogues unfold a philosophical search rather than a metaphysical system. My attempt to determine what Plato's hypothetical dialectic is, follows in a way the logical route of his philosophical search (3). In the Introduction I argue that this route started, very likely, from the results of Socrates' philosophy; and, in the seven chapters that follow, I analyze the two main areas covered by it: first, that of the metaphysical nature of the objects that can be known (Chapters One, Two, Three, Four and Five); and, once the theory of εἶδη is established (which is his answer to the question of the metaphysical nature of the objects that can be known), that of the εἶδη themselves (Chapters Six and Seven). My first main claim (stated in the first part of the Conclusions — see 8.1.) is that the μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη, as well as the μέθοδοι which aim at determining the εἶδη themselves, are (i) dialectical, in the sense that they are supposed to be undertaken through στα-λέγειν, dialectic (because for Plato the locus of certainty is the communion of minds, and such a communion is possible only through the medium of λόγος, language); and (ii) hypothetical, in the sense that their results remain not fully justified.

(2) In Chapters Four and Five I argue that Plato made an attempt to prove that reality (i.e. the 'world of εἶδη' and, to some extent, its sensible copy) is a ἀρμονία (for the εἶδη form not a chaos, but a κόσμος); and, at the beginning of the second part of the Conclusions (8.2.1.), I argue that for Plato the human mind can know this ἀρμονία only insofar it is itself harmonious (although the very notion of ἀρμονία remains actually not fully determined). My second main claim (stated in the middle section of 8.2.1.) is that the μέθοδοι which aim at determining the abstract εἶδη, as well as the μέθοδοι that introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη, are suitable (to use Robinson's expression) because the criterion on which they are grounded, i.e. the συμφωνία τῶν λέγουσιν, corresponds to the principles of both 'the reality sought to be known' (ἀρμονία τῶν εἶδων) and 'the human mind that seeks to know it' (ἀρμονία τοῦ ψυχῆς). In short: I claim that Plato's μέθοδοι in general are 'suitable' because their criterion is coherence, and coherence is 'immanent' in both reality and thinking.

There remains, however, two things that need to be clarified. One is the difference between the 'levels' at which the two groups of μέθοδοι function (i.e. the 'level of εἶδη' and the 'meta-εἶδη level'); and the other is the relation between the methodological criterion of coherence and the metaphysical principle of coherence in the case of the μέθοδοι that introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη. The first one, I think, can be clarified rather easily and I shall discuss it at the
end of 8.2.1. The second one, however, raises a very difficult question: if Plato achieved his metaphysics — i.e. his theory of εἴδη — through a μέθοδος grounded on συμφωνία τῶν λέγουσιν, then he used the methodological criterion of coherence before reaching a justification of it, namely the beliefs that both reality and thinking are coherent. So, one may ask, what did justify, for Plato, this methodological criterion of coherence when it was first applied? To attempt to answer this question is, I am very well aware of it, to open a philosophical 'can of worms' (which would be, nonetheless, a fascinating thing to do; as Plato said in R. 435 c 8, χαλεπά τὰ κόλα). As far as I am concerned, I shall propose at the end of 8.2.2. — tentatively, however — the sketch of a possible answer to this question.

To go back to Robinson. Philosophically, I share his views, that "if a method is suitable, that must surely be because the reality sought to be known is such and such, and the human mind that seeks to know it is such and such" (p. 178). (And, like him, I do not discuss, philosophically, this view.) Exegetically, however, my position differs from his, for I do not construe Plato's hypothetical methodology as he does, and I argue that this methodology (as I construe it) is linked with the Platonic metaphysics. Yet, I regard my research more like a possible completion of Robinson's work on this topic, rather than a contention of it; for, even if my answers differ from his, they were 'called for' by questions that he first raised, in unfolding so brilliantly the topic of Plato's dialectic.

c. The approach

A great deal of intellectual energy might have been saved, had the commentators of philosophical texts stated what their approach is and how faithful they believe their interpretations are.

What follows is a rather long (for a preface) discussion of this matter: what my approach is and how I see my results. Initially, this was the end of the Conclusions section; on second thoughts, however, I decided to clear the whole thing up right here, in the Preface; at least as far as philosophy is concerned, I think, it is preferable to irritate your reader with the way you see something he has not yet read, rather than convince him, at the end, that his objections are due to the way he read your text.

The author of a philosophical text cannot write down all that he actually has in mind, though he usually says more than he is aware of; thus, an interpreter of a philosophical text may focus on three different things: on what its author had in his mind and wanted to
say; on what the text itself might say (regardless of whether its author was aware of it or not); and on what he, the interpreter, through his own virtuosity, can make the text say; to put it in the jargon of some contemporary theories of criticism, the interpreter of a philosophical text may focus on \textit{intentio auctoris}, on \textit{intentio operis} or on \textit{intentio lectoris}. Now, those commentators on philosophical texts who make \textit{exegetical} claims would hardly admit that they regard a text as a 'picnic where the author brings the words and the readers bring the sense' (to use Todorov's expression (4)); most of them, on the contrary, would argue that they aim exclusively at reconstructing what a philosopher wanted to say in his texts. This happens also in the Platonic exegesis.

A text, a \textit{γεγραμμένος}, says Plato \textit{Phdr.} 275 e, may be 'ill-treated and unfairly abused, for it is not able to defend or help itself, always needing its parent to come to its help' (my paraphrase). The vast majority of his exegetes, however, who claim that their only concern regards Plato's 'intentions', would kindly deny that the Platonic texts, once they are in their hands, might need the presence of their 'parent' to defend them. But, quite often, their Plato is not at all Platonic. There are, for instance, a Christian (Ivanka 1964), a Hegelian (Bosanquet 1895), a Neokantian (Natorp 1902), a Husserlian (Ritter 1910-1923), a phenomenologist (Gadamer 1931), an existentialist (Friedländer 1964), an analytic (Gosling 1973), and even a Freudian Plato (Brès 1968) (cf. also Lafrance 1986, 285-6); and each time, we are told that we deal with an interpretation that reveals Plato's thoughts as they were construed by him. (To paraphrase one of Flaubert's famous \textit{mots} — \textit{Madame Bovary c'est moi} — we may say that, very often, the modern exeget of Plato's work should have had Flaubert's courage and admit, openly, that \textit{Monsieur Platon c'est moi}.)

These are, one may say, extreme positions; but, to some extent, I believe, \textit{any} interpretation of Plato's 'orphaned' work will be a 'mixture' of \textit{his} thoughts and \textit{ours}. And this is so for three main reasons.

(1) "The greatest danger in speaking about a thinker is that we will translate his language back into a language familiar to us in order to make it understandable. But what we really do is to mutilate what is proper to a thinker, because he is present and functions and lives in \textit{his} language. His language is his thought, and if we give up his language, we give up his thought." This sentence — which belongs to Walter Biemel (1981, 168) — expresses a much too often forgotten truth; but it also promotes an illusion; for we cannot completely avoid putting things in our terms.

(2) In the spiritual history of mankind, a \textit{beginning} is a unique moment, a moment which is, necessarily, tinged with confusion, hesitation, and perplexities. If you happen not to be part of it, you
will never be able to imagine its full flavour, mostly because, in retrospect, its confusion, hesitation, and perplexities cannot actually be experienced. How was it like to discover writing? How was it like to be among the men who saw Jesus Christ for the first time? We simply cannot operate an ἐνοχθή and elude the sediments of our history.

Leibniz, in a letter to Nicolas Remond, dated February 11, 1715, says that "if someone were to reduce Plato to a system, he would render a great service to mankind [...]" (1956, 1072). We do not know if Leibniz was or not ironic; we do not know, that is, if he believed or not that Plato's philosophy could be reduced to a system. We feel, however, that he was right in his assuming that 'a Plato reduced to a system' is more 'useful' than 'the actual Plato', for our mind cannot adapt any more to a spiritual space so full of obscurities and unresolved issues as the Platonic thought was.

Plato belongs to the aurora of what we now call Western philosophy; he was among the first men that spoke about the main philosophical questions: the ultimate causes of existence, the meaning of the verb 'to be', the nature of mind, language and time. How was it like to speak for the first time about these questions? How was it like to speak for the first time about the fact that we can know only that which remains the same and which is present in many individuals? We will never know; we, unlike Plato, live in a spiritual κόσμος in which Platonism is a fixed star. But it is not only that we are not able to live the beginning that Plato represents in the Western philosophy, because the 25 centuries of our history led us to a paradigm, as Kuhn would put it, which is very different from his; we are also unable to handle all the confusions, hesitations, perplexities and unsolved problems inherent in his philosophy, because we have become addicted to clarity. And so we cannot but attempt to 'reduce Plato to a system'; we cannot, that is, but get rid of his obscurities, hesitations and perplexities and introduce in his thoughts an artificial order and clarity.

(3) For most of the Western philosophers, and for Plato as well, the use of metaphorical language has only one aim: to lead one's 'sight' towards the abstract matter which is embodied in it. As Marias 1967, 46 put it: "The role of metaphor is like my finger when I point to something. When I point to something, I am suggesting that you look in this direction in order to discover what I am seeing. I am not suggesting you look at my finger. Some people do. And this is very surprising. Unfortunately this also happens in philosophy." With Plato, however, things were not that simple.

The view according to which the metaphorical language has important heuristic resources has survived until today (see for instance Ricoeur 1975, 10-1). But for most of the Western philosophers (from Aristotle to Hegel) the use of metaphorical
language is not a mark of 'serious philosophy'; for Plato this is hardly so. For him, man, unlike gods, cannot too often say ἐὰν οἷα καὶ οὐκ ἐκάτω (like Apollodorus says in Smp. 173 d 2-3); moreover, for him man is not even able, sometimes, to speak ἀκριβῶς about that very little he knows (cf. Ti. 29 c-d, Phd. 85 c-d, Sph. 233 a, etc.), in which case man has to resort to a metaphorical language. Plato, that is (not only unlike us, but also unlike most of the Western philosophers), believed that, very often, 'metaphorical thinking' is the only kind of rigour that we can achieve in our attempt to understand philosophical matters (5); so, besides the inevitable obscurities of his thought, due to his being a pioneer of Western philosophy, there are also the obscurities brought forward by the exuberance of his metaphorical language, i.e. by the plethora of his metaphors and metaphorical devices (whose philosophical use I shall discuss in 8.3.2.).

Given the enormous amount of metaphors and metaphorical devices he used, as well as their refinement and baroque interweaving, the abstract matters he expounded metaphorically became hardly visible. In other words, his manner of writing throws the reader of his texts into confusion. Faced with the parasitical meanings and the clandestine ideas introduced by the inhibited resources of Plato's metaphorical language, the reader of his texts will find himself at a loss about that towards which 'Plato's finger points', i.e. about that abstract ἄλλος implied by his ἄλλα-πηγορεῖν. Yet the reader (especially the one interested in the Platonic philosophy) cannot handle Plato's metaphors and metaphorical devices as they are; he has, eventually, to interfere and retrieve from them what he thinks they embody.

To conclude: we cannot, in our attempt to understand Plato, but interfere in — to use Aristotle's expression (Metaph. 987 a 31) — ἔπαθαν ΠΛΑΣΤΗΡΟΣ.

As far as I am concerned, I did not approach Plato from a particular non-Platonic philosophical perspective. I focussed my research on Plato's intentio, and I attempted to understand the way he thought; and yet my Plato too is not entirely ἐλληκρινὴς.

(1') I tried, as much as I could, to understand him in his own terms; yet, at some points, I failed, and I had to translate his claims in modern terms (as I did, for instance, in the Conclusions, where I put Plato's idea about the 'composition' of the soul in terms of the transcendental level of mind).

(2') As I said, my attempt to determine what Plato's hypothetical dialectic is, followed in a way his philosophical search, which, I believe, is a coherent search, in the sense that it, given its premisses, has a logical route; yet this search has its hesitations,
perplexities, confusions and unresolved problems. As I construed it, I am very well aware of it, this search is more clear cut than it actually was; and it is I who introduced in it an overdose of clarity and order, for I —like most of the modern scholars —have lost the grace of dealing with contingencies and fallibilities. I believe, however, that the 'exaggerated coherence' of Plato's philosophical search which I propose may help us to understand this search as it was.

(3') As regarding Plato's metaphors and metaphorical devices that I came across, I tried to separate what I believed is their 'essential' matter from their 'accidental' form. I do not totally reject, however, the possibility of interpreting these metaphors and metaphorical devices, occasionally, in a way favourable to that artificial order I introduced myself in my reading of Plato.

d. Miscellaneous

(i) The term 'Platonism' has become rather ambiguous, for — being used by so many 'philosophical schools' — it may refer nowadays not only to the original core of Plato's thought but also to various forms of Vulgatae Platonicae; whenever I used it, I meant by it 'Plato's Platonism'.

(ii) I hold, as the majority of scholars, that the Meno precedes the Phaedo, the Phaedo precedes the Republic, the Republic precedes the Parmenides, and the Parmenides precedes the Sophist. As Robinson (1953, v), I use the expressions middle and late dialogues with reference to the Meno, Cratylus, Symposium, Phaedo, Republic, Parmenides, Theaetetus, and the Phaedrus, Sophist, Politicus, Philebus, Timaeus-Critias, Laws respectively. Sometimes, however, I move rather freely between dialogues, on the assumption that they contain views which complement one another.

(iii) I take the Seventh Letter and the Greater Hippias to be genuine, although their authenticity is still debated; I have also made several references to the First Alcibiades, which I think was written by a pupil in Plato's lifetime (probably revised, or even completed by Plato himself) (for details regarding the authenticity of these works see Skemp 1976, 10-11 and Lafrance 1986, 276-77).

(iv) The text of the Platonic corpus used for citations is that of the Oxford Classical Text, edited by J. Burnet. Departures from Burnet's readings are noted. Citations from Aristotle's, Epictetus', Sextus Empiricus', Plotinus' and Porphyry's Greek texts were taken from the Loeb edition. The text of the Presocratic corpus used for citations is that of the Diels-Kranz edition.

(v) Unless otherwise noted, translations of Plato's texts are from The Collected Dialogues of Plato (Princeton University Press, 1989), and those of Aristotle's, Plotinus' and Sextus' from the Loeb
edition respectively — with occasional variants, sometimes critical, of my own.

(vi) As regarding references, I have adopted the name and date system (also known as the 'Harvard system'). In the text, references are made by indicating the author's name, followed by the year in which the work cited was published and the page(s) which is (are) referred to. No punctuation is used between the author's name and the date of citation; but the page(s) is (are) preceded by a comma, e.g. "Robinson 1953, 93". (The abbreviation for page or pages is omitted, apart from the cases in which confusion may result.) If two or more works of the same author have the same year, they are distinguished by lower-case letters given after the year.) References are given in the list of references (see Literature Cited), set out in alphabetical order of authors' surnames; each surname is followed by the year and the lower-case letter, if any.

(vii) Greek words are written in the Greek alphabet.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest debt is to Mr. Richard Stalley, my supervisor, for his challenging criticisms and support; he has patiently and meticulously guided me through many hours of tuition.

Thanks are also due to the examiners of the thesis, Ms Mary Haight (University of Glasgow) and Dr Anthony Price (Birkbeck College, University of London), who were both generous with advice.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor John Ackrill (Brasenose College, Oxford), Mrs. Lesley Brown (Somerville College, Oxford) and Mr. Alexandru Dragomir (New Europe College, Bucharest), who provided helpful comments and criticism at various stages of my work.

Some fragments from Chapter Four were used in two papers which I read at the III and IV Symposium Platonicum (held by International Plato Society at the University of Bristol, in August 1992, and at the University of Granada, in September 1995). The Introduction and Chapter One were the subject of four lectures I delivered at New Europe College at Bucharest, in January 1996. I wish to thank my audiences for their interest and critical remarks.

I thank also Professor Thomas Buchheim (University of Mainz), Professor Dorothea Frede (University of Hamburg), Professor Rainer Marten (University of Freiburg), Dr. David Robinson (University of Edinburgh), Professor Trevor Saunders (University of Newcastle) and Professor Wolfgang Wieland (University of Heidelberg) for their brief comments regarding some aspects of the productionist interpretation of Plato's metaphysics.

None of the above is to blame for the imperfections which remain.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to the University of Glasgow and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom for awarding me a Postgraduate Research Scholarship and an Overseas Research Student Award, respectively, which made this work possible.

University of Glasgow, June 1997

C. D. P.
ABBREVIATIONS

For the abbreviations I have followed the convention of employing a Latin title, although sometimes I offer an English version of it. Plato and Aristotle are taken separately (for their works I have used the abbreviations of Liddell-Scott-Jones's *Greek-English Lexicon*); then, listed in alphabetical order, are the other authors whom I have quoted.

(1) PLATO:

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<tr>
<th>Greek Title</th>
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(2) ARISTOTLE:
APo. = Analytica Posteriora
APr. = Analytica Priora
Δθ. = Ἀθηναίων Πολιτεία
Cael. = de Caelo
Cat. = Categoriae
de An. = de Anima
EE = Ethica Eudemia
EN = Ethica Nicomachea
dE = de Generacione et Corruptione
Int. = de Interpretatione
Metaph. = Metaphysica
Ph. = Physica
Po. = Poetica
Rh. = Rhetorica
SE = Sophistici Elenchi
Top. = Topica

(3) OTHER AUTHORS CITED

AESCHYLUS
Pr. = Prometheus Vinctus

ALEXANDER of Aphrodisias:
in AP = Commentary on Aristotle’s Prior Analytics

AMMONIUS:
in Int = Commentary on Aristotle’s On Interpretation

EPICHTETUS:
diss = Discourses

GALEN:
sect ingred = On the Schools, for beginners

PHILOPONUS:
in APr = Commentary on Aristotle’s Prior Analytics

PORPHYRY:
Plot. = Vita Plotini

PROCLUS:
in Eucl = Commentary on the First Book of Euclid’s Elements
in Tim = Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus

SEXTUS EMPIRICUS:
M = Against the Mathematicians
PH = Outlines of Pyrrhonism

SIMPLICIUS
in Ph. = Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics

STOBAEUS
Ecl. = Eclogues

XENOPHON:
Smp. = Symposium
Cyr. = Cyropaedia

(4) OTHER WORKS CITED


INTRODUCTION

Socratism and Platonism

As I said in the Preface, my attempt to determine what Plato's hypothetical dialectic is, follows in a way the logical route of his philosophical search. This route, in my view, covers two main areas: first, that of the metaphysical nature of the things that can be known; and then — once the theory of ἐξήγησις is established (which is Plato's answer to the question of the metaphysical nature of the things that can be known) — that of how a particular ἔδοκε can be known.

As I shall argue, within the first area Plato (i) starts from the question of the given way in which our knowledge works (Chapter One); and then continues with offering (ii) a possible μέθοδος towards the solution of the 'puzzle' brought forward by the given way in which our knowledge works (a 'puzzle' that concerns mainly the 'nature' of that which is the object of certain knowledge) (Chapter Two); and (iii) a possible solution to this 'puzzle' — the so-called theory of forms (Chapter Three). Why, however, did Plato's philosophical search — his 'intellectual odyssey', as Ryle 1966, 17 calls it — begin like this?

The most plausible answer (which I shall defend in what follows) is that Plato's philosophical search began as it did because of Socrates influence, i.e. because it started somehow from the results of Socrates' philosophy.

0.1. The Socratic matter

No one can deny the fact that Plato's first dialogues are dominated by the 'Socratic matter' and its 'elements' (the elenchus, the 'What is X?' question, etc.). In other words, one cannot deny Socrates' influence on Plato: one can only approximate its degree; this approximation, however, is a very delicate business. But first, what does the 'Socratic matter' consist of?

0.1.1. The Socratic παράδειγμα: the escape from pseudo-certain knowledge

One of our Oxford colleagues once remarked to me that his abler undergraduates could generally be relied upon to observe in
It seems to be assumed that what Socrates says represents what Plato thinks; but isn't that a questionable assumption? To which he would reply that the point is an excellent one, but not something to be pursued if the student is to get the appropriate benefit from reading the Republic: viz. to learn some philosophy.

This is the first paragraph of the "Editor's Note" of the XXXIVth volume (1989, 352) of Phronesis. Though more and more questioned nowadays, this approach has the appealing advantage of avoiding the endless discussion about the historical and the Platonic Socrates. I do not think, however, that we should succumb entirely to this seductive, for convenient, position.

It is true that some testimonies suggest that one should not rely very much on Plato's accounts about historical characters (Diogenes Laertius 3.35 and the Anonymous Prolegomena 3.28-31 give direct quotes of Socrates' protest after he had read the Lysis, and Athenaeus mentions that Gorgias disclaimed Gorgias and Phaedo the Phaedo —cf. Riggins, 1976, 55, 93, 108). I agree that, at least in Socrates' case, there are no reliable means to determine the fidelity and completeness of Plato's accounts about him. But this situation should not prevent us from distinguishing between the 'Socratic' Socrates of the earlier dialogues and the Platonic Socrates of the middle and late ones —even if we leave aside the endless debate about their 'boundary'. So, what does the 'Socratic matter' consists of?

One thing that every student in Ancient philosophy knows about Socrates is that he (unlike his predecessors, the Pre-socratics) focussed entirely on the question of man. What then is man for Socrates?

The First Alcibiades, it seems, was written by a pupil in Plato's lifetime, but, some scholars have argued, it was probably revised, or even completed by Plato himself (see Preface, d). One cannot rely then too much on this dialogue. Yet Socrates says in it something which was implied in many of Plato's Socratic dialogues: first, that man is, essentially, his soul, ψυχή (130 d); and secondly, that soul is, essentially, that divine (θεῖον) part of it in which σοφία may occur (133 b). What then is σοφία for Socrates?

In Apology Socrates speaks about three kinds of σοφία:

(i) the real, or authentic (cf. τῷ διῷ τι —23 a 5) σοφία, which 'is the property of θεός' (a 5-6);
(ii) the real, or authentic (cf. τῷ διῷ τι —20 a 8) human (ἀνθρωπίνη) σοφία, which, as the Delphic god said, is the σοφία that belongs to Socrates (but, adds Socrates, when the Delphic god uttered this oracle, he "is not referring literally to Socrates; he has merely taken my name as a παράθεται γυμνα" —23 a 8-b 4); and
To sum up so far: for Socrates man is, essentially, the real \( \alpha \nu \varphi \omicron \varphi \iota \alpha \), i.e. the Socratic \( \pi \alpha \rho \alpha \delta \varepsilon \epsilon \gamma \mu \alpha \). What then is at the core of this \( \pi \alpha \rho \alpha \delta \varepsilon \epsilon \gamma \mu \alpha \)?

According to the Apology (cf. 21 a; see also 22 a, 30 a and Phd. 85 b) the Delphic god, asked by Chaerephon, a friend of Socrates, whether there is anyone wiser than Socrates, answered that there is no such man. "He [the Delphic god] cannot be telling a lie; that would not be right for him" — says Socrates (21 b). And yet he, Socrates, starts to question the oracle's answer. In my view, this very gesture of Socrates, to question even a god's statement, reveals the Socratic \( \acute{\epsilon} \rho \epsilon \tau \varsigma \) \( \textit{par excellence} \), that which is at the core of the Socratic \( \pi \alpha \rho \alpha \delta \varepsilon \epsilon \gamma \mu \alpha \), namely the act of questioning. (When he says, in the Hippias Minor 372 b 1-2, c 2-5: "the only good thing I have is my persisting questioning", he points out, I think, precisely that questioning is his main \( \acute{\epsilon} \rho \epsilon \tau \varsigma \).)

Socrates' persisting questioning, however, stems from his being aware that he 'knows that he does not know' (cf., inter alia, Ap. 21 d, Euthphr. 2 c, Ly. 223 b, Hp. Ma. 286 c, 304 d f., Hp. Mi. 372 f.). There has been a complex debate about whether Socrates is or not sincere when he claims his ignorance. It is obvious, I agree, that he is not so ignorant as he pretends he is; that he does not suffer from poor memory as he claims he does (see for instance Prt. 334 c-d, or Men. 71 c); that his invitations to reciprocity in questioning are not always sincere; and that sometimes he is ironic and behaves like a mere \( \varepsilon \rho \iota \iota \sigma \tau \iota \kappa \iota \varsigma \) (cf. R. 348 a). But this whole discussion may obscure the philosophical point of the Socratic ignorance. For Socrates' claim of ignorance ('I know that I do not know') (from which his persisting questioning stems) was not aimed exclusively at himself; he, Socrates, is only a \( \pi \alpha \rho \alpha \delta \varepsilon \epsilon \gamma \mu \alpha \) (23 b 1), and his claim of ignorance was aimed at pointing out the very first step of the escape from a situation in which man, in his \( \text{Alltäglichkeit} \) (as Heidegger would put it), is caught —namely his acting on the ground of a stock of beliefs taken as certain, without his realizing that they are not actually so.

To conclude: for Socrates man is, essentially, the possibility of this escape from a non-authentic, everyday condition, which is caused by pseudo certain knowledge.

Now, it is only in such a context that the issue of a reliable \( \delta \delta \varsigma \) toward certain knowledge may arise. That is: the very issue of 'the right way towards sure knowledge' implies that 'sure knowledge' is not (completely) at hand for man, although the possibility of (partially) achieving it exists. So, did Socrates find such a \( \delta \delta \varsigma \)?
0.1.2. *συναφεία* as the Socratic locus of certainty. The dialogue as the condition for achieving certain knowledge

This way of putting things — that for Socrates man is, essentially, an *escape* from *pseudo certain knowledge* which begins by assuming his own ignorance — can make one think of Descartes, for whom the very first step toward the reaching of certainty, *le doute*, stems also from an assumed ignorance.

Descartes, at the beginning of his *Discours de la méthode*, says: "[...] la puissance de bien juger et distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, qui est proprement ce qu'on nomme le bon sens ou la raison, est naturellement égale en tous les hommes" ("[et elle] est la chose du monde la mieux partagée"). For him then, 'la puissance de bien juger et distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux' (i.e. the human capacity to achieve certain knowledge), is the same in *everyone*. And for him, one does not need, in order to achieve certain knowledge, another one's 'puissance de bien juger': he simply has to use his own and follow some sure, simple and easy rules. In short: for Descartes the *locus* of certainty is the *individual mind* (1).

For Socrates things are not exactly the same. For him 'la puissance de bien juger' is, one may claim, also 'naturellement égale en tous les hommes' (and this can be supported by, say, the episode with the slave boy from the *Meno* 82 a ff.). Yet for Socrates, unlike for Descartes, the *locus* of certainty is not the *individual mind*.

Socrates was a κοινωνικός ἀνήρ, a man of *communion*; he lived all his life in his πόλις, speaking with *anyone* who happened to be around. *Communion*, however, is not an 'accidental element' of the *Socratic παραδείγμα*.

In the *First Alcibiades*, again, Socrates says something which was *implied* in many of Plato's Socratic dialogues: that that divine part of our soul in which *σοφία* may occur (and which can provide the *escape* from *pseudo certain knowledge*) needs, in order to reveal itself, *other* souls (for, argues Socrates, this part of the soul is like an *eye* that can see itself only in *another eye* — 132 d ff.). And that is because, as Socrates claims many times, the quest for knowledge in general should be done κοινωνίᾳ, *in communion* (κοινωνία σκέπτεον — as he says in *Chrm.* 158 d 8) (2).

I [says Socrates to Polus], who am but one, do not agree with you, for you cannot compel me to; you are merely producing many false witnesses against me in your endeavour to drive me out of my property [*οὐσία*], the truth. But if I cannot produce in you yourself a single witness in agreement with my views, I consider that I have accomplished nothing worth speaking of in the
matter under debate; and the same, I think, is true for you also, if
I, one solitary witness, do not testify for you and if you do not
leave all these others out of account.

(Grg. 472 b-c)

We may say then that for Socrates one does need, in order to
achieve certainty, another one's 'puissance de bien juger'; which
means that for him the locus of certainty is not the individual mind,
but the συνουσία (3), i.e. the communion of individual minds (the
κοινή βουλή — cf. Alc. 1, 124 b 10). Such a communion, however, is
possible only through the medium of λόγος, language, and that is why
the διάλογος, the dialogue, is so important for Socrates; for the
dιάλογος plays the role of the means through which the συνουσία of
individual minds can be achieved. (Socrates' refusal to write, I
believe, may be due, to some extent, to the fact that writing, unlike
speaking, is essentially an individual process, which cannot be done
κοινώς.)

For Socrates then, the necessary condition for obtaining certain
knowledge is to secure for yourself the participation in a συνουσία.

0.1.3. How can certain knowledge be achieved. διολογία and ἐλεγχός

Now, how does a συνουσία, in its quest for certain knowledge,
function? Roughly speaking: by the procedure of the Socratic ἐλεγχός.

The word ἐλεγχός seems to be used for the first time in a
philosophical context by Parmenides (see 7 B, 5). It would be, of
course, very tempting to make Parmenides a predecessor of the
Socratic ἐλεγχός. (The title of D. Furley's 1989 article — "Truth as
what survives the elenchos: an idea in Parmenides" — seems very
appealing indeed.) But, I think, we cannot claim, counting only on
this single occurrence of the word ἐλεγχός, that we have in
Parmenides a real predecessor of the Socratic elenchus (a view
which I argued for in 1993, 191-5).

What then is the Socratic ἐλεγχός? Roughly put, it is a 'logical
device' whose aim is to establish the falsity or truth of one's opinions
(cf. for instance Euthd. 287 c 4-5, Grg. 472 c, 473 b, 508 b, 508 e-509
a, etc.; cf. also Robinson 1953, 7, Vlastos 1983, 71 and Waterfield
1989, 43) (4); and its 'standard' version (to use Vlastos's 1983, 38
expression) is this:

(1) An 'answerer' (ὁ ἀπεκρινόμενος) (usually an interlocutor of
Socrates) asserts a 'thesis', say p, which is his own belief. (This
'thesis' is a λέγωμενον, whose form is either 'a has the
characteristic of b' or 'a is b' — cf. also Robinson 1953, 49).
(ii) A questioner (ὁ ἐρωτῶν) (usually Socrates), through a chain of questions whose answers appear as being evident, attempts to make the answerer accept further 'theses', say q and r. Then, from these evidently true 'theses' (q and r) it is entailed non-p.

(iii) So, it follows that the original thesis (p) is false.

Or, to put it in a formal way (cf. Vlastos 1983, 29 and Waterfield 1989, 44):

(i) p
(ii) q·r
(iii) (q·r) → non p (5).

The most difficult question that the Socratic elenchus raises is, obviously, that of truth. Before considering it, however, I would like to say a few things about what knowledge is according to this procedure.

In the elenchus, the piece of knowledge whose certainty is to be checked, as well as those pieces of knowledge that are taken as evidently certain, are all λεγόμενα, statements, whose form is either 'a has the characteristic of b' or 'a is b'. Their forms are not, however, very important. What is important is that knowledge appears in this procedure as a statement about a κοινωνία between two 'things' —e.g. between 'temperance' (σωφροσύνη) and 'good' (καλόν) (Chrm. 159 c 1, d 8, 160 c 9); 'temperance' (σωφροσύνη) and 'modesty' (αἰσχῶς) (Chrm. 160 e 5); 'modesty' (αἰσχῶς) and 'good' (καλὸν) (Chrm. 161 a 6); 'beautiful' (τὸ καλὸν) and 'useful' (τὸ χρήσιμον) (Hi. Ma. 294 c ff.); 'good' (τὸ ἀγαθόν) and 'beautiful' (τὸ καλὸν) (Hi. Ma. 297 c); 'beneficial' (τὸ ἀφέλαιμον) and 'beautiful' (τὸ καλὸν) (Hi. Ma. 296 e). The 'object' of knowledge is then, to put it very roughly, the κοινωνία of 'things'.

One may object to this claim by saying that Socrates is concerned not only with elenchus (i.e. with the κοινωνία of things'), but with the so-called 'What is X?' questions (i.e. with 'things' in themselves) (see La. 189 e, Euthphr. 6 e, Prt. 360 e, etc.).

What happens with those asked by Socrates 'What something is?' reminds us of what Augustine says in Confessions, XI, 14, 17 about time ('quid est ergo tempus? si nemo ex me quae rat scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio'). For they know what X is, only as long as nobody questions them: the moment Socrates asks them, they cease to know it (cf. also Robinson 1953, 53-4). Socrates, however, cannot be blamed for this, because he stated very clearly his questions and the type of the expected answers.

Most of his 'What is X?' questions seem to be construed as requests for an identity, i.e. as requests for an answer of the type 'X is Y', where Y is taken to be the same thing as X. In my view, this is hardly the case. That which Socrates is actually expecting when he raises this kind of question is, obviously, a definition of X, and a
definition is more than a mere identity. If we rely on the *Meno* (although this dialogue is more Platonic than Socratic), a good definition is a statement which, roughly speaking, should have a form of this type: 'X is the y of z' (see for instance 76 a, where Socrates says that if he asked 'What is figure?', a good answer would be 'figure is the limit of a solid'; cf. also Robinson 1953, 50). And if so, then that which Socrates is seeking when he raises his 'What is X?' question is also a k*ó*lôsia of 'things'.

Now, to go back to the issue of 'truth and elenchus'. Irwin 1977 b, 41 claims that "whatever Socrates may think, the formal structure of the elenchus allows him to test consistency, not to discover truth. If I survive an elenchus with my original beliefs intact, I have some reason to believe they are consistent; but they may be consistently crazy." In other words: all that an elenchus can do is to affirm the consistency of a set of 'theses' (non p·q·r) and the inconsistency of another (p·q·r). If so, we have to consider Socrates either a not very sophisticated logician, who thought that consistency is a criterion of truth, or a very sophisticated one, who, in modern terms, held a coherence theory of truth.

Vlastos 1985, Waterfield 1989 and Woodruff 1990 propose (each in his own way) a solution which is extremely ingenious and, I must say, very persuasive. I shall refer in what follows, very briefly, to Waterfield's version of this solution.

Waterfield 1989 claims that in the Socratic dialogues we have to distinguish between two different fields of knowledge. (i) One is the field of 'experience', which belongs to the so-called 'experts' in various *té*vai; in this field, when an 'expert' has to establish if a certain opinion is true or false, he uses *correspondence* as the criterion of truth (that is, he 'confronts' that opinion with the 'reality' to which it refers) (for in this field of 'experience', the confrontation is possible). (ii) The other field is 'beyond experience', and this is the field of 'values' (beautiful, virtue, etc.), which Socrates is interested in. Here, in this field, the 'experiment' is not possible, and so, when one wants to establish whether a certain opinion is true or false, the only criterion of truth that he has is *coherence*. And Waterfield conclusion is that for Socrates "truth as consistency is second best to truth as correspondence" (p. 48). (Waterfield relies, *inter alia*, upon Ap. 21 d and *Euthyd.* 293 b ff., where Socrates' knowledge, the elenctic knowledge *par excellence*, being contrasted with the expert knowledge, is described as 'small' and 'unimportant' respectively — see p. 48).

As far as I am concerned, I do believe that the Socratic elenchus is a procedure whose aim is to establish the truth value of a statement, and so I must accept that consistency serves, for Socrates, as a sort of criterion of truth. And I accept Waterfield's distinction described above; I accept, in other words, that Socrates was faced
with the fact that there are two fields of knowledge—one in which the 'experiment' is possible and where correspondence appears, accordingly, as the best criterion of truth; and another one in which the 'experiment' is not possible and where coherence appears as the only criterion of truth.

So, how does a συνομνία, in its quest for certain knowledge, practice the μεθόδος? In my view, in two steps: first, it seeks to establish a body of beliefs that are evidently true (which are usually marked by the word 'agreement', ὀμολογία (6)); and then it assesses a belief that is not evidently true against this body of evidently true beliefs (that is: reject it as false if it is not consistent with it, or accept it as true if it is consistent with it). (To put it in terms of Plato's later philosophy: first there are established a set of evidently true κοιννία between several things; and then, a κοιννία that is not evidently true is assessed against this set of evidently true κοιννία; in short: if an alleged κοιννία between two 'things' 'fits' within a particular 'network' of κοιννία whose truth is commonly accepted, then this indicates that that the alleged κοιννία is also true.)

0.1.4. Conclusions: the Socratic problem ('How can certain knowledge be achieved?'), μέθοδος (διαλέγειν and ἔλεγχος) and unsolved difficulty ('What is the nature of that one in the many which is the object of certain knowledge?')

To sum up so far: the Socratic matter consists of a problem ('How can certain knowledge be achieved?') and a possible μέθοδος (whose main 'elements' are: the assumed ignorance, the dialogue and the ἔλεγχος). But this is not all; there is something else that belongs to Socratism: the unsolved difficulty regarding the object of certain knowledge.

According to Socrates, the object of certain knowledge is 'the one in the many' (which in the jargon of modern scholarship is called 'the Socratic universal'). Socrates explains what he means by that in several places: if we want to achieve certain knowledge about virtue, for instance, we should aim at finding out not what a particular virtue is, but what is that virtue which is present in all particular virtues (see Men. 73 e; cf. also Euthphr. 6 d, Prt. 360 e, La. 189 e-190 a, etc.) It is not my purpose here to enter into the issue of the 'Socratic universal' (Robinson 1953, 49-60 offers an excellent analysis of it). All I want to point out is that (i) the Socratic problem of 'how can certain knowledge be achieved' raises an enormous difficulty—namely 'what is the nature of that which is the object of certain knowledge'? And that (ii) Socrates does not actually solve this
difficulty — although he somehow determines it (cf. for instance Euthphr. 6 d: "... that what I asked of you was not to tell me one or two out of all the numerous actions that are holy. I wanted you to tell me what is the κλος of holiness which makes all holy actions holy. I believe you held that there is a μνεία by which unholy things are all unholy, and by which all holy things are holy").

That is why, I claim, the Socratic matter consists of both a problem ('How can certain knowledge be achieved?'), a possible μέθοδοσ (whose main 'elements' the dialogue and the ξειγχωσ) and an enormous, unsolved difficulty ('What is the nature of that one in the many which is the object of certain knowledge?').

Now, let us go back to the issue of Socrates' influence on Plato.

0.2. The Socratic matter as the starting-point of Platonism

As I said, Plato's philosophical search begins with: (i) putting the problem of the way in which our knowledge works; with (ii) offering a possible μέθοδοσ (grounded on the criterion of coherence) towards the solution of the 'puzzle' brought forward by the given way in which our knowledge works (a 'puzzle' that concerns mainly the 'nature' of that which is the object of certain knowledge); and with (iii) laying down a possible solution to this 'puzzle' — the so-called theory of forms.

Why, however, did it begin like this? The most plausible answer is, I believe, this: because of Socrates' influence, i.e. because these three 'elements' of the beginning of Platonism (his way of putting the question of knowledge, μέθοδοσ and solution) stem from Socrates' problem ('How can certain knowledge be achieved?'), μέθοδοσ (whose main 'elements' are the dialogue and the ξειγχωσ) and difficulty ('What is the nature of that one in the many which is the object of certain knowledge?'). (As I said at the end of 0.1.1., for Socrates man is, essentially, the possibility of escaping from a non-authentic, everyday condition, which is caused by pseudo certain knowledge. And, I claimed, it is only in such a context that the issue of a reliable δόΣ toward certain knowledge may arise. Now, this issue occurs also in Plato, and he points out too, in one form or another, its context — namely that 'sure knowledge is not completely at hand for man, although the possibility of partially achieving it exists'; cf. for instance Smp. 204 b 5, where he says that the philosopher is the one who is actually μεταχειροφορέω καὶ ἀμαθοῦσ.) (As I shall argue, some other 'elements' of Socratism are to be found in Platonism: the distinction between the two main fields of knowledge, the belief that the locus of certainty is the 'communion of minds', and the view according to which the 'object' of knowledge is the Κοινωνία of 'things'.)
CHAPTER ONE

Plato's way of putting the question of knowledge

Most of Plato's dialogues have, at their core, a human matter—that of knowledge, of politics, or of ethics. Plato, that is, like Socrates, focussed mainly on the question of man (an idea which, to some extent, is also suggested by the fact that all his dialogues, with a few exceptions, have as title men's names). What is then man for Plato?

For Plato man is a σώμα ἐφυσικόν (cf. Sph. 246 e-247 d and 248 a-249 a), i.e. a κοινωνία between a ψυχή (which is 'man's most precious possession' —Lg. 731 c, and, so to say, his 'essence') and a σώμα (cf. also Ti. 69 c ff.). Now, the human ψυχή has, for Plato, several 'parts' (see for instance R. 580 d-583 a). I shall not, however, enter here the complicated details of Plato's psychology; what I would like to point out is that for Plato the 'essential' part of the human ψυχή is the part with which we 'learn' (μαθητομέν —R. 436 a 9), i.e. τὸ λογιστικὸν (441 e 4, 550 b 1, 571 c 4), not the parts with which we 'feel anger' (Θυμόμεθα) or 'desire [ἐπιθυμομέν] the pleasures of nutrition and generation and their kind' (436 a 10-11) —i.e. ὁ θυμός (436 e 4, 439 c 3, 550 b 3, 581 a 9) and τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν (550 b 2) respectively (see also Ti. 69 c ff.) (1).

To sum up: for Plato every soul is tripartite, and every soul has a part (τὸ λογιστικὸν) which aims at achieving knowledge. And since knowledge is 'the only good that man may have' (Euthd. 292 b 1-2), man is, for him, essentially, that part through which knowledge is achieved.

As I argued (see 0.1.1.), for Socrates man is, essentially, 'the possibility of achieving sure knowledge'; and his philosophy started from a given situation, which hinders this possibility and which concerns (in one way or another) every man, namely one's acting on the ground of a stock of beliefs taken as certain, without his realizing that they are not actually so. For Plato man is also, essentially, 'the possibility of achieving sure knowledge'; but he does not start from what hinders this possibility; he starts from the given way in which every λογιστικὸν μαθητομέν, in other words: from the given way in which knowledge in general works (for, as I shall argue in Chapter Three, his main philosophical doctrine, the so-called theory of forms, was aimed primarily at solving the puzzling way in which knowledge seems to be working).
1.1. 'To know' as 'to know what remains the same'

ἐπιστήμη seems to signify that the soul is stopping [Ιστήμη] at things, rather than going round with them. [...] ἔστημον [which is a common attribute for ἐπιστήμη in Plato] is clearly the expression of station [στάσις] and position [πάσις], not of motion [φορά]. Again, the word ἰστορία bears upon the face of it the stopping [ἰστθαι] of the stream, and the word μετόν certainly indicates cessation of motion [Ιστήμη]; then, again, μνήμη, as anyone may see, expresses rest [μνήμη] in the soul, and not motion [φορά].

This is what Plato says in the Cratylus 437 a-b. Apparently, these etymologies are correct (ἐπιστήμη, for instance, comes from the verb ἐπισταμέναι, which is made out of the preposition ἐπὶ, 'on', 'upon', and the verb ἑστὶ, a passive form of ἔστημι, which means 'to make to stand still', in its transitive form, and 'to remain fixed', in its intransitive form). Yet earlier on, at 412 a-b, he said something different, which suggests that knowledge is linked with motion, not with rest ("ἐπιστήμη indicates that the soul follows [ἐποιένης] the motion of things"; "σύνημος is derived from συνιέναι ['to understand' — the infinitive of συνιέμι] and, like ἐπιστασθαι, implies the progression [συνιέναι —which is also the infinitive of σύνεμι, 'to come together'] of the soul in company with the nature of things"; "σοφία means 'touching [ἐπάπτεσθαι] the motion [φορά] or stream of things').

Now, how are we to take all this?

In the Sophist Plato claims that knowledge (γιγνώσκειν) is actually a κοινωνία between something that is known and the soul that knows it (248 a ff.). That which is known, he argues, cannot be separated from rest (249 b, c), while soul cannot be separated from motion (249 a, b); so, we may say, knowledge is somehow linked with both motion and rest. But here in the Cratylus this point is not at stake.

In the Cratylus 440 a-b Plato says that "knowledge [γιγνώσκειν] cannot continue to be knowledge unless continuing always to abide and exist". Why? "[Because] if knowledge changes in its form, at the time when the change occurs there will be no knowledge; and if the transition is always going on, there will always be no knowledge, and, according to this view, there will be no one to know [οὔτε τὸ γνώσθημεν] and nothing to be known [οὔτε τὸ γνώσθημεν]" (2). That is: to really know something (or: to have a sure knowledge) means, first of all, 'to know today and tomorrow' (cf. also Grg. 482 a: 'philosophy [i.e. the sure knowledge par excellence] holds always to the same, being not at the mercy now of one argument, now of another' —my paraphrase); in other words, if a knowledge is really knowledge, if it is sure, it has to remain as it is. If tomorrow my
knowledge is not like today, then this, claims Plato, is not real knowledge. (And this is, we have to admit, a feature of the given way in which our knowledge works, not Plato's 'invention'. Why is that so? Why knowledge is sure only if it remains the same? The answer, obviously, must be linked with the way man, and so human knowledge, is determined by time. Plato, however, as far as I know, does not give an explicit answer to this question; he only takes into account this 'feature' of the given way in which our knowledge works.)

So, since knowledge is sure only if it is in rest, i.e. only if it remains the same (440 b), those words that refer to it and contain this idea (e.g. μηδεμία, ἡστορία, πιστόν or μνήμη — cf. 437 a-b) were well 'construed' by the name-giver; whereas those that refer to it and do not contain this idea (e.g. σύνησις or σοφία cf. 412 a-b) were (according to Plato's view) badly chosen (this claim is missing from the text of the Cratylus, but it would suggest itself readily enough as a corollary of the end of the dialogue). (And, we may complete his thought, words in which both ideas are present — as it is the case with ἐπιστήμην, cf. 437 a and 412 a — are ambiguous, ἀμφιβολοί, cf. 437 a 3.) (That is why, he concludes, we should not trust the names, for they may be misleading — cf. 440 c.)

Now, if knowledge is knowledge only insofar as it remains the same, then its object has also to remain the same; that is: my knowledge can remain the same, today and tomorrow, only if that which is known, ἑτί τὸ γνῶσον σώματον, remains, today and tomorrow, the same. This idea, that knowledge is always knowledge of something that μένει κατὰ ταύτα, occurs in Plato many times (cf. Cra. 440 a-b: "[...] you cannot know that which has no state. [...] And] we cannot reasonably say that there is knowledge [γνώσις] at all, if everything is in a state of transition and there is nothing abiding [μὴ σὲν μένει]"; cf. also R. 585 c f., Sph. 249 b, Phlb. 58 a, 61 ε (3)). This way of putting things, however, leaves us with a difficult question, namely What is actually that which remains the same?

(In his Ethica Nicomachea Aristotle says the same thing, that we can have knowledge only about those ὧν ὅτα that are the ἀίτω, cf. 1139 b 23 f., i.e. only about that which cannot be otherwise — cf. 1139 b 20 ff.: ὃ ἐπιστήμης, μὴ ἔνδεχεσθαι ἀλλὰς ἔχειν. Heidegger 1992 b, 33 argues that this claim —that 'we can know only that which remains the same'— is not inferred by Aristotle from some of his philosophical views, but from the given way in which human knowledge works. As far as I am concerned, I endorse Heidegger's comment, and I think that it also applies to Plato. That is: Plato's claim, that 'we can know only that which remains the same' is not deduced by him from anything related with his doctrines; it is, I believe, a claim based on the observation that our knowledge is real
knowledge only if it remains the same and that the object of such unchanging knowledge must itself remain the same.)

1.2. Perceiving and speaking

Now, how can we know that which remains the same? As I said, for Plato man is a σῶμα ἔμψυχον (cf. Sph. cf. 246 e-247 d and 248 a-249 a), i.e. a συναμφότερον (cf. Ti. 87 c 6) made out of a σῶμα and a ψυχῆ. Does this mean that man, for Plato, can know that which remains the same with both his bodily senses and his soul?

In the Theaetetus 184 d Plato claims explicitly that that with which we perceive is the soul:

It would surely be strange" — says there Socrates — "that there should be a number of senses [αἴσθησεις] ensconced inside us, like the warriors in the Trojan horse, and all these things should not converge and meet in some single nature — a soul [Ψυχή], or whatever it is to be called — with which we perceive all the objects of perception through the senses as instruments" [cf. also 184 b-c, e; 185 a ff.]. [For instance:] the hardness of something hard and the softness of something soft will be perceived [αἴσθησεις] by the soul through touch [186 b].

(Cf. also Phd. 73 c ff., or Ti. 67 b: "sound is a blow which passes through the ears, and is transmitted by means of the air, the brain, and the blood, to the [whole] soul; and hearing is the vibration of this blow which begins in the head [i.e. in the learning part of the soul — τῷ λόγιστικών] and ends in the region of the liver [i.e. it affects also the other two parts of the soul — δὲ ὑμὸς and τῷ ἐπιθυμητικών]." In the Philebus 33 d, however, Plato attempts to put things in a more refined way: "[...]} among the παθήματα that are constantly affecting our bodies some are exhausted in the body before passing through to the soul, thus leaving the latter unaffected, while others penetrate both body and soul and set up a sort of disturbance which is both peculiar to each and common to both.") Thus, for Plato, it is only the soul that can know — either through the senses or through itself (Thk. 185 e 6-7; cf. also e 1-2); which is to say that man, for Plato, can know that which remains the same only with his soul.

Now, in the Timaeus, Plato claims that the ἐκ τοῦ νοῦ σερομένη δύναμις (i.e., roughly speaking, the δύναμις of the learning part of the soul) is a δύναμις of διανοήματα, of thoughts (71 b 3-4); which implies that thinking (διανοεῖσθαι) is soul’s (main) 'activity'. But, the very process of thinking (διανοεῖσθαι, and sometimes φορεῖν) is, he says in the Theaetetus 189 e-190 a, λέγειν.
Sia voe is a logos that the soul carries out with herself about any subject she is considering [...; and] when the soul is thinking [Σιάνοιωμένη] she is simply talking to herself [Σιάλέγειςθαί] asking questions and answering them, and saying yes or no.

(Cf. also Sph. 263 e: "Well, διάνοια and λόγος are the same thing, except that what we call διάνοια is, precisely, the inward διάλογος carried out by the soul with herself without spoken sound"; see also Sph. 264 a and Ti. 37 a-b.) In short: for Plato soul (i.e. the learning part of the soul) is, as he says in the Theaetetus 185 c, a διά τής γνώμης δύναμις (a 'faculty that works through the tongue' as Cornford translates); that is: soul is primarily related with speaking. So, if that which remains the same can be known only with the soul, and if soul knows, primarily, through speaking, it follows that that which remains the same must be known primarily through speaking, λέγειν (cf. Tht. 183 a-b: "for those who hold that all things are in change, [says Socrates,] some new dialect will have to be instituted, since, as it is, they have no phrases to fit their fundamental proposition — unless indeed it were 'not even nohow'; which suggests that for Plato speaking is about that which remains the same).

Plato, however, claims that 'to know through the αἰσθήσεως τοῦ σώματος' and 'to know only through soul' (through speaking) "have a distinct origin and are of a different nature" (Ti. 51 e 1-2); but this way of putting things leaves us with another difficult question, namely Why knowing through senses and knowing through speaking have a distinct origin and are of a different nature?

1.3. Knowledge and causality

Burnet 1908, 10-11 claims that "the great principle which underlies all their [the Ionian cosmologists'] thinking, though it is first put into words by Pamenides, is that Nothing comes into being out of nothing, and nothing passes away into nothing". The Greek notion of 'origin' raises some major difficulties, mainly because of the 'problematic' terms by which it was rendered, such as αρχή, φύσις or aitia. Yet, in spite of this terminological variety, the idea that every thing in our world (as well as the world itself) must have an 'origin' (an idea which was rejected in the Old Testament) is, in one form or another, to be found not only in the Ionian cosmologists, but in all important Greek thinkers. This idea (which in the Middle Ages was reformulated as nihil est sine ratione and labelled as principium rationis sufficientis) was explicitly discussed and justified by many mediaeval, modern and contemporary philosophers (as, for instance,
Leibniz in his treatise *Primae veritates*, or Heidegger in his *Vom Wesen des Grundes*). But, strangely enough, the Greek thinkers, from whom, one may claim, this idea has emerged, did not make any attempt to justify it. And so, all we can do is to take their belief in the existence of 'origins' as a given postulate of their thinking; we have, that is, to accept that for them, unlike for many mediaeval, modern and contemporary philosophers, this belief was, in itself, non-problematic. For them, nevertheless, *philosophy* — although it does not justify this principle — is aimed primarily at finding the 'origins' of our world and of everything that is in it (cf. for instance Aristotle, *Metaph.* 993 b 20-4: "philosophy is rightly called a knowledge of truth. [...] But we cannot know the truth apart from the cause").

This is also the case with Plato. First, he believes that everything in our world (which is in a process of change) must have a cause (or, arguably, causes) (cf. *Ti.* 28 a 4-5: πᾶν δὲ αὐτὸ τὸ γεγομένων ὑπ’ αἰτίων τινὸς ἢ ἀνάγκης γίγνεσθαι; or *Phlb.* 26 e 3-4: ἀναγκαῖον ἑναὶ πάντα τὰ γεγομένα διὰ τινὰ αἰτίαν γίγνεσθαι). Secondly, he left this principle unjustified. And thirdly, he claims that philosophy should be concerned with finding the *causes* of things; that is: to know what something is — be it a simple couch (*R.* 597 a) or the universe itself (*Ti.* 28 c ff.) — implies to know its cause (cf. *Ti.* 28 a 4-5, c ff., 29 d-e, 31 b; *Phlb.* 26 e 3-4.). (And — as the discussion of τὸ ἄγαθὸν from the *Republic* and that of the μέγιστα γένη from the *Sophist* and the *Philebus* suggest — philosophy should raise not only the question about the causes of things that exist in our world, but also the one about the ultimate causes of existence.)

1.4. The puzzle brought forward by the given way in which our knowledge works

As I said, Plato starts his philosophical search from what he thinks is the given way in which every λογιστικὸν μανθάνει; in other words: from the given way in which μάθησις in general works. And his way of putting the question of μάθησις in general is this:

(i) man can know only that which remains the same;
(ii) that which remains the same, however, can be known only by the (learning part of the) soul, although man is both a ψυχή and a σώμα;
(iii) 'to know through the καθηκόντως τοῦ σώματος' and 'to know only through soul' (through speaking) 'have a distinct origin and are of a different nature'; yet that which remains the same is known primarily through speaking; and
(iv) our knowledge seems to be concerned with knowing *causes*. 

39
These four determinations of the given way in which our knowledge, at a first sight, works — namely (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) — raise many difficult questions, the most important ones being these three: **What is actually that which remains the same? Why knowing through senses and knowing through speaking have a distinct origin and are of a different nature? And: What is the relation between that which remains the same and the causes of things?**

These questions are not *explicitly* formulated by Plato; but they are, I think, *latent* in his way of putting the question of knowledge. If so, however (i.e. if we accept that these three questions, though not explicitly formulated, are latent in his way of putting the question of knowledge), then the given way in which, for Plato, *παιδεία* in general works appears like a πάνω θεωμαστὼν puzzle. Now, what would be, according to him, the right *way of reasoning*, the right *μέθοδος*, that we should follow, if we want to solve this puzzle?

The ἔλεγχος, the main element of Socrates' *μέθοδος*, occurs in Plato in many middle and late dialogues, and he regarded it as a valuable device (cf. for instance *Sph.* 230 d 7-8, where it is called the μεγίστη καὶ κυριοτάτη τῶν καθάρσεων) (4). But the Socratic ἔλεγχος is not at the core of Plato's *μέθοδος*. What then does Plato's *μέθοδος* toward the solving of this puzzle consist of? The answer to this question is to be found in the *Phaedo*. 
CHAPTER TWO

The μέθοδος toward theories

The Phaedo is the dialogue in which Socrates dies; but, it is also the dialogue in which the Platonism is born; because here, for the first time in an explicit manner, Plato refers to his own solution to his way of putting the Socratic matter.

In this dialogue, at 100 a-101 e (1), he also describes the μέθοδος toward his solution (which, it seems, was intended as being of general application (cf. the expression ἐκάστοτε, 'on each occasion', at 100 a 3; cf. also Bostock 1986, 157). In what follows I shall describe its main steps and then show the way it was applied by Plato. Before that, however, I would like to say a few things about Plato's notion of μέθοδος.

Usually, a definition of the notion of method begins with its etymology. 'Method', it is said, comes from the Greek μέθοδος which is derived from ὁδός, 'path' or 'way' or 'journey' (for an opposite, yet unconvincing view see Robinson 1953, 67). Hence, it is commonly argued, 'method' is 'a path towards something'. The word μέθοδος, however, occurs for the first time in Plato's writings (where it refers, roughly speaking, to 'the way toward knowledge') and, it seems, it was coined by him (2). Yet, as Lutoslawski 1897, 418-9 put it,

many translators of Plato refrained from the identification of μέθοδος with the modern term method, as if they were afraid to credit an ancient Greek philosopher with a consciousness of regulated proceeding which seems to be a privilege of recent science.

But, concludes Lutoslawski, "this is really a wrong cautiousness, and Jowett and Campbell were perfectly right in translating μέθοδος here [i.e. in Plato] by 'method'" (p. 419). One way to deal with this problem (μέθοδος qua 'way of reasoning' vs. μέθοδος qua 'method') is suggested by Lutoslawski himself: in the earlier dialogues this word is used rather loosely, and here it is better rendered by 'way of reasoning' (3); whereas in the later ones, it refers to what we may call a 'logical method' (4).

As far as I am concerned, I am rather reluctant to translate Plato's μέθοδος by the modern term 'method'; for the modern notion of 'method' is of Cartesian descent, and the Cartesian notion of method is not exactly Plato's notion of μέθοδος.
First, Plato's μέθοδος in general is, first of all, dialectic, in the sense that it supposed to be undertaken through δια-λέγειν, dialectic; for Plato (unlike Descartes — see 0.1.2.) believed that the locus of certainty is the communion of minds, and such a communion is possible only through the medium of λόγος, language (a point which I shall develop in 8.1.2.). And this belief of Plato, I think, is echoed by the very word μέθοδος.

μέθοδος comes from the proposition μετά and the noun δόδος, which means, as I said, 'path', 'way', 'journey'. In compounds, the preposition μετά carries out, inter alia, two ideas: the idea of "following/going towards something", as in μετα-διώκω ("to pursue closely") or μετα-οίχωμαι ("to be gone after"); and the idea of community or participation, as in μετα-δίδωμι ("to give a share") (cf. LSI). So, given this ambiguity that μετά has in compounds, μέθοδος implies both 'a path that goes towards something' and 'a path that is covered together' (i.e. with, μετά, others). Now, if Plato did coin the word μέθοδος, he managed to find a word which suits rather well his views regarding 'the process of achieving knowledge': that man, being μεταξύ σωφρον καὶ άθλωσ (cf. Σmp. 204 b 5), has to find a path towards sure knowledge, and that this path should be covered with other men.

Secondly, Plato's διαλεκτική μέθοδος, is a rather long (cf. for instance Phdr. 274 a or Plt. 265 a) and difficult (5) way of reasoning which can be followed only by a few (having, thus, an aristocratic, not a democratic character, as has the Cartesian method (6)).

That is why, I think (although this seems to be just a matter of negotiating terms), we will move away from Plato's thought if we take his διαλεκτική μέθοδος as 'dialectical method'.

2.1. Finding and hypothesizing the most plausible theory

When we face a difficult question, then, according to the μέθοδος introduced in the Phaedo, we should first 'hypothesize [ὑποθέμενος] the λόγος which we judge to be the strongest [ἐρωμένοστατος] (see 100 a) (7). Now, what do λόγος, ὑποθέμενος and ἐρωμένοστατος mean here?

In their comments on the Phaedo 100 a ff., some scholars claim that λόγος should be understood as 'definition' (e.g. Bluck 1955, Appendix 6; Guthrie 1975, 325), or as 'statement', or 'proposition' (e.g. Ross 1951, 27; Robinson 1953, 124, 126; Hackforth 1955, ad locum; Sayre 1969, 5; Bostock 1986, 160). But we cannot ignore the context in which Plato brought forward this μέθοδος (i.e. 'Socrates' intellectual history'); and so, we cannot narrow down λόγος either as
'definition' or as 'statement'/proposition', for what is at stake in the context is a theory of causation (i.e. a 'body of statements') (8). Thus, we should construe the phrase 'to lay down the ἐπιθέσεις λόγος as 'to lay down the ἐπιθέσεις theory' (as Gallop 1975, 178 does) — even if 'theory' may be too strong a word for what Plato has in view here.

One may object to this reading by saying that λόγος should be construed here as 'statement' because in Plato ὑποθέσεις does always mean 'statement' (9). Yet this is hardly the case. In Plato the word ὑποθέσεις has various meanings: (i) a 'statement adopted to support (or reject) another statement' (Chrm. 160 d, Prt. 339 d, Men, passim, R. 437 a); (ii) a 'starting point for discussion' (Hp. Ma. 302 e, Chrm. 171 d, Prt. 361 b, Grg. 454 c, R. 550 c, Prm. 136 a-b, Thg. 165 d, 183 b, Sph. 237 a, 244 c); (iii) a 'starting point for practical action' (Lg. 743 c, 812 a); (iv) a 'proposed subject for discussion' (Prom. 127 d) (or generally, 'the subject matter of a discussion' — cf. Lg. 812 a); and, as I believe (relying on the context of Phd. 99 b ff.), a 'theory'.

If so, however, what does the expression 'to hypothesize the ἐπιθέσεις theory' mean? But first, what is a ὑποθέσεις qua theory?

A theory is usually taken as an explanation. To be an explanation, "the proffered information", as van Fraassen 1989, 87 put it, "must provide the missing piece in the puzzle that preoccupies the questioner [...; and this] presupposes that he has already pieces in place, which the newly offered piece fits into". (This idea, that to know something means to place that something into the context of known pieces of knowledge, occurs many times in Plato — see for instance Phd. 73 a: "[...] when people are asked questions, if the question is put in the right way they can give a perfectly correct answer, which they could not possible do unless they had some knowledge and a proper grasp of the subject.") Thus, in order to hypothesize a theory, the theory must be first found; in other words, the questioner has first to find 'a piece' which can fit into the 'pieces' that he already had in place, and only then may he hypothesize it. Hypothesizing a theory is, thus, a heuristic process (10).

In Plato, however, a ὑποθέσεις (qua statement or qua theory) is, generally speaking, a λεγόμενον whose truth value is not yet beyond any doubt (cf. R. 388 c, 437 a, Phd. 107 b, Cra. 428 d, Thg. 165 d, etc.; cf. also Robinson 1953, 94-5 and Barnes 1990, 93) (11). If so, then how can a theory judged to be the strongest (ἐπιθέσεις) be hypothesized, i.e. laid down tentatively? But, what does actually ἐπιθέσεις mean here?

ἐπιθέσεις is the superlative degree of the adjective ἐπιθέσεως ('vigorous', 'stout', 'sound'), which comes from the verb ἐπιθέω ('to strengthen', 'make strong'). Now, what does determine
the *strength* of a theory? First, one may claim, a theory is *érrwmménov* if its *érrwmménov* *állhlouis* *súmpfwneít* or if it is supported by another one (as Socrates says explicitly at 101 d); but there, at 101 d, Socrates speaks about *testing* an already hypothesized theory, whereas here, at 100 a, he speaks about *finding* and *hypothesizing* a theory. If so, one may argue, a theory is *érrwmménov* when it resists refutations (as it is suggested at 85 c-d (12). I agree that it is very tempting to connect this *méðodós* with the elenctic procedure (as Robinson 1953, 140 does); but this will make things very complicated, for what is at stake here is a *theory*, not a *statement* (as in the Socratic elenchus). As I argued, the Socratic elenchus functions in two steps: one is to establish a body of statements that are evidently true, and the other is to assess a statement that is not evidently true against that body of evidently true statements (and if the statement in question is not consistent with that body of statements, it is rejected as false; if it is consistent—it is accepted as true). Now, if we construe *érrwmménéstatos* as *dúxefexélykhtóótatos* (to use this expression from 85 c 9), then 'to find and hypothesize the *érrwmménéstatos* theory' should mean 'to establish a body of theories that are evidently true, assess the theory in question against this body of evidently true theories, and show that they are all consistent with each other; but Socrates does not say anything here, at 100 a (or later, at 101 a ff.) about such a procedure. (That is: there is no evidence that this *méðodós* described here, at 100 a, deals with a theory in the way the Socratic elenchus deals with a statement.)

If so, what does then determine the *strength* of a theory? In my view, it is its capacity to fit into the 'pieces that the questioner has already in place' (13). Now, if this theory does not belong to that field of knowledge in which the 'experiment' is possible, we cannot 'manipulate' it and prove its truth in a strong way; in this case, its capacity to fit into a given puzzle remains so far the only source of its credibility. But for Plato, it seems, this 'capacity to fit into a given puzzle' does not prove, beyond any doubt, the truth of a theory, in which case that theory remains only *plausible*.

To conclude: the way I construe the first step of the *méðodós* brought forward by Plato in the *Phaedo* (namely: 'to hypothesize the *léógos* which we judge to be the strongest' —100 a) is this: if 'we cannot make our journey with greater confidence and security by the surer means of a divine *léógos*' and we cannot 'ascertain the facts (whether by *lathedí* or by *élpèdí*); and if we decide not to 'leave off before we have come to the end of our resources' (if I may use these phrases from 85 c), then we do not have any other choice apart from *finding* the most plausible theory (i.e. the theory that fits better than any other theory into our puzzle) and *hypothesizing* it.
2.2. Hypothesizing as true what ἐπιθέμεναι with the most plausible theory

Now, what does Socrates do after he has found and hypothesized the most plausible theory for a given puzzle? Then, he claims, "I put down [τίθημι] as true [ὅτι ἀληθὲς Ὀντα] whatever things seems to me to accord [ἐπιθέμεναι] with it [....] and whatever seems not to, I put down as not true [ὅτι οὐκ ἀληθέν]" (100 a). This passage raises difficult problems of interpretation, mainly because of the ambiguity of the verb ἐπιθέμεναι. What then does Plato mean here by ἐπιθέμεναι, by 'reaching an accord'?

2.2.1. Robinson's interpretation

Robinson 1953 believes that "we have to choose between consistency and deducibility as the meaning of 'accord'" ([for] it is very hard to think of anything else that he could possibly have meant by [this] metaphor" — p. 126). (We have to remember, however, that Robinson believes that this method is about statements, not theories — cf. *inter alia* p. 124, where he translates the expression λόγος ἑρωμενέστατος as 'the strongest proposition'; see also p. 126).

(a) The 'consistency/inconsistency' interpretation, he argues, is better supported than the 'deducible from/not deducible from' one (14). But the main objection against this interpretation, namely why do we have to adopt every proposition that is consistent with our hypothesis, is very difficult to dismiss (if the proposition p: 'I have one brother' is true, the proposition q: 'I have a dog' is consistent with p, but q may be false).

(b) In favour of the 'deducible from/not deducible from' interpretation there is little that may be invoked (see p. 127). Besides, a strong objection may be raised against it, namely why do we have to consider as false any proposition that is not deducible from a hypothesis? (To take the example mentioned above: if the proposition p: 'I have one brother' is true, the proposition q: 'I have a dog' is not deducible from consistent with p, but q may be true).

Thus, each interpretation has to face a serious objection. In the case of consistency/inconsistency interpretation (i) the instruction to posit as true whatever proposition is consistent with a hypothesis is unacceptable (since false propositions might be consistent with a true hypothesis), whereas (ii) the instruction to posit as false whatever proposition is inconsistent with a hypothesis is acceptable. In the case of 'deducibility/non-deducibility' interpretation we have the
opposite situation: (i) the instruction to posit as true whatever proposition is deducible from a hypothesis is acceptable, whereas (ii) the instruction to posit as false whatever proposition is not deducible from that hypothesis is not (cf. Robonson 1953, 126 ff.). So, what interpretation should we choose? Robinson agrees that the better is consistency (p. 127), mainly because the instruction to posit as false whatever proposition is not deducible from a hypothesis is less acceptable than the instruction to posit as true whatever proposition is consistent with that hypothesis. Nevertheless, he claims, even if 'accord' means consistency and deducibility, Plato's hypothetical method, "in the Phaedo as elsewhere, was surely a deduction of consequences from the hypothesis and not merely a further hypothesizing of propositions consistent with the first hypothesis" (p. 128). Robinson's own solution is extremely ingenious (15), but in my view regrettably unsound, because of his assumption that what is at stake here are propositions, not theories (although, oddly enough, he admits at p. 202 that "[in the Phaedo the] hypothesis is the theory of forms").

How should we take then this second step of the μέθοδος, namely the hypothesizing as true whatever σύμφωνει with a theory that we judged to be the most plausible? σύμφωνει is, as I said, an ambiguous verb; but it is hard to believe that Plato used this ambiguous verb (in such an important context) because he just happened to expressed himself carelessly; I am more inclined to believe the contrary: that he used such ambiguous a verb precisely because he wanted to.

2.2.2. Plato's notion of σύμφωνία

Literally, σύμφωνία means a 'togetherness (συμ-) of (φωνή); φωνή, however, means both sound (cf. Lg. 665 a 1) (usually the sound of musical instruments), voice and language (cf. Sph. 262 d 9), and so σύμφωνία belongs, etymologically, to two 'fields': that of making music and that of speaking. When Plato makes Eryximachus say in the Symposium 187 b 4 that ἡ ἀρμονία σύμφωνια ἐστίν, σύμφωνια δὲ ὀμολογία τως (my italics), he points out, in a way, precisely these two 'fields' to which σύμφωνία (etymologically at least) belongs (cf. also Ti. 47 c-d: φωνή and ἀκοή refer, in man's case, to λόγος and μουσική) (16).

(a) Let us take the first 'field' first. Burnet 1908, 24 claims that an elementary knowledge of the Greek lyre is essential for the understanding of Greek philosophy. As far as I am concerned, I would not go as far as Burnet; but the knowledge of lyre may help us to trace the history of some Greek words which have a place of their own in Greek philosophy — such as σύμφωνία. The Greek lyre had first
seven (then eight) strings (and eventually it ended up with more than fifteen). At the beginning, the attuning of the strings was very diverse; but, around the end of VI century B.C. four strings of the lyre (the first one, the most bass one, and the last three ones) began to be attuned in the same way by more and more players, who started to adopt three particular intervals between the first string and the other three, namely the fourth, the fifth and the octave. These three intervals were called συμφωνία, and the octave was called ἀρμονία (cf. Philolaos B 6). To the best of my knowledge, these are the first technical usages of the terms συμφωνία and ἀρμονία. In time, however, in the field of music, these technical meanings faded away; and, by the time of Plato, the terms συμφωνία and ἀρμονία were mostly used as synonyms (cf. inter alia Cra. 405 d 1: 'in singing ἄμα ἰε [δὴ] ἀρμονία is called συμφωνία'), denoting a τάξις that exists between sounds qu'a pitches (17) (cf. Lg. 665 a 1 f.: τῷ ἰε [τάξει] ἀν τῆς φώνης, τοῦ τε ὀξέος ἰε καὶ βαρέος συγκεραυνυμένων, ἀρμονία ἦν ἱερὰ προσαγορεύοντο) — viz. an interval, a mode (Ionian, Phrygian, Dorian, etc., cf. La. 188 d) or a melody (18). In other words: in the field of music, we may say, ἀρμονία/συμφωνία tend to refer to a σύνθετον πράγμα (to use an expression from Phd. 92 a 8) (i.e. to an interval, a melody or a mode), which is determined as a succession (τάξις) of sounds qua pitches that produces ἰέσει ἢ ἐφφρούσῃ in a hearer (cf. Ti. 80 b; although the mere ἰέσει is not the actual end of hearing symphonic sounds — see 47 d; I shall come back to this point in 8.2.1.).

(b) Now, let us turn to the other field of φώνη, namely that of speaking. When one's λέγωμεν were 'well said', Socrates seemed to suggest in the Protagoras, they were said μυστικῶς, for they συνήκουσιν (333 a 6-7). If so, Plato compares then the excellence in the field of speaking with the excellence in field of making music; and that indicates that the proper sense of συμφωνία and ἀρμονία belongs to the field of music. In other words: if so, then Plato — when he speaks about the ἀρμονία and συμφωνία of those 'elements' proper to the field of speaking (i.e. letters, words, statements and accounts) — speaks metaphorically.

(a) In the case of letters that συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις (cf. Sph. 253 a 1-2), the ἀρμονία/συμφωνία that results refers to a σύνθετον πράγμα (i.e. to a word), which is determined as a succession (τάξις) of letters that has (qua word) a meaning (this point is not actually made in the texts, but, I believe, the idea of a ἀρμονία/συμφωνία of letters cannot suggest any other one).

(b) In the case of words that συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις (cf. Sph. 261 d), the ἀρμονία/συμφωνία that results refers to a σύνθετον πράγμα (i.e. to a statement — cf. 262 e 1: τὰ [λέγωμεν] ἀρμόττουτα λόγου
which is determined as a succession (τάξις) of words (τὰ ἐφεξῆς λεγόμενα — 261 d 8) that has (qua statement) a meaning (τὰ λεγόμενα δηλούντα/σημαίνοντα — e 1-2). (The original reads: τὰ μὲν ἐφεξῆς λεγόμενα καὶ δηλούντα τι συμαρμόττει, τα  δὲ τῇ συνεχείᾳ μηδὲν σημαίνοντα ἀναφικοῦτε; the majority of its translations — see those made by Fowler 1928, Cornford 1951 or Диès 1925 — render the expressions τὰ λεγόμενα δηλούντα/σημαίνοντα by 'words that have meaning'; cf. Cornford's translation: "words which, when spoken in succession, signify something, do fit together, while those which mean nothing when they are strung together, do not").

(y) In the case of statements and accounts (or theories) that συμαρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις, however, things are not that simple, and here the metaphor of ἀρμονία/συμφωνία becomes obscure.

When two or more statements συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις (cf. Prt. 333 a 7-8), to what does the ἀρμονία that results refer? We may be tempted to say: to 'a τάξις qua succession of statements which has a meaning qua account'; but, in the case of statements, the metaphor of ἀρμονία/συμφωνία does not refer primarily to meaning (as in the cases of letters and words), but to what we may call 'coherence'. 'Coherence', however, is an ambiguous word; usually, it is understood either as 'consistency', or as 'implication', or as 'explanation'. In Plato, the συμφωνία of statements refers sometimes to coherence qua consistency (cf. for instance Prt. 333 a; cf. also Grg. 457 e, 461 a, 482 b-c); and sometimes to coherence qua deducibility (cf. Cra. 436; here the expression is ὀμολογεῖται ἀλλήλοις, not συμφωνεῖται; but we know, from the Smp. 187 b 4 that ἡ συμφωνία ὂμολογία ἐστίν) (19). Yet, I believe, we cannot reduce it to either consistency or deducibility.

It is clear that the συμφωνία of statements requires consistency (i.e. the lack of explicit contradictions). But the consistency involved here is not among any statements, and Plato, when he speaks about statements that συμφωνεῖται ἀλλήλοις, refers to statements that are consistent and hang together in a significant way (cf. Prt. 333 a, Grg. 482 b-c, etc.). Now, consistent statements may 'hang together' in various ways: p may hang together with q, if p implies (or it is implied by) q; or if p explains (or it is explained by) q; or if both p and q imply (or explains) another proposition r — and so on.

And so it is in the case of accounts (or theories) that συμφωνεῖται ἀλλήλοις (20): they must be consistent, but they must also 'hang together' in an significant way — either by implying, or explaining or completing somehow one another. What is important is that the statements (or the theories) that συμφωνεῖται ἀλλήλοις are not only consistent, but they form, one way or another, not a mere σύνθετον, but a κόσμον πράγμα (21). Now, in the case of statements and accounts (or theories) the metaphor of ἀρμονία/συμφωνία becomes, as
I said, obscure; and that is so precisely because here it ceases to determine the κόσμων πράγμα to which it refers. In other words, here the metaphor of ἀρμονία/συμφωνία says only that the statements (or the theories) that συμφωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις form a κόσμων πράγμα (because they 'hang together' in one way or another); but it does not determine the τάξις that exists among them (as it does, say, in the case of letters, where it determines it as a 'succession of letters with meaning') — i.e. it does not indicate how should we take their 'hanging together', as implication, as explanatory relation, etc.

To go back to the second step of the μέθοδος described in the Phaedo 100 a, namely the hypothesizing as true whatever συμφωνεῖ with a theory that we judged to be the most plausible. As I said, it is very hard to believe that Plato used this metaphor of συμφωνία (in such an important context), because he just happened to express himself carelessly. I am more inclined to believe the contrary: if Plato chose to use it, he chose to use an ambiguous metaphor; and I do not think that we should attribute to it a precision that it lacks (as Robinson 1953, 127 does for instance, when he says that there is no third interpretation [of συμφωνία, so] we have to choose between consistency and deducibility).

How should we then construe this second step of the μέθοδος? As I said, according to the first step, if we cannot make our journey with greater confidence and security by the surer means of a divine λόγος and we cannot 'ascertain the facts (whether by μαθεῖν or by εὑρεῖν)'; and if we decide not to 'leave off before we have come to the end of our resources' (Phd. 85 c), then we do not have any other choice apart from finding the most plausible theory (i.e. the theory that fits best into our puzzle). Now, if we found such a theory, then we should hypothesize it, and use it ('as a raft to ride the seas of life' — as Socrates says at 85 d 1-2), for this theory is the only thing we have. In short: regarding some problems we face, we cannot but rely on a plausible theory.

In the second step of the μέθοδος Plato claims that, if we find a theory that fits best into our puzzle, we should hypothesize (τίθημι) as true (ὡς ἀληθῆ δεύτερο) whatever things seems to συμφωνεῖν with it, and as not true (ὡς οὐκ ἀληθῆ) whatever seems do not (100 a). In my view, what Plato says here is this: if we found a theory that fits best into our puzzle, we should hypothesize and use not only that theory, but also all the theories (and statements) that are consistent and 'hang together' with it — be they theories (or statements) that imply (or are implied), explain (or are explained), etc. by it (and, of course, we should not use all those theories that do not 'hang together' with it). In short: regarding some problems we face, we cannot but rely on a plausible theory and on everything that may 'hang together' with
it. That is: regarding some problems, we cannot but 'ride the seas of life with a raft' (85 d 1-2), i.e. with the εἰκόνες ἀνεθέουσα provided by a plausible theory and everything that 'hangs together' with it (22).

Plato, however, was very well aware that the second step of the μέθοδος depends on the first one; for there are many theories that may be consistent and 'hang together' with both a plausible and a false theory. If one that is faced with a problem begins by laying down (τον μέθοδος) something that is not true, says Socrates in the Cratylus 436 c-e, he may find many things that συμφωνοῦσιν with it; but they will all be false, as it happens in geometry when we construe an argument on a false premiss. This situation is not something unusual (οὐδὲν ἄτοπον), and so "every man should expend his chief thought and attention on the consideration of the ἀρχὴν and see whether it is or not rightly [ὁρεῖ] laid down [ὑπόκειται]". As I said, the capacity of a theory to fit into the pieces that the questioner has already in place determines its credibility. But, it seems, even if a theory fits perfectly into the puzzle, this does not prove beyond any doubt its truth. We have, therefore, to think of some ways of testing the theory.

2.3. Testing the theory

In the Phaedo Plato speaks, as I shall argue, of two tests: one about checking the implications of the theory, and the other about the possibility to include it into a wider theory.

2.3.1. Testing the theory by seeing whether its implications συμφωνοῦσιν

First, says Socrates, "if anyone should fasten upon the hypothesis itself, you would disregard him and refuse to answer until you could consider whether its ὄρμηθέντα συμφωνεῖ ἄλληλοις or διαφωνεῖ" (101 d).

The key-word of this passage is ὄρμηθέντα. ὄρμηθέντα is taken by many commentators (such as Ross 1951, 27; Robinson 1953, 129; Hackforth 1955, 139-40 or Gallop 1975, ad. loc.) as 'logical consequences'—although, as Robinson 1953, 129 claims, with the possible exception of the Phaedo 101 d the other occurrences of this word (or of its cognates) (e.g. Smp. 185 e, R. 510 d, 511 b, Thi. 184 a) do not support such a reading.

If one, however, takes ὄρμηθέντα as 'logical consequences', then he will be inclined to take συμφωνεῖ as 'deducibility' (for how could
the consequences of a single hypothesis be inconsistent with one another?), and claim that what Plato appears to say here is this: one need not answer a question about the hypothesis itself, until he checks whether its consequences follow from it or not. But this interpretation does not make too much sense in the context (23). That is: why does one have to check whether the consequences of a plausible hypothesis are really its consequences? And so, as Robinson 1953, 130 put it, "somehow or other it is necessary to get over the apparent logical absurdity and take συμφωνία as meaning consistency here also".

But, if we take συμφωνία as 'consistency', how are to cope with the strong objection that the consequences of a hypothesis can be inconsistent with one another? For, from a formal point of view, it is a logical absurdity to pretend that a hypothesis can have two contradictory consequences or a consequence that is contradictory with itself.

Robinson 1953, 131 ff. argues that this formal point of view refers to an ideal situation, e.g. to a completely axiomatized system. But this is hardly the case in Plato's philosophical inquiries, whose assumptions form anything but a completely axiomatized system. Here in Plato, claims Robinson, a hypothesis does often contain more than one part (i.e. more than one atomic proposition) and "some of them may be latently inconsistent with one another" (p. 132). And, besides, continues Robinson, in Plato (as well as in any non-mathematical thinking) a hypothesis is always combined with one's 'permanent beliefs', i.e. with the 'standing assumptions' that one does never spell out (which are regarded "as merely the 'conditions' without which the true premiss would not have had the effect it does" — p. 133). And he concludes: "This is the sense, the natural and ordinary sense, in which Plato speaks of an hypothesis' having conflicting consequences. It may have conflicting consequences on our standing assumptions, that is, when combined with some of our permanent beliefs" (p. 133).

I agree that Robinson's interpretation is very tempting; yet I am reluctant to accept it. First, to take the expression τὰ ἀπ’ ἀκείμενος ὀρμηθέντα (101 d 4) as 'the consequences of the hypothesis', is, I think, to read too much in it. The verb ὀρμάω means 'to begin from something and/or set something in motion'; and τὰ ὀρμηθέντα (which is a passive aorist participle of ὀρμάω) means, literally, 'the things which were set in motion by something'. In our context, I believe, the expression τὰ ὀρμηθέντα refers simply to 'everything which is set in motion by the theory we judged to be the most plausible', i.e. to the implications of our theory (not to its consequences, which is too strong a word here and for which Plato tends to use the expression
And secondly, if we take the expression συμφωνεῖ ἀλλήλοις as meaning 'deducibility' we will read too much in it, whereas if we take it as meaning 'consistency' we will read too little.

So, how should we construe this way to check a theory by considering whether its ἐφημένα συμφωνεῖ ἅλληλοισ or ἐν τῷ; In my view, what Plato says here is this: a theory that we hypothesized as being the most plausible one may be tested by seeing if its implications 'hang together', i.e. by seeing if its implications form a κόσμιον πράγμα — a structured whole (although, if they do, this does not prove the truth of the theory, for Plato speaks about another test). Thus, what he seems to say here is not

(i) let us hypothesize the theory T and let us see whether its implications form a 'structured whole'; and if they do, this entails that T is true;

but rather

(ii) let us hypothesize the theory T and let us see whether its implications form a 'structured whole'; and if they do, this corroborates (i.e. gives additional support to) the theory T.

Now, this test, claims Plato, which regards the implications of the theory (τῶν ἐκ ἐκείνης ἐφημένων — 101 e 2-3), should not be mixed with the other test (e 1), which regards the relation between the hypothesized theory and another theory that may be hypothesized.

2.3.2. Including the theory into a wider one

The fourth step of the μέθοδος is very briefly described at 101 d. There, Socrates says that if we have 'to give a λόγος' (διδόναι λόγον — d 6) about the theory itself, we should "proceed in the same way [ἀκολουθεῖ — d 6] hypothesizing [ὑποθέσεις] another ὑπόθεσις which seems best of those above [τῶν ἀκολουθοῦντα], until we reach one which is satisfactory [τῷ ἱκανῷ]."

Now, Plato does not tell us here to substitute the theory that we judged to be ἐφημενένοστατον by a better one (i.e. by a theory that fits better into the pieces that the questioner has already in place); he simply says that, when it comes to the theory we believe fits better than any other into our puzzle, we should support it (cf. also Robinson 1953, 136) in the same way by a higher and satisfactory hypothesis. But what do support, in the same way, higher, satisfactory and hypothesis mean — he does not explicitly say.

Robinson, as most of the commentators, believes that Plato speaks here in the Phaedo about deducing a hypothesis qua
proposition from another one. And he takes the expression 'until you come to something ἵκανόν' as 'until you come to a least refutable λόγος [i.e. proposition]' (for he argues that the 'hypothetical method' is connected with the elenctic procedure —see pp. 140-1; he claims, roughly speaking, that Plato speaks about two ways of testing a hypothetical statement: an external procedure in which a hypothesis is deduced from a higher one, designed only to satisfy an objector; and an internal procedure, the real test, which consists of drawing consequences from the hypothesis). In my view, however, to take the expression 'to hypothesize another ὑπόθεσις which seems best of those above' as 'to deduce the hypothesis we judged to be most plausible from another one' means, again, to read too much in Plato's text.

The whole passage of 101 d-e (in which this fourth step of the μέθοδος occurs) is constructed on the contrast between this step and the third one (which I called the first test of a hypothesized theory). The procedure of the third step, it is said here, regards the ἄρχη (i.e. implications) of the theory (cf. 101 e 2-3) (from the point of view of their being capable to συμφωνεῖν ἀλήθειας, viz. to form a 'structured whole'); whereas the procedure of the fourth step regards its ἄρχη (e 2), i.e. a 'higher ὑπόθεσις'. A 'higher' ὑπόθεσις suggests, in my view, a 'theory that is (somehow) superior' (as I shall argue in the Annex II, 3.1., c, in Plato the superiority of something is marked, inter alia, by its being localized, metaphorically, above). But, what could a 'superior ὑπόθεσις' mean here? A 'superior ὑπόθεσις qua ἄρχη' suggests an ἄρχη τῶν ἄποδειξεων, i.e. a proposition conventionally accepted as true for the sake of our investigations (viz. a postulate) or a proposition for which no proof is required, because its truth is self-evident (viz. an axiom). Now, Plato's saying that such a 'superior ὑπόθεσις qua ἄρχη' cannot be more than ἵκανον, does not allow us to take this expression as referring to an axiom. One may claim then that it could refer to a postulate; but Plato's indication that the procedure of the fourth step should be done ὑποθεσάμεθα implies that what is at stake here is what was at stake in the preceding steps —i.e. a hypothetical theory (not proposition). If so, then what does a 'superior theory' mean?

Let us go back to the question of ὑποθεσάμεθα: what does 'to proceed in the same way' mean? What did we first do? First, we had to find a theory that is ἐφαρμηκτάται, i.e. a theory' that fits best into a given puzzle; and then, we have to see if its implications συμφωνεῖσθαι, i.e. if they form a 'structured whole'. Now, when we have to support this theory (say A), by another one (say B), we have, Plato says, to proceed in the same way. That is: first, we have to find a theory B that is superior to A, and then see if its implications form a 'structured whole'. What then does this mean —to find a theory B
that is superior to the theory A and supports it? Obviously, it cannot mean 'to find theory B that fits better than A into the same puzzle'; for in this case B would not support, but simply substitute A. It could only mean, I believe, 'to find a theory B that fits into a puzzle that is greater than and includes the puzzle into which A fits'; it means, in other words, 'to find a theory B that has a greater explanatory range than A and includes it'. (Robinson 1953 137 states that some readers do take 'above' as 'more comprehensive'; and, although he does not endorse this view, he agrees that one may construe the 'higher hypothesis' as a hypothesis that includes the 'lower hypothesis', in the way, say, 'Newton's laws included Kepler's'.)

If so, what Plato says here, in the fourth step of the μέθοδος, is this: in order to support a theory which we think fits best into a given puzzle, we should find another theory, that περιέχει it ἐξωθεν, viz. that includes it and fits best into a greater puzzle; and then, we should see if the implications of this wider theory form a 'structured whole'. But if this wider theory (which is a sort of ὡς ὑπ' ἀναπεριέχον) needs to be supported itself, we should find a much wider theory that includes it and fits best into a much greater puzzle; and so on, until it is reached a satisfactory theory, i.e. a theory that fits into a puzzle which is 'wide enough'.

In the field of contemporary epistemology, it is a common place that the plausibility of a theory depends, to a considerable extent, on the explanatory range of that theory. In other words: the more a theory takes into account and the less it leaves unexplained, the more plausible it is. The same idea, I think, is at stake here in Plato, when he says that we should aim at a satisfactory theory. That is: he tells us to attempt to include a theory which we found very plausible for a particular problem (but which has an 'unsatisfactory' explanatory range, for it leaves too many other problems unexplained) into a wider theory, because he believes that the plausibility of a theory depends on its explanatory range.

To conclude: if we can include a plausible theory into an equally plausible, yet wider one, this will support our initial theory. And so, we can regard the assessment of its capacity to be part of an equally plausible, yet wider theory as another way of testing its plausibility. If a theory 'passes this test', however, this does not prove the truth of the theory, for it will always be supported by a theory that is only satisfactory, i.e. only 'wide enough'. What counts as 'wide enough', Plato does not say; but he implies that the theories man 'lays down', no matter how wide they may be, can only be satisfactory, for they will never explain everything. Thus, what Plato seems to say here is not
(i) let us hypothesize the theory $T$ and let us see whether we can include it into another, equally plausible, yet wider theory; and if we can, this entails that $T$ is true;

but

(ii) let us hypothesize the theory $T$ and let us see whether we can include it into another, equally plausible, yet wider theory; and if we can, this corroborates (i.e. gives additional support to) the theory $T$.

To sum up so far: in the *Phaedo* 100 a-101 e Plato describes a μέθοδος which is introduced as a possible way out of the ἀδιαφορία raised by the question of causality (95 e-96 a, 100 a), but which is presented as a possible way to reach a theory in general. This μέθοδος regards mainly that field of knowledge in which the 'experiment' is not possible, and it has four steps.

(i) First, we have to find the most plausible theory, i.e. the theory that fits better than any other theory into our puzzle); and if we found such a theory, then we should hypothesize it, and use it.

(ii) If we found a theory that fits best into our puzzle, we should hypothesize and use not only that theory, but also all the theories (and statements) that συμφωνοῦσιν with it, i.e. all the theories that are consistent and 'hang together' with it—in the theories (or statements) that imply (or are implied), explain (or are explained), etc. by it (and, of course, we should not use all those theories that do not 'hang together' with it). In short: regarding some problems we face, we cannot but rely on the έλεγχος of everything that is consistent and may 'hang together' with it. But, even if a theory fits perfectly into the puzzle, this does not prove beyond any doubt its truth. We have, therefore, to test it.

(iii) The first test is aimed at what comes (logically) after the theory: its implications; according to this test, if they συμφωνοῦσιν ελεγχοῦσι, i.e. if they form a 'structured whole', the theory becomes more plausible.

(iv) The second test is aimed at what comes (logically) before the theory in question, namely to another, wider theory; according to this test, if we can find another equally plausible, yet wider theory, which includes our theory, our theory becomes more plausible. (If a theory, however, passes both tests, it will become only more plausible.)

That which is at the core of each step of the μέθοδος is, I believe, the notion of συμφωνία — explicitly in the second and the third, implicitly in the first and the fourth; and we may put the whole μέθοδος in these terms:

(i) First, we have to find the theory that συμφωνεῖ best with our puzzle.
(ii) If we find such a theory, we should hypothesize and use as plausible not only that theory, but also all the theories (and statements) that συμφωνοῦσιν with it.

(iii) We have, however, to test the theory. First by seeing whether its implications συμφωνοῦσιν ἀλήθεια; and then by

(iv) seeing whether the theory συμφωνεῖ with another equally plausible, yet wider theory.

To conclude: the criterion of plausibility on which Plato based his μέθοδος is συμφωνία. (We may ask, however, why did he believe that this criterion may lead us to truth? I shall discuss this question later, in 8.2.1.)
CHAPTER THREE

The μέθοδος toward theories and the theory of εἴδη (I)

The structure of the Phaedo is not at all obscure; but the chain of its arguments is not always easy to follow and the philosophical application of the μέθοδος introduced at 100 a-101 c is not very clear-cut.

The first step of the μέθοδος is to find and then hypothesize the theory that fits better than any other theory into a puzzle. Now, Plato tells us explicitly that the theory he found and hypothesized is what we now usually call the theory of forms, or εἴδη (cf. 100 b, 101 c-d, etc.; cf. also, inter alios, Robinson 1953, 202, 139, and Vlastos 1973, 83).

3.1. The theory of εἴδη

The ancestor of the Greek word μὑμησις is the noun μῦμος, which first meant 'actor in a cult or a ritualistic drama' (cf. Koller 1954) (the evaluations of the ancient usage of the words of the μῦμος-group led to the conclusion that μὑμησις meant mainly 'enactment', i.e. 'dramatic impersonation' —cf. Koller 1954 and Keuls 1978, 11-14). A μὑμησις is therefore 'a playing of another', and the performer of this act, the mimic actor, is somebody who assumes other identity than his own and pretends to be somebody else. (γυναικόμιμος for instance, 'woman-miming' —found once in each of the three great tragedians, see Keuls 1979, 16 —is an actor who impersonates a woman).

Let us take a clear instance of μὑμησις. Suppose one looks at the dummy of the Queen from Madame Tussaud's and at a portrait of the Queen from the National Gallery. Both replicas 'pretend' to be something which they are not: they pretend to be the Queen, but they are only an image, an εἰκών of her. (There are, says Plato in the Sophist 235 d ff., 'believable' copies, εἴθωλα εἰκότα, e.g. the Queen's dummy from Madame Tussaud's; and 'unbelievable' copies, εἴθωλα φανταστικά, e.g. a cartoon of the Queen from the Punch.) Yet every copy, μὴσαμεγν, is a sort of a pretender, exactly like an actor (μῦμος) on stage, i.e. it pretends, more or less convincingly, to be that in the likeness of which it was made.
The wax dummy of the Queen (as well as the portrait), however, is an έν in which something that this έν is not (i.e. the 'real' Queen) is somehow present. (As Husserl put it in his V. Untersuchung, chapter 2, we have to distinguish between the Bildobjekt, say the marble of a statue, and the Bildsubjekt, that whom the marble statue represents — apud Heidegger, 1992 b, 400). In other words, when we look at the Queen's dummy we do look at a μάλα άτομον fact (Sph. 240 c 2 and 3), namely at a συμπλοκή between an έν (the wax dummy) and a μη έν (taken as that something which this έν is not, i.e. the 'real' Queen). In this case, however, only the model is the real Queen; that is: only she is an έν τώς έν, whereas one of her dummies is only a έν ποις. And if we accept that any x which looks like y is a copy of y, then we have also to admit that any x which looks like y depends ontologically upon y. For a copy, by its very nature, relies on its model, and to say that 'if there is no model, there is no copy' is a truism.

In the Sophist (240 a-b) Plato puts all this in the following terms. An εἰδώλιον is a ἐτερον (a 9), i.e. something which is other than a 'real thing' (ἀληθινόν — a 9, b 2, 3, 5), but still similar (τουστων — a 9; ἐοικός — b 2) to it. If so, argues the Stranger, then the εἰδώλιον is the ἐπαντίον of the ἀληθινόν (b 5); and if we understand by ἀληθινόν 'that which really is' (τούτων έν — b 3), then we have to admit that it is the εἰδώλιον which does not have a 'real existence' (οὐκ τούτως έν έπαιδεύεται το ἐοικός, εἰπερ αὕτη γε μη ἀληθινόν ἐρείς — b 7-8). In other words, when Plato claims that the εἰδώλιον does not have a 'real existence', he claims that an image, although it is an έν (cf. b 9,11 and 12), something which exists, is not that other έν which is 'represented' in the image — this 'represented' έν being, from the two of them, the only έν ἀληθινόν, the only 'real thing': the 'model', the παράδειγμα (1). An εἰδώλιον is therefore an έν ποις (b 9); and this έν ποις is actually that in which there is a κοινωνία (or συμπλοκή) between έν (that very εἰδώλιον) and μη (that which the εἰδώλιον looks like — i.e. 'the model') (c 1-2) (2).

Now, one may accept that some cases things can be described in the terms of a 'theory of copies and models'. But he may object if we will attempt to describe everything in these terms. Yet this is exactly what Plato does in his so-called theory of forms, which puts everything in these terms.

The question regarding the boundary between the Socratic 'universals' and the Platonic forms is difficult to establish. Many scholars, like, for instance, Allen 1970, argues that there is not such a boundary (cf. Skemp 1976, 34: "Allen [unlike, say, Ross 1951] shows that a sharp line of separation cannot be drawn and that 'the Holy' in the Euthyphro 5 c-6 e has already some characteristics of the Platonic Form in the later sense") (cf. Euthphr. 6 d: "[...] that what I
asked of you was not to tell me one or two out of all the numerous actions that are holy. I wanted you to tell me what is the εἴδος of holiness which makes all holy actions holy. I believe you held that there is a μία ἱδέα by which unholy things are all unholy, and by which all holy things are holy."). And this is, I think, a rather reasonable position.

As regarding the Platonic forms, however, there is a change in his way of referring to them. In a first phase they are called mostly αὐτὸν καθ'αὐτὸν (cf. Hp. Ma. 299 c 8-9, Ly. 220 c 5, Smp. 211 b 1, Phd. 66 a 2, 100 b 6); then they are called mostly εἴδη (Cra. 389 b 3, R. 402 c 2, 476 a 5, 510 b 8, Prm. 129 a 1) or ἱδέαι (Cra. 389 e 3, R. 479 a 1, 596 b 3, 7, 9); and, in some later dialogues, they are sometimes called γένη (Prm. 129 c 2, 134 b 7, Sph. 254 b 7).

All these terminological changes and the questions they raise (e.g. 'Why did Plato use εἴδος instead of αὐτὸν καθ'αὐτόν?' and 'Why did he then use γένη instead of εἴδος?') have been discussed at endless length (by, inter alios, Cornford, Bluck, Ross, Owen and Vlastos — for references see Skemp 1976, 35-44). Regardless of the way Plato referred to forms, however, the theory of forms claims that the forms are eternal models, παραδείγματα, which are always the same (cf. inter alia Smp. 211 a-b, Phd. 78 c 6-8, Cra. 386 a, 440 b, Prm. 135 b-c, Tī. 48 e 6); that the sensible things are their copies (3); and that the forms are the 'causes' of their copies (cf. for instance Prm. 132 d), be these copies particular objects or acts (Smp. 212 a, R. 382 b, 402 c, 443 c, etc.). (The word γένη does not suggest either an eternal model or a cause; I shall say a few things about its use in the context of the theory of forms in Chapters Five and Six.)

One may object to this view and claim that: (i) the theory of forms does offer a 'two-tier' metaphysics, but only in the Phaedo, the Republic and the Phaedrus, and that (ii) in his later thinking Plato was less enthusiastic about this theory, as the Parmenides, for instance, seems to suggest. I cannot enter here into this very complicated debate; on the whole, however, the view that Plato did not abandon the theory of forms in his late works (which is not at all an uncommon view) is, I think, preferable to the one which states that there was such an abandonment and claims strange chronologies of Plato's writings. (As Thesleff 1989, 24 put it: "[...] since the references to the theory [of forms] are mostly indirect, defective, or playful, it is advisable to harmonize as far as possible the few scraps of solid evidence to be gathered, primarily, from Phaedo, Republic [...], Parmenides, and Timaeus, and to apply this picture to the interpretation of relevant passages elsewhere [...] including the Academic twists of the late works [...].")

Let us go back, however, to the theory itself and ask: does this theory claim that there is an εἴδος for everything we see? 'Are you
doubtful, says Parmenides to Socrates, 'whether or not to assert that there is a separate ἐλεός of every undignified object, such as hair or mud or dirt?' — Prm. 132 c, my paraphrase. 'It would surely be too absurd to suppose that they have an ἐλεός', replies Socrates. 'All the same', he continues, 'I have sometimes been troubled by a doubt whether what is true in one case may not be true in all' — d. It is fairly obvious, I think, that Plato is a philosopher who has not only a logical relation with things, but also an emotional one — see for instance the Phaedo, Phaedrus or Republic. He was so fond of some 'valuable' things — 'rightness, beauty, goodness and of all such things', Prm. 130 b — that he felt they must have more ontological dignity than others; yet he had to accept that there must be an ἐλεός of everything there is in our world, and in the late dialogues, he attempted to 'rehabilitate' the 'more humble realm' — cf. the Timaeus or the Philebus 55 b, 66 a.

In the Phaedo, however, the theory of forms is less developed; here Plato says only that the ἔλεος are the 'causes' of things (cf. for instance 100 b-d). This causal relation (which in the Phaedo he refers to by the obscure verb μετέχειν) will be determined as a model-copy relation only in the later dialogues, such as the Republic or the Parmenides (see for instance 132 d). Nonetheless, I think, the core of the theory is contained, in nuce, also in the Phaedo.

3.2. The puzzle that the theory of ἔλεος explains best

This discussion about forms, says Socrates (100 b 1 ff.), is not something καινόν, newly introduced; "I said it not only in the earlier part of this discussion", he claims, "I have always said it'. But if the theory is not newly introduced, the question which it explains (i.e. 'the puzzle into which it fits') must also be something οὐ καινὸν. Now, what is this puzzle?

As I argued in Chapter One, the given way in which, for Plato, ἐλεον in general works appears like a πάντα θαμαστὸν puzzle (for it contains, even if only in a latent form, three main unanswered difficult questions: What is actually that which remains the same? Why are knowing through the senses and knowing through speaking of a different nature? And What is the relation between that which remains the same and the causes of things?) In my view, this puzzle of μέθοςις is the one at which the theory of ἔλεος was primarily aimed.

As I said, the theory of ἔλεος claims an ontological distinction between the ἔλεος and the individual things qua ἐκδότες of the ἔλεος,
and states that the former (which are always the same) are the causes of the latter (which do not remain the same). So, that which is to be known are, on the one hand, the ἐἴθη, and, on the other, their embodiments. Now, since soul can know either through the αἰσθήσεως τοῦ σώματος or through itself, through διανοεῖσθαι qua λέγειν, the "entities" involved in the "act" of μάθησις in general are: (i) the εἴδωλον (the seen image, or in a wider sense, 'embodiment') of an εἴδος (VII 342 b 2; cf. also τὸ εὐγραφάμενον, VII 342 c 1); (ii) the ὄνομα of that εἴδος (Prm. 142 a, Tht. 202 b 2, Sph. 218 b 1, c 2, Lg. 895 d 5, 964 a 6, VII 342 b 2, 344 b 4) (4); and (iii) the λόγοι about that εἴδος (Prm. 142 a, Tht. 202 b 9, Sph. 218 c 6, 221 b 2, Lg. 895 d, 964 a 7, VII 342 b 2, 344 b 4) (5). (Thus, we have to distinguish between five different things: the εἴδος itself; its εἴδωλον; its ὄνομα; the λόγοι about it; and knowledge itself—see VII 342 a ff.) And, as we know, Plato claimed that that which the soul can know through the αἰσθήσεως τοῦ σώματος are the embodiments of εἴθη, whereas that which the soul can know through itself, i.e. through διανοεῖσθαι qua λέγειν, are the εἴθη themselves (cf. inter alia Prm. 135 b-c and Sph. 259 e).

Now, if we accept his way of putting the question of knowledge; and if we admit that this way of putting the question of knowledge appears like a πάνυ σωματικὸν puzzle (for it contains, even if only in a latent form, three main difficult questions), then we should agree, I think, that the theory of εἴθη seems to solve rather well this puzzle; because it has appealing (since clear and articulated) answers to all the three questions that form this puzzle: (i) that which remains the same are the εἴθη —i.e. the παραδείγματα that sensible objects embody; (ii) knowing through the αἰσθήσεως τοῦ σώματος and knowing through speaking are of a different nature because their objects are so: the bodily senses deal with the sensible embodiments of the εἴθη, whereas speaking deals with the εἴθη themselves (which, as models, are different than their embodiments); and (iii) that which remains the same, viz. the εἴθη, are the causes of the sensible things.

In the Phaedo Plato says explicitly that 'ὁ περὶ τῆς ἀναμνήσεως καὶ μαθήσεως λόγος' is explained by 'α ὑπόθεσις worthy of acceptance [δι' ὑποθέσεως ἥξις ὑποθέσεως]', i.e. by the theory of εἴθη (92 d 6-7) (6). Here, however, things are not very clearly stated as to how the theory of εἴθη explains the question of μάθησις; one may, however, argue that the theory, as it is presented in this dialogue, hints at the puzzle brought forth by Plato's way of putting the question of knowledge.

I would, however, not go as far as to say that this view can be convincingly supported by textual evidence. The first step of the μέθοδος introduced in the Phaedo consists of finding and then hypothesizing the theory that fits better than any other theory into a
puzzle. The theory that Plato introduces in this dialogue is the theory of forms; but the puzzle into which this theory was supposed to fit is not clearly stated. Now, all that I am claiming is that the most plausible puzzle seems to be the one implied by Plato's way of putting the question of knowledge.

3.3. Hypothesizing as true what συμφωνεῖ with the theory of εἴδος

As I argued in 2.2., according to the second step of the μέθοδος we should hypothesize and use not only that theory that fits best into our puzzle, but also all the theories (and statements) that συμφωνοῦσιν with it, i.e. all the theories that are consistent and 'hang together' with it — be they theories (or statements) that imply (or are implied), explain (or are explained), etc. by it (and, of course, we should not use all those theories that do not 'hang together' with it). Now, does Plato apply in the *Phaedo* this second step of the μέθοδος? In my view, he does; but there are several things here that call for comment.

3.3.1. The theory of recollection

Plato chose the word εἴδος (and its cognate ἴδεα) to name the unchanging παραδείγματα of things. εἴδος and ἴδεα — which seem to come from a verb root that originally meant 'to see' (and which are cognate with the Latin *video*) — mean, in their literal sense, 'look, or 'appearance' (and they belong, primarily, to the field of visible perception (cf. for instance *Chrm.* 154 d 5, e 6, 158 b 1). εἴδος contains then an implicit reference to sight (a reference which we do not perceive any more in the modern 'idea'). Now, how are we to take this reference?

Plato, as many other Greek philosophers — such as Aristotle (cf. *Metaph.* 980 a 22-4) — believed that sight is the most important sense (cf. for instance *R.* 507 c: "Have you ever observed, [asks Socrates,] how much the greatest expenditure the creator of senses has lavished on the faculty of seeing and being seen?"; cf. also *Phdr.* 250 d 3-4). And in the *Phaedo* he claims that in seeing, we see (at least sometimes) forms embodied in sensible things (74 d 9 ff.: "we must have had some previous knowledge of equality before the time when we first saw equal things and realized that they were striving after equality, but fell short of it"; cf. also 75 b 4 ff.: "so before we began to see and hear and use our other senses we must somewhere have acquired the knowledge that there is such a thing as absolute equality. Otherwise we could never have realized, by using it as
standard for comparison, that all equal objects of sense are desirous
of being like it, but are only imperfect copies") (cf. also Sph. 253 d 5-
6, for instance, where he speaks about 'discerning µίαν ἕσσεν διὰ
τολήμων', i.e. — according to the majority of the commentators —
'seeing [with soul through eyes] the same ἐιδός in many sensible
things'). And here in the Phaedo Plato introduces in connection with
all this the so-called theory of ἀνάμνησις (73 c 9-d 2, 74 c 13-d 2; cf.
also 73 d 5 ff.), which states that then, when we see forms embodied
in sensible things, we actually recollect forms (7).

The theory of recollection raises various difficult questions; this
is hardly the occasion, however, for detailing this issue. For my
present purpose I need to say only that (at least in the Phaedo) the
theory of forms contains in it the theory of recollection.

3.3.2. The theory of soul's immortality

If you accept my theory (i.e. the theory of forms), says
Socrates, then let us look at what comes next to it (100 c 3-4), i.e. let
us see what ὑπομονεῖ with it. With the theory of forms there are
many things that συμφωνοῦν; here in the Phaedo, however, Plato is
concerned only with one: the soul's immortality. His argument about
soul's immortality can fairly be represented like this.

(i) if we (at least sometimes) recollect ἐιδός (cf. Phd. 74 d 9 ff., or
75 b 4 ff.);
(ii) then, 'we must have learned at some time before our souls
entered this human shape [i.e. 'before our birth' — cf. 75 c 4] that
which we recollect now (72 e — my paraphrase, my italics);
(iii) and if soul existed before our birth, it will continue to exist
after our death (102 b-106 e); and that means that soul is
ἀνάμνησις καὶ ἑταθνήσκου (106 e 1).

In other words:

(i) the theory of forms contains the theory of recollection;
(ii) the theory that soul is immortal συμφωνεῖ (cf. the expression
συμφωνεῖ at 92 c 5 and 8) with the theory of forms, for it is
consistent and 'hangs very well together' with it (being actually
implied by it) (cf. 92 d: "the theory that our soul exists even
before it enters the body surely stands or falls with the soul's
possession" of the ἐιδός); (whereas the theory that soul is a kind
of ἀρμονία is not συμφωνεῖ with the theory of forms — cf. 92 c 8);
(iii) so, we must also lay down as true the theory that soul is
immortal (cf. 106 e f.), and as false the theory of soul ὃς ἀρμονία
(92 c).
Now, even if a theory fits perfectly into a puzzle, this does not prove beyond any doubt its truth. We have, therefore, to test it. As I argued in 2.3., Plato speaks about two ways of testing a theory: by seeing whether its implications सम्मातवेणि धात्यालोचि, and by attempting to include it into a wider one. Plato’s theory of एन —although it (arguably) fits rather well into the puzzle brought forward by the way our knowledge appears to be working—is exposed to several strong objections (for instance: if an एन is a model of a copy, the model and the copies are alike, and so they both must have a second model, and so on — cf. Prm. 132 d-e; cf. also the earlier Euthd. 300 e). The theory, therefore, needs testing. Now, does Plato, in the Phaedo, apply to his theory of एन the tests he mentioned in this dialogue? Yes, but only tentatively.

3.4. Testing the theory of एन by seeing whether its implications सम्मातवेणिः

This is how the story goes. When any man dies, his own guardian spirit [δαστήρ], which was given charge over him in his life, tries to bring him to a certain place where all must assemble, and from which, after submitting their several cases to judgement, they must set out for the next world, under the guidance of one who has the office of escorting souls from this world to the other. When they have there undergone the necessary experiences and remained as long as is required, another guide brings them back again after many vast periods of time. Of course this journey is not as Aeschylus makes Telephus describe it. He says that the path to Hades is straightforward, but it seems clear to me that it is neither straightforward nor single. If it were, there would be no need for a guide, because surely nobody could lose his way anywhere if there were only one road. In fact, it seems likely that it contains many forking and crossroads, to judge from the ceremonies and observances of this world [107 d-108 a]. [...] Although we live in a hollow of the earth, we assume that we are living on the surface, and we call the air heaven, as though it were the heaven through which the stars move. [...] And if someone could reach to the summit, or put on wings and fly aloft, when he put up his head he would see the world above, just as fishes see our world when they put up their heads out the sea. And if his nature were able to bear the sight, he would recognize that that is the true heaven and the true light and the true earth [109 d-e].

These are a few fragments from the myth that Socrates tells his audience at the end of the Phaedo (107 d-108 a). Now, why does Plato introduce this myth?

To sum up so far: the puzzle raised by the way our लोगितकान् भ्रमणि is explained, I hold, by Plato through the theory of forms, which claims an ontological distinction between the एन and the
individual things, and states that the former are the causes of the latter. Now, this theory implies (inter alia) that (i) existence is divided into two realms: the realm of the individual things \( \text{qua } \epsilon\iota\kappa\omicron\upsilon\kappa\nu\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\) of the \( \epsilon\iota\delta\eta \) and the realm of the \( \epsilon\iota\delta\eta \text{ qua } \pi\omicron\alpha\omicron\beta\epsilon\iota\gamma\iota\mu\alpha\tau\alpha \) (cf. Phd. 79 a; cf. also R. 507 b-509 d; Sph. 247 c-248 a; Pit. 269 d; Phlb. 15 a-b); and that (ii) soul (at least of its learning part, \( \tau\omicron \alpha\omicron\gamma\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron \)) is immortal. Now, do these implications, these \( \omega\rho\omicron\mu\iota\theta\omicron\delta\epsilon\nu\tau\alpha \) of the theory of \( \epsilon\iota\delta\eta, \sigma\mu\i\phi\omega\nu\epsilon\nu\epsilon\iota\nu \alpha\lambda\lambda\iota\lambda\alpha\omicron \text{ or } \delta\iota\iota\phi\omega\nu\epsilon\nu\epsilon? \)

In my view, what Plato does in the myth from the end of the \( \text{Phaedo} \) is precisely this: he attempts to see if the \( \omega\rho\omicron\mu\iota\theta\omicron\delta\epsilon\nu\tau\alpha \) of the theory of forms \( \sigma\mu\i\phi\omega\nu\epsilon\nu\epsilon\iota\nu \alpha\lambda\lambda\iota\lambda\alpha\omicron \), i.e. if they 'hang together' within a \( \kappa\omicron\sigma\omicron\mu\sigma\omicron \pi\rho\alpha\gamma\omicron\omicron \); in other words, if these two implications of the theory of forms—the two ontological realms and soul's immortality—may be put together into a \textit{coherent whole}. I cannot quote here the entire myth, nor consider its 'elements'—they are too complicated and too many; but anyone who takes the effort to read it will have to admit that it is construed on two main topics: a \textit{metaphysical} topography (grounded on the existence of the two realms) and an account of what happens to souls when they are not \textit{embodied}. (The myth, if I may use an expression from Ryle 1966, 237, \textit{would serve as topical sugar for the very untopical pill produced by the implications of the theory of }\( \epsilon\iota\delta\eta \).)

Of course, no reasonable man ought to insist that the facts are exactly as I have described them. But that either this or something very like it is a true account of our souls and their future habitations—since we have clear evidence that the soul is immortal—this, I think, is both a reasonable contention and a belief worth risking, for the risk is a noble one.

This is how Socrates ends his myth (114 d). So, did the theory pass the test? Do its implications form a \( \kappa\omicron\sigma\omicron\mu\sigma\omicron \pi\rho\alpha\gamma\omicron\omicron \)? Yes—\textit{for the myth offers us a coherent whole} (i.e. it puts together into a coherent account the two main implications of the theory of forms—the two ontological realms and soul's immortality); although, as the above quoted passage seems to suggest, one should not take its details at their face value (8).

3.5. \textit{Testing the theory of }\( \epsilon\iota\delta\eta \) \textit{by including it into a wider one}

As I argued in 2.3.2., the second test is aimed at what comes (logically) \textit{before} the theory: i.e. at finding another, equally plausible, yet wider theory, which will include it. Did Plato apply this test in
the *Phaedo?* In my view, he did—but he did it *tentatively*, and the theory, I believe, did not pass the test.

We have, at this point, to go back to the issue of causality. Let us first consider the context on which this issue occurs. Hearing the objection which Cebes formulated against the immortality of the soul (namely that the soul’s divinity and prior existence do not prove its immortality—see 95 b-d), Socrates says that 'a full inquiry into the whole question of the causes [αἰτίαι] for coming-to-be [γένεσις], existence [ζήσιμα] and destruction [φθορά] is required (96 a; although at 95 e 1 he does not uses the plural αἰτίαι, but the singular αἰτία). And this gives Socrates the opening line for summarizing his own 'intellectual history' into this issue of causation.

"I thought it would be marvellous to know the causes for which each thing comes and ceases and continues to be. I was constantly veering to and from, puzzling primarily over this sort of question"; this is how Socrates began his 'intellectual history' (96 a-b). Roughly speaking, Socrates went through three 'stages' on his quest for finding the causes of becoming, existence and perishing: he first believed in a 'mechanistic' explanation (96 c - 97 b), then in a teleological explanation (97 b - 99 d), and, eventually, he introduced the εἴδη as αἰτίαι (cf. 99 a ff.). Now, how should we construe all this?

At a first sight, the issue of causality in Plato is far from being clear. It is true that he distinguishes explicitly between several *kinds* of cause (9). But the questions about how many kinds of cause are there in Plato, and and what are they, did not receive a single answer. Ancient commentators, for instance, claimed that the Platonic causes are ὄλη (Aristotle, Diogene Laertius, Theophrastus, Alexander, Alcinous, Simplicius), ἐς (Diogenes Laertius, Theophrastus), παράδειγμα (Alexander, Simplicius), and ἱσέα (Alcinous) (10).

Heidegger 1992 b, 10-4 claimed that the easiest way into Plato’s thought is through Aristotle, for if we attempt to understand Plato through Aristotle we are moving vom Hellen ins Dunkle, from light into dark. It is not my purpose here to discuss this claim; but, I believe, in the case of this issue of causality, this is surely so. In other words: the easiest way into the Platonic issue of causality is through Aristotle, for he, Aristotle, gives a clearer account of this notion.

In *Metaphysics* 1032 a 13 ff. Aristotle claims that "of things which are generated [τὰ γεννώμενα], some are generated naturally [τὰ φύσει γεννεῖαι], and others artificially [τὰ τέχνη]" (11). And he seems to imply that for all generated things (πάντα τὰ γεννώμενα) —be they τὰ φύσει δηντα or τὰ ποιῶμενα — there are 'responsible' four αἰτίαι (12) (cf. 1032 a 13 ff. and 1049 b 29 ff.): (i) *causa materialis* (if I may use the Latin terminology) (ὑλη, i.e. the matter or 'constituent' out of
which something, say, a statue is made, e.g. bronze); (ii) *causa efficiens* (e.g. the sculptor of the statue); (iii) *causa finalis* (τέλος, the goal, e.g. the purpose for the sake of which the sculptor has made the statue); and (iv) *causa formalis* (εἶδος, or that which is responsible for the form of the matter, e.g. the 'model' of the statue; for these four αἰτίαι see, *inter alia*, Metaph. 1032 b 1 ff.) (13).

This 'productionist metaphysical explanation' of the world of γένεσις, however, was used, before Aristotle, by Plato.

### 3.5.1. The failed tentative of the *Phaedo*

To go back to Socrates' intellectual history from the *Phaedo*. As I said (see supra), Socrates went through three 'stages' in his quest for finding the causes of becoming, existence and perishing: (i) he first believes in a 'mechanistic' explanation (96 c - 97 b), (ii) then in a teleological explanation (97 b - 99 d), and, eventually, (iii) he introduces the εἶδος as αἴτια (cf. 99 a ff.). Let us look at each of these stages.

(i) First, Socrates says, he thought that the αἴτια of each thing lies in its material; for instance: the cause of growth in human beings is due to the food and drink which is added to the bulk of the body (96 c-97 b). But he soon realized that matter cannot be an αἴτια; for instance: the cause that makes something-which-is-two to come into being as such, he says, is neither the addition of two different things, nor the division of a single thing into two parts; in other words, a thing may be 'one', but its being one is not caused by its matter, since the same matter could be either 'two', or 'one' (96 e ff.).

(ii) Then, he heard that another philosopher, Anaxagoras, claimed that the νοῦς is the αἴτια of all things, and he was very pleased with this explanation and assumed that, since νοῦς is the rational 'agent' par excellence, it would produce everything in the way that is best for it (τὸ βέλτιστον — 98 b; cf. also 97 c). (It seems that for Plato —and the *Timaeus* provides further evidence, see for instance 28 b 1 and 29 a — an 'efficient rational agent' always wants to achieve in his 'activity' an excellence of some sort). (As to what is the aim, the τέλος, of such an 'agent's activity', there is nothing said here in the *Phaedo*.) But, eventually, Socrates realized that Anaxagoras ended up by explaining each thing by 'water', 'air', and other elements.

(iii) "I should be delighted to learn about the works of such an αἴτια [i.e. νοῦς] from anyone, but since I have been denied knowledge of it, and have been unable either to discover it myself or to learn about from another, I have worked out my own makeshift approach to the problem of causation" (99 c); and this 'makeshift approach' of
his, which he calls "my second voyage (δεύτερος πλούς) in the quest of ἀιτία" (99 c 9-d 1) (14), introduces the εἴδη as ἀιτία (cf. 99 a ff).

I do not intend to read Aristotle back into Plato: Plato does not explicitly distinguish, as Aristotle, four kinds of ἀιτία; and, even if they recognise similar modes of explanation, they seek to account for these with metaphysical frameworks that are significantly different. But the easiest way into what Plato has in mind here is Aristotle's way of putting the issue of causality in terms of four causes. If I may use the the jargon of Aristotelian scholarship, what Plato does here in the Phaedo is this:

(i) he classifies 'matter' only as a 'necessary condition' (cf. 99 b), claiming that to call 'matter' an ἀιτία "is too absurd" (99 a);
(ii) he then 'muses' about the possibility of an efficient ἀιτία (i.e. νοῦς) (cf. 98 e 1, 99 b 3); and, unable 'either to discover it or learn about it from others' (99 c 9 ff.), he, eventually,
(iii) introduces and applies the formal ἀιτία (εἴδος).

Of course, this way of putting things is not in Plato; but it helps us to understand what Plato does have, in a rather obscure form, in mind. He does not say, I agree, that γιγνόμενον comes into being as such and such because of a 'maker' (νοῦς) that has an 'aim' and a 'model' (εἴδος). What he says is that a γιγνόμενον comes into being as such and such because of its εἴδος.

Now, what does all this have to do with testing the theory of forms by finding another, equally plausible, yet wider theory, which will include it? As I said, the issue of causality is introduced as being required by the issue of soul's immortality (96 a). But, in my view, Plato introduced this issue because he wanted to include his theory of forms into a wider theory. The Phaedo does not tell us how this wider theory may look like; it suggests only that it has to contain other kinds of cause. Here, however, in this dialogue, Plato could not make anything ἰκανόν out of this wider theory. So here, the theory of forms does not pass the second test. But, in the Timaeus, Plato tried one more time; and there, in my view, he managed to put together a wider, equally plausible theory that includes the theory of εἴδη. Thus, we may say that the theory did eventually pass the second test.

3.5.2. The successful attempt of the Timaeus

Usually, μῦθος is held as the ultimate determination of μέτεξις (i.e. the individual things are thought of as copies of εἴδη). Yet Plato does further determine the concept of μῦθος. In the Sophist he says explicitly: μῦθος ποίησις τῆς ἔστιν, 'imitation is a sort of production' (i.e. a production of images, not of 'real things')
(265 b 1). (In the *Sophist* the issue of *ποιήσις* is particularly stressed out, and the dialogue *ends* with it — cf. 265 d ff.) If so, then the individual things are thought of as being not mere *copies* of *εἴδη*, but *produced copies*.

As I mentioned, Plato claims (especially in the post-*Phaedo* dialogues) that *every* individual thing (i.e. *every* *γιγνόμενον*) has a cause (cf. *Ti.* 28 a 4-5, and *Phlb.* 26 c 3-4). And — since he tends (at least) to think that a *γιγνόμενον* — from a simple couch (*R.* 597 a) to the universe itself (*Ti.* 28 c ff.) — is actually a *ποιήμενον* (cf. also *Phlb.* 27 a 1-2: καὶ ἴπτι τὰ γε ποιήμενον ἢ καὶ τὸ γιγνόμενον οὐδὲν πλὴν ὑμᾶς, καθ' ἄλλο τὸ γιγνόμενον διαφέρον εὑρήσασθαι) — he often refers to *ποιήσις* or to its 'performer' as 'that which is responsible for' (i.e., in a broad sense, 'the *αἴτια* of') *τὸ γιγνόμενον* in general. (For reference to *ποιήσις* *qua* *αἴτια* see for instance *Smp.* 197 a 1-3: τὸντα τὰ ζῷα γίγνεται τε καὶ φύεται through the *σοφή* *ποιήσις* of *Eros* — my paraphrase; *Smp.* 205 b 8-9: ἢ γάρ του ἐκ τοῦ μὴ δυντος είς τὸ διὸ λέγων ὀνομάζειν αἴτια πάσα ἐστὶ *ποιήσις* (15); *Sph.* 219 b 4-6: πάν ὅπερ ἄν μὴ πράτερν τις ὄν ὑποτερον εἰς ο(LED<

Now, since *ποιήσις* seems to be such an important notion in Plato's metaphysics, what are its 'determinations'? And what are the 'elements' which 'constitute' the 'act' of *ποιήσις*?

For Plato *ποιήσις* is 'something manifold' (πολύ —cf. *Smp.* 205 b 8), and he refers to this notion in many places (e.g. *Chrm.* 163 a ff.; *Smp.* 197 a, 205 a; *R.* 597 a ff.; *Sph.* 219 b, 265 b; *Phlb.* 26 c ff, 28 d, etc.). Now, does this have any *metaphysical* relevance? Or is it only a banal and 'handy' way of putting things? (Usually the topic of *ποιήσις* in Plato has been avoided or simply treated as having no philosophical implications at all. One of the first philosophers who pointed out the crucial role that *ποιήσις* plays in Plato's philosophy was Heidegger, and in the last years more and more commentators wrote extensively about this topic and recognized the 'productionist vein' of Platonic metaphysics, cf. for instance Kato 1986 and Thomsen 1990 (16)). As far as I am concerned, I think that the topic of *ποιήσις* is not only one of the major *philosophical* topics of Platonism (for *ποιήσις* is connected with many of its key issues, such as 'causation', 'participation' or 'truth'); it is, I think, its widest 'framework', which included even the theory of *εἴδη*. And the *Timaeus* is the proof.

Of all the Platonic texts, however, the *Timaeus* is, I think, the best place to look for the answers to these questions (17). In the *Timaeus* the universe is explicitly described as being the 'product' of
a divine δημιουργός (cf. 28 a ff., 29 d-c, 31 b, etc.) (18). Roughly speaking, production is the making of something from something, and so it can take place only if some sort of materials are given (19). In the Timaeus that out of which the universe is made is a sort of a 'primordial given matter' (cf. 52 d); and this 'primordial given matter' is 'turned' into a 'product' by the divine δημιουργός, who has a 'model' (cf. τὸ νοητὸν ζῦον — 30 c) for everything he does. (As to what the aim of the maker may be, he, again, does not say anything. He says, though, that the Demiurge, being 'good [ἀγαθός] and without jealousy [οὔδενὸς φθονὸς]', 29 a 3 and e 1-2, wanted to frame the universe as similar as possible with its model — cf. inter alia 38 b-c and 39 e; so, we may infer, the aim of his framing the universe was simply his willingness to create 'something ἀγαθόν'.)

If so, one may be tempted, I suppose, to claim that according to Plato for πάντα τὰ γιγνόμενα there are 'responsible' three αἰτίαι: a material, an efficient and a formal αἰτία (if we may use this jargon of Aristotle's commentators), since (i) he refers (in the Timaeus) to the αἰτία of a γιγνόμενον in terms of ποιήσεις, and since (ii) for him in the 'act' of ποιήσεις involves a maker, a matter and a model. This is a rather tempting interpretation (or so I find), but it is bound to remain insufficiently supported, for there is little textual evidence which might be invoked in its favour (Ti. 28 a and Phlb. 26 e suggest that only a 'maker' may be rightly called an αἰτία, and Phd. 99 a states that it would be too absurd to apply such a name to 'matter' for instance, cf. also 98 c ff. (20)).

To sum up: Plato, like Aristotle, refers to the αἰτία of a γιγνόμενον in terms of ποιήσεις, and for him there are three 'elements' that 'take part' in the 'act' of ποιήσεις (the maker, the matter and the model); but he, unlike Aristotle, does not take these three 'elements' which 'constitute' the 'act' of ποιήσεις as three different kinds of cause. Nevertheless, Plato does use in his explanation of a γιγνόμενον qua πολούμενον all these three 'elements' of the 'act' of ποιήσεις (21); and the best argument in favour of this claim is the Timaeus.

Now, the next question is how should we take his productionist metaphysical explanation? That is: should we take the 'productionist' framework of Plato's metaphysics literally or figuratively? To answer this question is, I think, rather difficult, for each option has its problems. For Aristotle, 'to say that the εἶδη are παραβείγματα, and that other things 'participate' [μετέχεται] in them, is to use [...] poetical metaphors [μεταφοράς λέγειν ποιητικός]' (Metaph. 1079 b 25 ff.; my paraphrase; cf. also 991 a 19-22) (see also Prm. 132 c, where the εἶδη are said to like models, ὥστερ παραβείγματα). I agree that this view has appealing advantages (for it allows us to get rid of many difficulties, raised by a literal reading). In my view, we cannot claim
that Plato regarded his 'productionist' framework as a mere 'poetical metaphor'.

For him there are two kinds of ποίησις, the θεῖον and the ἀνθρώπινον kind (cf. Sph. 265 b); and it would be in his spirit to take the ἀνθρώπινον production as, so to speak, a 'projection of the θεῖον production (cf. Lg. 902 c: "we are never, then, to fancy God [εἰς θεόν] the inferior of human workmen" —my italics; and Smp. 197 a: "in every τέχνη, the [human] ἀνθρωπογός who achieves the brightest fame is the one whose διασκεδάζως is the god, θεός, [i.e. Eros], while those that lack his influence grow old in the shadow of oblivion"; cf. also Lg. 907 a and R. 597 c-d: when a carpenter makes a couch having in his mind the 'model', εἰδώλιος, of couch, which was 'made' by God, he is actually copying what the God did.) So: to take Plato's 'productionist framework' from the Timaeus metaphorically means actually to take the Demiurge's ποίησις as a metaphorical projection of the human ποίησις, and this contradicts Plato's view that it is the human craftsman, when he produces artefacta, that copies the divinity, in whose existence he strongly believed. (Plato calls his cosmology from the the Timaeus a 'likely myth', see 29 d 1; and, I agree, it does contain various metaphors and 'mythical episodes'; but they all refer to particular details of this cosmology, not to its 'productionist' framework.) This is, however, another problem, which I cannot open here.

What is important, for my line of argument, is that this productionist theory is Plato's widest theory (which includes the theory of εἰς θεόν); and that it, in spite of being only a likely, εἰκώς, 'account' (cf. Ti. 29 b 5-c 2, etc.) is, nevertheless, ἰκανόν. (This ἰκανόν theory, however, raises many difficulties. But, because Plato did not want to renounce to it, he often avoided to take into account some of its 'elements' —such as the matter, the producer, or the producer's aim.)

"Plato had set this problem to those who were engaged in these [sc. astronomical] studies: what uniform and orderly motions must be hypothesized [ὑποτεθεικατ] to save the phenomenal motions of the wandering stars." This is a quotation from Sosigenes, preserved in Simplicius' De caelo (II, 12, 488.21-24, Heiberg; the above translation is from Vlastos 1975, 60). In its spirit, Sosigenes' remark tells us something true about Plato's way of thinking, for he, Plato, did not attempt to 'coin' a reality that will support his hypotheses; he, on the contrary, attempted to find the hypotheses that can explain best (and so 'save') the way things around us — the stars, the πάλιντ, the sophist — are (22).

Now, the μέοδος described in the Phaedo at 100 a-101 e is a μέοδος that is aimed precisely at finding, using and checking
That can explain (and so 'save') the way things around us are. The theory of ἐνθής, in my view, such a ὑπόθεσις, for it was aimed at solving (primarily) the πάνυ θαμμαστόν puzzle brought forward by the given way in which τὸ λογιστικὸν μανθάνει. This theory, however, brings forward other puzzle — that of the two ontological realms. In the Timaeus, Plato attempted to solve the puzzle of these two realms by including it into another theory. But that theory too, in spite of being ἰκανόν, produces a difficult puzzle — that of the creation itself. Now, how sure are all these theories?

"We must not let it enter our minds that nothing in our theories ὑπὸ λόγον is healthy. On the contrary we should recognize that we ourselves are still ill, but that we must brace ourselves and do our best to become healthy." This is what Plato says in the Phaedo (90 e), and this is his position throughout the dialogues.

How certain is the theory of ἐνθής? "This", says Socrates, "is the safest answer for me or for anyone else to give, and I believe that while I hold fast to this I cannot fall; it is safe for me or for anyone else to answer that it is by beauty that beautiful things are beautiful" (Phd. 100 d-e; cf. also 92 a, d-e, 105 b; cf. also Prm. 134 e-135 c). But, at the end of the dialogue, Plato expresses his doubts: "As a matter of fact, said Simmias, I have no doubts myself either now, in view of what you have just been saying. All the same, the subject is so vast, and I have such a poor opinion of our weak human nature, that I can't help still feeling a distrust [ἀπιστία]" (107 b). And this 'distrust', it seems, regards not only the details of the theory (which no one should insist too much on —cf. 100 d), but also the theory itself.

Plato's 'philosophical odyssey', however, does not end with the πάνυ θαμμαστόν puzzle brought forward by the given way in which τὸ λογιστικὸν μανθάνει, with the μέθοδος toward its solving, and with a very likely solution — the theory of ἐνθής; it continues, and its next stages are explicitly stated in the Republic and the Sophist.
CHAPTER FOUR

The theory of \( \varepsilon\iota\delta\eta \) (II):

\( \tau\delta\; \delta\gamma\alpha\theta\omicron\nu \)

as the \( \alpha\nu\nu\pi\omicron\omicron\theta\epsilon\omicron\omicron\sigma\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\zeta\; \delta\rho\chi\eta \) of

the theory of \( \varepsilon\iota\delta\eta \)

What I shall claim in what follows relies on three passages from the \textit{Republic}: 507 a-509 c (of which there is a very short summary at 534 a 2-5), 509 d-511 e and 514 a-517 a. These passages were so much discussed, that eventually they received their own name: the Sun, the Divided Line and the Cave.

About this 'crux' of Sun, Divided Line and Cave everyone, as Skemp 1976, 36 put it, has its own exegesis (and, we must add, many have published it). Those who want to 'join the club' used to begin their study by a review of the main interpretations (or of some of them); but since this requires so much space, and since there are already so many reviews of these interpretations, one feels very tempted to proceed directly to one's own thesis.

"Évidemment je n'oserai pas proposer ici une interprétation définitive de ce texte célèbre de Platon. Je ne veux pas non plus passer en revue les interprétations, assez nombreuses et assez poussées, qu'ont déjà données les philosophes analitique." This is how Jonathan Barnes (1991, 81) begins his article about the passage of Sun (written in French and entitled "Le soleil de Platon vu avec des lunettes analytiques"). I shall adopt, for my interpretation of the Sun, Divided Line and Cave, the same position: I shall not review the main interpretations of these passages; and I shall not claim that my interpretation is definitive. Moreover, I shall focus only on what I believe is philosophically essential in these texts.

In the Divided Line Plato puts in very precise terms the distinction between the two ontological realms which is brought forward by the theory of \( \varepsilon\iota\delta\eta \):

(a) on the one hand, the visible realm (\( \tau\delta\; \delta\rho\pi\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\; 509\; d\; 4 \); cf. also: \( \tau\delta\; \delta\rho\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\; 507\; b\; 9,\; 508\; a\; 6,\; 509\; b\; 2 \); and \( \tau\delta\; \delta\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\; 507\; d\; 8 \) (or the realm of \( \gamma\nu\nu\sigma\omicron\ionic
(ii) that which is a copy of a model (τὸ ὁμοιωθέν — 510 a 10), i.e. images (ἐἰκόνες — 509 e 1), like shadows (σκία — 510 a 1) or reflections (φαντασμάτα — 510 a 2) (be they in water or on some other surfaces); and which is apprehended by εἰκάσια (511 e 2, 534 a 1);

(b) on the other hand, the intelligible realm (τὸ νοητόν — 507 b 9-10, 509 d 4, 511 a 3; cf. also τὰ νοούμενα — 508 e 1 and τὰ νοητά — 508 e 1) (or the realm of οὐσία — 534 a 3), which is the realm of the knowable (τὸ γνωστὸν — 510 a 9).

(Plato, as many other Greek philosophers, believed that sight is the most important sense, and he tended to reduce the question of αἰσθήσεως to that of ὀψις — cf. for instance Th. 151 e ff. and Ti. 47 a-b; so, he often phrases the contrast between 'knowing with the soul through the bodily senses' and 'knowing with the soul through itself' in terms of seeing and speaking.)

That which is at the core of the Divided Line is not actually this ontological distinction. In the Republic Plato is not concerned with testing the theory of εἰδή (as he was, for instance, in the Phaedo); here the theory is regarded with much more confidence, and Plato begins to be concerned with what is actually the very basis of it. But when it comes to describing the procedure he wants to propose for this, he, as in the Phaedo, begin to express himself in general terms, as if at stake was not his theory of εἰδή, but a general methodological point.

Regarding the ὑπόθεσις of an ensuing argument, there are, claims Plato two attitudes.

(a) We may leave it unexplained; and in this case we would be led by δύναμις (511 a 1, c 7, d 2, 5, 533 d 6, c 8 — which refers here, I presume, to our common way of thinking) and we would be like the geometers (510 c 2-3, 511 b 1-2, 533 b 7), who proceed from their hypotheses (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως — 510 b 5) not up to an ἀρχή but down to a conclusion (510 b 6, c-d, 511 a 3-6, c 8-d 2), leaving them, the hypotheses, unexplained (533 c 1-2). (As I argue in Annex II, 2.2., the Greek geometers suggested that we should accept, conventionally, that the 'foundation', the ὑπόθεσις of an ensuing argument is sure and then continue our investigations as if it were so —cf. inter alia Men. 86 e. Thus, for them, a ὑπόθεσις is what we usually call a postulate, i.e. a proposition conventionally accepted as true for the sake of our investigations. And this is what Plato wants to tell us here: that the hypotheses from which the geometers start are accepted, cf. ὁμολογία — 533 c 5, as ἀρχή, c 3, of their reasonings without any questioning, and that they cannot turn their knowledge into επιστήμη, c 5, precisely because they leave their hypotheses
unexplained; cf. also *Cratylus* 436 c-e, which I quoted at the end of 2.2.2. (1.)

(b) Or, we may let ourselves led by νόησις (511 d 8, or νοῦς, 508 c 1, d 6—which refer here, I presume, to a *superior* way of thinking) and advance upward from our hypothesis (ἐκ ὑπόθεσις — 5) to an ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη (510 b 7, 511 b 3-c 2, 533 c 8) (in short: we may try to *explain* what lies at the very bottom of our ὑπόθεσις); and then, after reaching this ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη, proceed from it downward the conclusion (511 b). (And only in this way, claims Plato, we will reach ἐπιστήμη, 533 e 8, i.e. actual knowledge.)

It has been argued that these two attitudes toward hypotheses announce the later Platonic method of συναγωγή and διάλεκτικ; or that they correspond somehow to the geometrical procedure of analysis and synthesis (2) (for countless details on this issue see Robinson 1953, 162-77). As far as I am concerned, I think that Plato, although he speaks about a general methodological point, has in mind his theory of ἀνθρώπη; and so all this can be actually understood only by placing it within the context of this theory.

4.1. The ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη as τὸ ἀγάθον

The way we construe what Plato says in the Divided Line depends, obviously, on the way we interpret the notion of ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη. What is then this ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη?

Plato does not explicitly say too much about the ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη. But he suggests (i) that τὸ ἀγάθον is the ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη, and (ii) that the sun is an analogy for it. (i) First, Plato says in the Sun that τὸ ἀγάθον has a unique place in our knowledge (just as the sun has in sight), and then, in the Divided Line, he says the same thing about the ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη (3). Then, (ii) in the Cave, he says that what the released prisoner sees the last of all is the sun, and in the Divided Line he said that the ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη is reached at the end of an upward path (which implies that, since the *sun* is an analogy for both τὰ ἀγαθὰ and the ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη, these two are one and the same thing). On the whole, however, this indirect evidence—for claiming that τὸ ἀγάθον is the ἀνυπόθετος ἄρχη and that the sun is an analogy for both—‘seems sufficient’ (as Robinson 1953, 160 says).

Now, what is τὸ ἀγάθον?

It is generally accepted, as there are several testimonies (4), that Plato did hold a lecture ‘on the idea of good’ which became very soon proverbial for its obscurity (something which could have hardly escaped the attention of the Ancient comic writers (5)). We do not know exactly what Plato said about the good in his lecture. We know
from Aris Xen us (Elementa harmonica II 30-31) that the Platonic notion of ἀγαθόν, as Plato himself described it in his famous public lecture on it, does not refer to a moral value. (ἀγαθόν, although it may refer to a moral value, cf. Mx. 237 a 6, or Hp. Mi. 376 b 1, "does not coincide in meaning with the English 'good', and in particular [...] it had not necessarily any moral force", as Guthrie 1975, 503 put it; cf. also Nettleship 1951, 218-19: "τὸ ἀγαθὸν does not in the first involve any moral qualities.") But we cannot make too much out of all this.

So, what does Plato say in the Republic about the good?

In the Republic Plato says several things about it; he says for instance that ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἱσέα is what makes 'just things and all the rest ἄριστα καὶ ὑφέλιμα — useful and beneficial' (505 a); and that the philosopher-kings of Kallipolis, in order to really understand justice, should understand the ultimate object of knowledge — ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἱσέα (504 d, 505 a 2). But we cannot make too much out of this either.

Now, Plato himself admits that the good is something μόρις ὀρᾶσθαι (cf. 517 c 1) and at 506 e he makes Socrates introduce an analogy:

Nay, my beloved, let us dismiss for the time being τί ποτ᾽ ἐστὶ τά ἀγαθάν, for to attain to my present surmise of that seems a pitch above the impulse that wings my flight today. But of what is the offspring [ἐκγενον] of ἀγαθόν and most nearly made in its likeness [ὁμοιότατος] I am willing to speak [...].

4.2. τὸ ἀγαθὸν as that which is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας

The 'seen things' (τὰ ὄρῳμενα — 507 b 1, 508 a 6, 509 b 2), claims Plato, correspond to 'the known things' (τὰ νοεῖμενα — 508 c 1; or τὰ γιγνῷσκόμενα — 508 e 1, 509 b 6); the eye (ὁμα — 507 d 11, 508 b 1) to the soul (ψυχὴ — 508 d 4) (although he does not say explicitly so); the sight (ὁπίς — 507 d 8, 11, e 1; or ἡ τοῦ ὀρᾶν ὑπόκλιμα — 507 c 7) to knowledge (ἐπιστήμη — 508 e 3509 a 6; or γιγνῶσις — 508 e 4); the light (φῶς — 507 e 4) to truth (ἄληθεία — 508 d 5, e 1, 4); and the sun (ἡλιος — 508 a 7, 11, d 1, 509 b 2) to the 'idea of the good' (ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἱσεά — 508 c 2-3).

The context in which the analogy between the sun and τὸ ἀγαθόν occurs is then a broader analogy between what we may call the τόπος ὀρᾶτος and the τόπος νοεῖμας. Now, within each τόπος, Plato confers the same vital position to sun and ἀγαθόν, respectively:
(a) The sun is the cause of light, and light makes possible sight and makes things visible (508 a); and
(ii) it provides to the seen objects (τὰ ὅρωμα) not only light, but γένεσις, αἴτησις, and προφήτιον, without being itself γένεσις (509 b).

(b) The cause of ἀλήθεια (508 e), and ἀλήθεια is that which makes possible knowledge (508 d); and
(ii) it provides (προσέλναι) the οὐσία of all εἴδη, being above (ὑπερέχοντος) and beyond (ἐπέκεινα) οὐσία in 'dignity' (πρέσβειας) and 'power' (δυνάμεις) (509 b 8) (and so it is called ἡ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχὴ — 511 b 7, and πάντων αἵτιν όρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν οὐσία — 517 c 2).

Things, as anyone can see, are getting very complicated. The keyword, however, from which we should begin the analysis of all this, is, in my view, οὐσία.

An English physicist said once that all physicists want to speak about that which baffles them, i.e. about God, but they wait until they win the Nobel prize. In philosophy, things are different: the Nobel prize is not awarded, and the philosophers may speak from the very beginning about that which 'will always baffle them' (as Aristotle says in Metaph. 1028 b 1-5), i.e. about being.

4.2.1. Plato's notion of being: οὐσία qua 'whatness'

What is being for Plato?

Here is a question which we must not leave unexamined or undetermined, nor must we affirm too confidently that there can be no decision; neither must we interpolate in our present long discourse a digression equally long, but if it is possible to set a great principle in a few words, that is just what we want.

This is what Timaeus says to his auditors, when they reached the topic of εἰδη (Ti. 51 c-d); regarding the topic of 'being in Plato' I shall follow his advice.

As I claimed, Plato hypothesizes a theory which claims that the 'object of knowledge' are the εἴδη, and that these εἴδη are like παράδειγματα, the sensible things being but their copies, εἴδωλα. And in the Sophist he puts the distinction between παράδειγμα and εἴδωλον in these terms: an εἴδωλον is only a pretender, a μῦρος (cf. a 9 b 11), something which it itself is not (cf. a 9): of its εἴδος qua παράδειγμα (240 c 1-2). That is: an εἴδωλον is an ὅν (cf. b 9, 11, 12), something which exists: but it exists only insofar it...
'embodies' a model; and, so, from the two of them, model and copy, the only ὅν ἀληθινὸν (a 9, b 2, 3, 5), the only 'real thing' (ὅντως ὅν — b 3), is the model, the copy being only an ὅν τως (b 9), a pretender, a μῆμα of it.

To conclude: for Plato 'being' has grades; that is: some ὅντα are more than others (cf. μᾶλλον ὅντα — R. 515 d 3). And those that are more are those that are ὅντως, i.e. the εἶδη qua παραδείγματα. ὅντως means then ἀληθῶς (cf. Sph. 240 b 10; cf. also R. 515 d: μᾶλλον ὅντα are ἀληθέστερα ὅντα): that is, to be as a model, real (ἀληθινὸν) not as a copy, which is only a fake of the real model.

We know then what is for Plato 'to be more' and 'to be less'. But what does he actually understand by 'to be'? In my view, the clearest answer to this question is contained in a phrase that occurs in a very troublesome passage — the Timaeus 27 d ff.

This phrase is the very opening phrase of the cosmological discourse and it reads:


How should we take this distinction between τί τò ὅν ἄει, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχουν and τί τò γιγνόμενον μὲν ἄει, ὅν δὲ οὐδέποτε; Usually, it has been interpreted as referring to what follows in the dialogue.

The Timaeus contains a 'productionist theory' in which the universe is explicitly described as a 'product' made from a 'primordial given matter' (cf. 52 d) by a divine δημουργός (cf. 28 a ff., 29 d-e, 31 b, etc.) who has a 'model', the νοητὸν ζῷον (30 c), in front of his eyes (30 c, 38 b-c, 39 e). Now, what follows after the above quoted distinction (27 d 7-28 a 4) is a passage in which Plato speaks, abruptly, about two 'elements' of his 'productionist theory': the Demiurgē (δημουργός), as the αἰτία of the universe qua γιγνόμενον, and the Demiurgē's choosing as the model (παραδείγμα) of the universe 'that which is always the same' (τò κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχουν ἄει), not 'something generated' (γεννητόν).

So, if the above quoted distinction belongs to what follows, then it should be taken as referring to the distinction (made a few lines later) between the two possible models: the παραδείγμα that is κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχουν ἄει and the γεννητὸν παράδειγμα. But this does not make any sense: for how could the Demiurgē take as model for the universe he is about to frame τί τò γιγνόμενον μὲν ἄει, ὅν δὲ οὐδέποτε? How could he make a γιγνόμενον (i.e. the universe)
by looking at a γιγνόμενον ἄει that is not an ὅν? Plato does not say it is impossible, he only says that if that was the case, the universe would have been οὐ καλὸν (28 b 3). Now, what is that γιγνόμενον μὲν ἄει, ὅν δὲ οὐδέποτε qua γεννητὸν παράδειγμα? The primordial given matter, one may argue, for that is a γιγνόμενον ἄει which is not an ὅν, for it is in a state of ἀτοξεία (30 a 5), 'shaken' by chaotic δύναμεις (52 d-e, 53 a), not at rest (οὐχ ὄσυς), and moving in an irregular and disorderly way (ἀλλὰ κινούμενον πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως) (30 a). But, if this was so, then what Plato says here is that the Demiurge could have framed the universe by taking as model its very material.

This difficulty cannot be solved by claiming that the cosmogony of the Timaeus was not meant to be taken in its letter. This difficulty, I hold, can be solved only if we assume (i) a hiatus between the distinction made at 27 d 7-28 a 4 and what follows, and (ii) a distinction between 'τι τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἄει, ὅν δὲ οὐδέποτε', 'the universe qua γιγνόμενον' and 'the γεννητὸν παράδειγμα'.

Plato introduces the distinction from 27 d 7-28 a 4 by saying: ἔστων οὖν ὅτι κατ' ἐμὸν δοξῆν πρῶτον διαμετέον τάδε (my italics). What this πρῶτον indicates, I think, is precisely that the distinction to be made is to be distinguished from what follows; but he does not mark what follows by a δεύτερον. Now, if this distinction from 27 d 7-28 a 4 is to be distinguished from what follows, how should we construe it?

Let us look at the only hint we have: that τι τὸ ὅν ἄει, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἐχον ὄντως, is νοῆσαι μετὰ λόγου περιληπτόν, being ἄει κατὰ ταύτα ὅν; and that τι τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἄει, ὅν δὲ οὐδέποτε is δέξα μετ' ἀληθοσεῖς ἀλόγου δοξαστόν, being a γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, and so not an ὄντως ὅν. If this phrase does not refer to what follows, i.e. to the issue of model-copy, ὄντως ὅν cannot mean to be as a model, real (ἀληθεινὸν), not as a copy, which is only a fake of the real model; in short: if this phrase does not refer to what follows we cannot construe ὄντως here as ἀληθινὸς (as Plato does in Sph. 240 b 10). What then does ὄντως mean here? The answer depends, in my view, upon νοῆσαι μετὰ λόγου περιληπτόν' and ἄει κατὰ ταύτα ὅν'.

In the Sophist, at 248 a, Plato puts things in almost the same terms: man is, he claims there, through ἄλλως, in κοινωνία with γένεσις; and, through λογισμὸς, in κοινωνία with ὄντως ὀσύα; and he defines the ὄντως ὀσύα as being ἄει κατὰ ταύτα ὑσαύτως, and γένεσις as being ἀλλότριος ἀλλωσ. Now, this way of putting things (from Sph. 248 a and Tt. 27 d 7-28 a 4) raises two questions: (i) what is the object of knowledge, and (ii) what is the meaning of being.

(i) As I argued in 1.1., Plato claims explicitly that we can know only that which is ἄει κατὰ ταύτα ὑσαύτως (cf. Cra. 440 a-b, R. 585 c f., Sph. 249 b, Phlb. 58 a, 61 e, etc.); that is: the object of sure
knowledge can only be that which ἄει μένει κατὰ ταῦτα, 'that which always remains the same'.

(ii) He also claims explicitly that 'to be' means either 'to be ἄει κατὰ ταῦτα ὑστάτως' or 'to be ἄλλοτε ἄλλως'; and that only 'to be ἄει κατὰ ταῦτα ὑστάτως' is actually (ὅστως) 'to be'. This claim, however, states, implicitly, the meaning of to be ὑστάτως. For 'that which can be the same' is a what; in other words: only a determination, a what can 'always remain the same'. If so, then for Plato being is understood as whatness, quidditas, Washeit (this claim, that for Plato being means primarily whatness has been endorsed by many commentators — from Heidegger (7) to Owen (8) and Kahn (9)); and for him, that whatness which remains the same is more than that whatness which changes.

Thus, what the distinction from Tī. 27 d 7-28 a 4 says is this: as long as something is only τὸ γιγνόμενον ἄει, i.e. as long as it is in an undetermined state (in other words: as long as it cannot be something, or have a particular what), it cannot be actually known, and that is why it is an ὑστάτως δὲ οὐδὲποτε ὡν, a no-thing; whereas as long as something is τὸ ὃν ἂν ἂν, γένεσιν δὲ σῶς ἔχων, i.e. as long as it is always in a determined state (in other words: as long as it is always the same some-thing), it can be actually known, and that is why it is an ὑστάτως ὡν (10). (After this distinction Plato introduces, abruptly, two other issues: the Demiurge as the αἴτια of the universe as γιγνόμενον and the two possible models of the universe which he might have chosen —28 a ff. This distinction, I believe, between model and copy, is not a reference to the distinction made earlier; it may be, as Cornford 1937, 27 suggested, a reference to an older problem, stated in the Republic 597 c-d, where he says that the good craftsman is the one who takes as model for what he wants to make the εἴδος of that something, which is always the same, not an already made copy of it; a good carpenter, for instance, Plato claims there, is that which, when making a couch, has as model the very εἴδος of couch, not a couch made by other carpenter. This reading, however, would imply that Plato claims here, at Tī. 28 a ff., a rather strange thing, namely that the Demiurge could have taken as a model for the universe he is about to frame either a model that is always the same or an already existing copy of it; I do not know how to cope with this implication; but, having no alternative, I am inclined to adopt Cornford's reading.)

To sum up so far: for Plato 'being' has two main levels, and one of them has two grades.

(a) The criterion which separates the two levels is whatness.

(i) 'That which is as a determined thing' (that which has a what') belongs to the realm of actual being (ὅστως ὡν); whereas
(ii) 'that which does not have a what' cannot in any way be known by man, and so, although it exists, it is as though it belongs to the realm of non-being. Such a thing seems to be the primordial matter, from which the Demiurge framed the universe; for it was a matter in which predominated ἀτάξία (30 a 5), since it was 'shaken' by chaotic दग्धम (52 d-e, 53 a), not at rest (οὐχ ἀτάξιαν) and moved in an irregular and disorderly way (ἄλλα κυνῳδοῦν ταμήλας καὶ ἀτάξιας) (30 a). Being so, in a ceaseless ἀτάξία, the primordial matter exists, but not as something, as a determined τι, as a what; it exists, but, being not something, it exists as no-thing, as an οὐδέποτε ὑπ' οὐδέποτε ὑπ' (11).

(b) The criteria which introduce grades within the realm of whatness are two: causality and time.

(i) That which, in the realm of whatness, causes the what of something is more than that whose what is caused. That which causes the what of something is what stands as its model (e.g. the νοητὸν ζῷον, or the ἐθική in general), and that whose what is caused is but a copy of a model (e.g. the universe qua copy or the sensible things qua model in general).

(ii) That whose what does always remains the same (e.g. the νοητὸν ζῷον, or the ἐθική in general) is more than that whose what remains the same only a limited period of time (e.g. the sensible things qua model in general, and the universe qua copy). (The universe is said to have an endless duration, 41 a-b; but, we may claim on Plato's behalf, since it is only a copy of a model, 92 c, some parts of its what are not always the same.)

(Plato does not say anything about what the grounds of his belief in these ontological views and distinctions may be. If one asked him about such grounds, I imagine him replying with a line from Wittgenstein's On Certainty: "I can't give you any grounds, but if you learn more you too will think the same").

Let us now go back, however, to the Republic and the passage of the Line.

τὸ ἀγαθὸν, as I said, is determined at 509 b as being beyond (ἐπέκεινα) οὐσία in 'dignity' (πρέσβεια) and 'power' (δύναμις). Now, if οὐσία is understood by Plato as whatness, then what does he mean by the phrase: τὸ ἀγαθὸν is beyond (ἐπέκεινα) οὐσία in 'dignity' (πρέσβεια) and 'power' (δύναμις)?

This could only mean that Plato believed that whatness is not the ultimate determination of being; there is something else, which has more πρέσβεια and δύναμις. To say that 'x is beyond y in πρέσβεια' implies that x has a 'superior rank' than y due to x's being older than y, i.e. that x has a 'seniority of birth', προσρηγένεια, over y. If so, then to say that there is something which has a seniority of birth over whatness, and more power than it, suggests that whatness has an origin, an ἀρχή (cf. 511 b 7 and 517 c 2 where τὸ ἀγαθὸν is called ἢ
and respectively; cf. also 509 b 8, where it is said that to ἀγαθόν provides, προσεῖναι, οὐσία of all ἔδη).

Now, this metaphysical view according to which being in general has an 'origin' which is 'beyond' being itself is to be found in the doctrines of some other philosophers (such as Heidegger, for instance, who, to put it very roughly, claims that being is grounded on time). What is then, for Plato, this origin of being qua whatness, which is the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of ἔδη — namely to ἀγαθόν? In my view there is no clear answer to this question in Plato's Republic. Plato, it seems, was certain that being qua whatness has an ἀρχή; but what exactly this ἀρχή is — he was not (at the time he wrote the Republic) very sure (and he explicitly admits that to ἀγαθόν is something μοίμως ἀράσθαι) (12). So, all that we can say about it is this.

(i) For Plato the ἔδη form a κόσμος κατὰ λόγον, i.e. a structured totality (cf. 500 c: "the things of the eternal and unchanging order neither wrong nor are wronged by one another, for they all abide in κόσμος κατὰ λόγον"). (In the Sophist, as I shall argue in Chapter Five, being qua whatness is determined by the κοινωνία of ἔδη, so, we may say, the Republic contains in nuce a view that will be thoroughly unfolded only later, in the Sophist.)
(ii) to ἀγαθόν (as 509 b implies) is that which determines all the ἔδη, i.e. the totality of ἔδη;
(iii) to ἀγαθόν (as 509 b states explicitly) is that which determines the community of ἔδη.

4.2.2. The two μέθοδοι and their aims: 'determining the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of ἔδη' and 'determining τί ποτ' ἐστιν ἕκαστον ἔδος'

In the Republic Plato claims that dialectic has two aims: one is to apprehend to ἀγαθόν, which is 'the limit of the intelligible' (532 a 7- b 1); and the other is to find out 'what each thing is', τί ποτ' ἐστιν ἐκαστον ἔδος (532 a 7, 533 b 1).

The meaning of all this can be properly understood only if we place it in the context of what had been achieved before the Republic. The best account of what had been achieved before the Republic is to be found in the Phaedo. What Plato claimed in the Phaedo is, as I argued, this: in order to solve the πάν ἑκακατόν puzzle brought forward by the given way in which to λογιστικών μορίων, we have to follow a certain μέθοδος; and, following this μέθοδος, Plato hypothesized the theory of forms.

Now, after this, in the Republic, Plato claims that, if we accept the theory of ἔδη, then we have to do two things: one is to attempt
to determine what each elSoC is; and the other is to attempt to
determine τὸ ἀγαθόν, which is 'the limit of the intelligible'. In order to
reach these two aims, we have to follow particular μέθοδος (cf. 532 c
1: τίνες ὁδοί; cf. also 531 d 1 and 533 b 3, respectively). So:

(i) if τὸ ἀγαθόν is the ἄρχη of whatness;
(ii) then, the μέθοδος that aims at apprehending τὸ ἀγαθόν aims
actually at apprehending the ἄρχη of whatness. But:
(iii) the μέθοδος that aims at apprehending τὸ ἀγαθόν is said in
the Line to be 'one that 'advances upward from a hypothesis (ἐξ
ὑποθέσεως) to the ἄνυπόθετος ἄρχη' (cf. 510 b 7, 511 b 3-c 2, 533 c
8) (because, as I claimed, the ἄνυπόθετος ἄρχη is τὸ ἀγαθόν)
(13);
(iv) the theory of εἶθη, however, is a ὑπόθεσις (cf. Phd. 100 a) in
which being is understood as whatness; so, I construe
(v) the μέθοδος that aims at apprehending τὸ ἀγαθόν as a
μέθοδος aimed at reaching the ἄνυπόθετος ἄρχη of the
hypothetical theory of εἶθη, i.e. the ἄρχη of what lies at the
bottom of this theory, namely at the bottom of understanding
being as whatness (cf. 533 b-c: those who do not follow this
upward path do not have a clear vision about τὸ ὅν, which may be
taken, I think, as about what is the ἄρχη of being).

Plato does not say too much about this μέθοδος; he only says
that it is a διαλεκτικὴ μέθοδος (533 c 7), and that it must do two
things: it must rely only on εἶθη, making no use of any of their
images, εἰκόνες (510 b 8), as the geometers do (510 b 4, d 6-7, e 3 f.,
511 a 6); and that it must 'destroy [ἀναίρουσα] the hypotheses, up to
the ἄρχη, in order to become firm [ἵνα ἐμπιστεύσηται]' (533 c 7-d 1).
(And then, after reaching the ἄνυπόθετος ἄρχη, he says, we have to
proceed from it toward our initial hypothesis — 511 b).

There have been suggested several interpretations of this
μέθοδος (see Robinson's account on this matter, p. 162 ff.); but, since
Plato tells us so little about it, "all interpretations of this path are
doubtful", as Robinson 1953, 162 put it. As far as I am concerned, I
am reluctant to support any of these interpretations, and I think that
we simply have to admit that there are no reliable hints about 'how
the trick is done' (to use an expression from Robinson, p. 160)
according to this μέθοδος. (In the Republic Plato does say too much
about the other μέθοδος either, i.e. the one that aims at finding 'what
each thing is'; he claims, however, that the "dialectic is he who can
view things together [ὁμοστόλοκος — viz. in their connection]" —537 c,
which seems to imply that knowing what each thing is has to do with
knowing the κοινωνία of things (14.).)
"For certainly, my friend," says the Stranger in the *Sophist*, "the attempt to separate everything from everything else is not only not in good taste but also shows that a man is utterly uncultivated and unphilosophical" (259 e, translation from Fowler 1928). This statement, together with many others, suggests that that which is actually at stake in Plato's metaphysics is not the question of *separation* (as it has sometimes been argued), but that of *communion*, *koinwnia* (15). This is what I shall attempt to prove in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

The theory of $\epsilon\delta\eta$ (III): $\omega\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota\alpha$ as $\delta\um\alpha\omicron\mu\upsilon\varsigma$ $\kappa\omicron\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\alpha\varsigma$

In the *Phaedo* Plato claims that the $\epsilon\delta\eta$ must be $\delta\sigma\upsilon\nu\theta\epsilon\tau\alpha$, for, he argues, 'it is very likely [$\mu\alpha\lambda\iota\sigma\sigma\tau\alpha\epsilon\iota\kappa\omicron\varsigma$] that what is $\delta\epsilon\iota\omega\varsigma$ $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\tau\delta$ $\omega\sigma\omega\alpha\tau\omega\varsigma$ [i.e. the $\epsilon\delta\eta$] is $\delta\sigma\upsilon\nu\theta\epsilon\tau\alpha$' (78 c 6-8). Plato, it seems, found this argument very likely; and, we may assume, he would have liked it to be true. But, he became more and more aware of the enormous difficulties raised by the idea of $\delta\sigma\upsilon\nu\theta\epsilon\tau\alpha$ $\epsilon\delta\eta$. So, *malgrè lui* (in a way), he had to accept that the $\epsilon\delta\eta$ are, on the contrary, $\sigma\upsilon\theta\epsilon\tau\alpha$, i.e. in a $\kappa\omicron\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\alpha$. (To cover my back against a possible objection, I mention that this is just a way of speaking; that is: I do not claim that the $\kappa\omicron\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\alpha$ $\tau\omega\nu$ $\epsilon\delta\omega\nu$ implies that the $\epsilon\delta\eta$ are 's$\sigma\upsilon\theta\epsilon\tau\alpha$', *in the Phaedo's sense*.)

This idea, however, occurs in many dialogues. In the *Republic*, for instance, Plato speaks about the $\kappa\omega\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma$ $\tau\omega\nu$ $\epsilon\delta\omega\nu$ (500 c; cf. also 476 a). In the *Timaeus* he goes further and attempts to determine more precisely this idea; here, he claims that the Demiurge framed the universe after a model ($\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\epsilon\iota\gamma\mu\alpha$ — 28 a 7, 37 c 8, 39 c 7, etc.) that contains in itself *all* 'intelligible creatures' (τὰ γὰρ τὰ νοητὰ ζῷα πάντα ἐκεῖνο ἐν ἐναπλασθέν ἔχει — 30 c 7-8); in other words, all these intelligible creatures are — both individually and in their tribes (καθ' ἐν καὶ κατὰ γένει — the parts (μόρια — c 6) of the model. But this means that 'the world of intelligible and living beings' (the so-called 'world of forms') exists only as a *totality* (i.e. as a $\pi\alpha\tau\nu\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\varsigma\zeta\omicron\nu$, an all-complete creature, as Plato says at 31 b 1); or, to put it in a different way, this means that each 'intelligible creature' (or $\epsilon\delta\omega\varsigma$) does not exist separated from the other 'intelligible creatures' (or $\epsilon\delta\eta$), but with them (cf. also Vollrath 1969, 260). In short: the 'forms', it is suggested in the *Timaeus*, exist only in their totality. Yet this *with* does not mean that each $\epsilon\delta\omega\varsigma$ is connected with all the others. Each $\epsilon\delta\omega\varsigma$ is connected only with some of the other $\epsilon\delta\eta$, with which it forms a $\gamma\epsilon\nu\omega\varsigma$, a 'tribe' (cf. κατὰ γένει — 30 c 6). So, if we may use this modern expression, the totality of 'intelligible creatures' is a *structured totality* (and so it is, as far as possible, its copy, the sensible universe — cf. 31 a-b) (1).

This idea, however, that the $\epsilon\delta\eta$ are in a $\kappa\omicron\iota\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\alpha$ was fully developed in the *Sophist*. 
5.1. The κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων

At the very core of the *Sophist* lies the issue of how the ontical 'realm of εἴδη' is reflected by language (2). And here in the *Sophist* Plato claims explicitly: if we put things in these terms — i.e. if *speaking* is about εἴδη and if some words unite with one another, and some not, cf. 261 d 5-7 (as we can see in any thesaurus of English language) — then we have no choice: we have to admit that the εἴδη are σύνθετα; and, if we accept that there is only one 'combination' of words that 'depicts reality' (which is what the philosopher is after, not the sophist — a point that is strongly assumed by the *Sophist*, cf. for instance 253 d; see also 6.2.2.), then we have to admit that the εἴδη form a particular κοινωνία. That is:

(i) if there were no κοινωνία of εἴδη (or at least a partial one), then no kind of discourse would exist (259 e-260 a; cf. also 252 a ff.) (that is: 'the complete separation of each thing from all is the utterly final obliteration of all discourse [πάντες λόγοι], for our speaking [λόγος] is possible because of the communion [συμπλοκή] between the εἴδη' — 259 e);
(ii) on the other hand, if all the εἴδη would be in κοινωνία with all εἴδη, then many absurd situations would follow (e.g. 'the rest would be in movement') (252 d-e).

This way of putting things *echoes* the first step of the μέθοδος described in the *Phaedo*: if 'we cannot make our journey with greater confidence and security by the surer means of a divine λόγος' and we cannot 'ascertain the facts, whether by ματαιών or by εὑρεῖν'; and if we decide not to 'leave off before we have come to the end of our resources' (cf. 85 c), then we do not have any other choice apart from finding the most plausible theory, i.e. the theory that fits better than any other theory into our puzzle, and *hypothesizing* it. That is: the theory that fits best into the puzzle raised by the link between speaking and εἴδη is that the εἴδη are in a particular κοινωνία. Plato does not, however, apply here in the *Sophist* the μέθοδος described in the *Phaedo*, nor does he mention anything about what μέθοδος should we follow for reaching an answer to the question about the 'way the εἴδη are'.

Now, if the sensible things are copies of εἴδη, and if the εἴδη are *structured* in a particular κοινωνία, then the sensible realm is, as a whole, a copy of the κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων. So, Plato says actually two things in the *Sophist*: that our world is not chaos, but τάξις; and that this mundane τάξις is an approximate copy of a perfect τάξις — the κοινωνία, or the κόσμος τῶν εἴδων (and in *Ti* 30 a 4-5 he does put
things in these terms: the universe is brought by the Demiurge εἰς
tάξιν τῆς ἀτάξειας; cf. also R. 500 c, where he says that the εἰδη form a
κόσμος κατὰ λόγον). But, one may claim, this idea of an ontological
harmony is not actually Platonic, it is an idea that occurred in all
major Greek thinkers that lived before Plato.

The idea of an ontological harmony is, I agree, to be found (in
one form or another) in many (if not all) Preplatonic thinkers. But
what occurs for the first time with Plato is an extraordinary effort to
determine this idea; that is, an extraordinary effort aimed at going
beyond the ambiguous notions of ἀρμονία, κοινωνία, κόσμος κτλ. (used
so much by his predecessors) and finding out what this ontological
harmony consists of (3).

The results of this effort are, in my view, to be handled with
great care; for, I believe, they are only the approximation of an
aspect of reality that is extremely difficult to grasp. These results,
however, come in two parts: a part centred upon the five μέγιστα
γένη, and a part centred upon the notion of δύναμες κοινωνίας.

5.2. The μέγιστα γένη

"Since some εἰδη blend with one another, and some not", Plato
claims, "they might be said to be like [σχεδον σίδον] the letters of the
alphabet [τὰ γράμματα], for some of these ἀναμοστεῖ ποι πρὸς ἀλληλα, τὰ δὲ συναρμόττει" (252 c 9-253 a 2).

The παράδειγμα of letters occurs several times in Plato (cf. Tht.
201 ff., Plt. 277 a-278 e, Phlb. 18 a ff., Ti. 48 c 1), and it brings
forward several problems. Here, in this passage from the Sophist, it is
aimed, I hold, at pointing out a single thing: that some εἰδη are like
the vowels, without which the other, like the consonants, 'cannot be
fitted together' (253 a).

Plato claims that some γένη (a word which here, I think, is used
as a synonym for εἰδη) combine with one another (τὰ μὲν τῶν γενῶν
κοινωνεῖν ἐθέλειν ἀλλήλας — 254 b 7) and some will not (τὰ δὲ μὴ —
254 b 8; cf. also 253 b: "some γένη συμφωνοῦσιν, some do not"); and
from those that combine, some combine to a small extent (τὰ μὲν ἐπ'
ὅλγον — b 8) and some to a great extent (τὰ δὲ ἐπὶ πολλὰ — b 9),
whereas some combine with all (since there is nothing against their
being combined with everything — τὰ δὲ διὰ πάντων οὐδὲν κατόλοιπα τῶν
τῶν πάντων κεκοινωνηκέναι , b 9-10). Now, which are those γένη that are like
the vowels and that κοινωνοῦσιν διὰ πάντων?

The answer to this question, one may say, is very clear: those
γένη are called by Plato τὰ μέγιστα γένη, and they are five: δυν., ταύτων,
θάτερον, κίνησις and στάσις (254 d-255 d). But in my view things are more complicated.

There are three arguments about the εἴδη of τὸ ὅν, ταῦτάν, θάτερον, κίνησις and στάσις, and their conclusions are:

(a) τὸ ὅν, ταῦτάν and θάτερον are the εἴδη that are in κοινωνία with all εἴδη;
(b) κίνησις and στάσις — although they are in communion with both τὸ ὅν, ταῦτάν and θάτερον — cannot be 'combined' with each other;
(c) κίνησις is somehow in communion with both ὅν, ταῦτάν, θάτερον and στάσις.

I cannot enter here all the details of these three arguments. I shall say, however, a few things about what I believe is at the core of each of them.

5.2.7. τὸ ὅν, ταῦτάν and θάτερον as the εἴδη that are in κοινωνία with all εἴδη

Plato claims that τὸ ὅν, ταῦτάν and θάτερον διὰ πάντων κεκοιμωνηκέναι (cf., inter alia, 255 c, 256 a and 259 a), for

(i) τὸ ὅν is not the same thing as ταῦτάν (255 c 3: ἀδύνατον ἀπα ταῦτάν καὶ τὸ ὅν ἐν εἴναι), although τὸ ὅν is always in κοινωνία with ταῦτάν (cf. 256 a 7-8: πάντα ὅντα] partake, μετέχειν, of ταῦτα); and
(ii) τὸ ὅν is not the same thing as θάτερον (255 d 3-4: τὸ ὅν καὶ τὸ θάτερον [...] πάλησαν διεφερέτεσιν), although τὸ ὅν is always in κοινωνία with θάτερον (cf. 259 a 5-6: τὸ τε ὅν καὶ θάτερον διὰ πάντων καὶ διὰ ἄλλων διεληλυθόταν...; he, however, puts this claim also in terms of 'partaking of the ὁδεῖα τῆς θάτερου' — 255 c; cf. also 254 b-257 a);

Now, what does this mean? The problem of 'identity' (or of the principle of identity, principium identitas) has been discussed throughout the history of philosophy, but every philosopher who has approached it (e.g. Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Locke, Hume, Frege, Wittgenstein (4)), has tended to discuss it in his own terms; yet the idea is, roughly speaking, the same: everything that exists, every being, insofar as it is, it is 'identical with itself' (that is: nothing could actually be without its 'being identical with itself'). But the notion of identity is linked with that of difference: a thing can be identical with itself only because it is different from all the other things.

In his terms, Plato claims the same thing: that everything which exists, as a τι which is a ὅν (cf. Sph. 237 d), is something that is
ταυτὸν, 'the same as itself' (cf. 254 d 15: αὐτὸ δ' ἑαυτῷ ταυτὸν; cf. also 256 b 1: ταυτὸν πρὸς ἑαυτὴν), i.e. something that is 'identical with itself'; and that something can be 'identical with itself' only because it is different from all the other things (cf. Th. 185 a 11-2: “each [thing, e.g. sound or colour] is different [ἐστερον] from the other and the same [ταυτὸν] as itself ")

But here in the Sophist Plato expresses this idea at three different levels.

(a) The level of the εἴδη of τὸ ὑπαρχόν, ταυτὸν and θάτερον.

First, Plato says that the very εἴδη of τὸ ὑπαρχόν, ταυτὸν and θάτερον cannot be separated; that is: each one of these εἴδη is only insofar it is in κοινωνία with the other two; in other words: each one of these three ultimate εἴδη, like the most humble sensible thing, is only because it has an identity, which, in its turn, is possible only because it involves a difference.

(b) The level of εἴδη in general.

Every εἴδος that is, Plato seems to imply, is only because it is in κοινωνία with the εἴδος of τὸ ὑπαρχόν, ταυτὸν and θάτερον. That is: the εἴδη of τὸ ὑπαρχόν, ταυτὸν and θάτερον are 'universal', i.e. they are in κοινωνία with all εἴδη. They are then, as Plato said, like the vowels, without which the other εἴδη, like the consonants, cannot be fitted together (cf. 253 a) (5).

(c) The level of all the ὑπάρχον in general.

For Plato the realm of existence is divided into two 'subrealms': that of εἴδη qua παραδείγματα (the one that is an ὑπάρχον ὑπάρχον) and the realm of sensible things qua εἴδη (the one that is only an ὑπάρχον παράδειγμα). That is: the sensible things are copies of εἴδη, and if all the εἴδη are in κοινωνία with the εἴδη of τὸ ὑπαρχόν, ταυτὸν and θάτερον, then all sensible things participate in these three εἴδη.

5.2.2. οὐσία as δύναμες κοινωνίας. Whatness as caused by θάτερον

Now, this way of putting things (i.e. 'to say that the very εἴδη of τὸ ὑπαρχόν, ταυτὸν and θάτερον cannot be separated') implies two things.

(i) One is that being in general means whatness; for that which the κοινωνία with ταυτὸν and θάτερον brings forth is precisely an identity, a what; so, to say that the very εἴδος of τὸ ὑπαρχόν cannot be separated from these two εἴδη is to say that being in general is always whatness.

(ii) And the other is that whatness in general is determined as being due to κοινωνία; for whatness 'results' from the κοινωνία of τὸ ὑπαρχόν with ταυτὸν and θάτερον.
In less abstract words: the *what* of every *εἶδος* (and so of every sensible thing) is due to the 'net of *κοινωνία* in which it is 'caught'.

This claim is explicitly formulated by Plato in the *Parmenides* 134 a: "[the *εἶδη*] are what they are with reference to one another and toward one another [ἁπτὰ εὐτὶ καὶ πρὸς εὐτὶ ἐκεῖθε τῇ ἐστὶ], and so likewise are the things in our world [καὶ τὸ παρὰ ἡμῖν ἁπατῶς πρὸς εὔτα]" (translation from Cornford). I hold (as Fine 1990, 98) that this view was contained in the *Republic*, and (as Heidegger 1992 b) that Plato attempted to develop it in the *Sophist*.

In his lecture on Plato's *Sophist* (1992 b, 474-80) Heidegger claims that in the *Sophist* *οὐσία* is determined as δύναμις κοινωνίας, and he produces the following argument:

(i) τὸ ὑπὸ is first determined as τὸ κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἶτ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν εἶτ' εἰς τὸ παθεῖν (247 d 8-e 1; cf. also 248 c 4-5: ἡ τοῦ πασχεῖν ἠ δραίον δύναμις).

(ii) κοινωνία, however, is determined in the same way as τὸ ὑπὸ, namely as a δύναμις of either πάθημα or ποίημα (248 b); which is to say that 'each thing, in so far as it is, it is itself and something else' (1992 b, 475-6, Heidegger's italics).

(iii) τὸ ὑπὸ is therefore actually determined as a δύναμις κοινωνίας, that is, as the 'capacity of communion' (Miteinandersein-Können, or Möglichkeit des Miteinanderseins ---1992 b, 485 f.; cf. also 1969, 9).

δύναμις, in these passages, was mostly translated by 'power' (e.g. Cornford 1951, ad locum). According to Souihle 1919, 149 the Platonic δύναμις is a property of a thing, and this property manifests itself in an active and/or passive relationship with something else (this view of a 'passive power' of things has been claimed by some other philosophers, e.g. Locke, who was, however, severely criticized for it by many XVIIIth century thinkers). On the other hand, one may claim that the expression τὸ κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἶτ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν εἶτ' εἰς τὸ παθεῖν (247 d 8-e 1) seems —since the concept of δύναμις implies the idea of 'acting and being acted upon'—a bit of a pleonasm, and so one could be tempted to take δύναμις, in this context, as 'possibility'; yet such a reading raises several complications.

As far as I am concerned, I am inclined to avoid both 'power' and 'possibility' in favour of 'capacity', which in my view fits better in the above context. And so, I read Plato's determination of τὸ ὑπὸ as τὸ κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἶτ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν εἶτ' εἰς τὸ παθεῖν (247 d 8-e 1) as implying that 'to be' (τὸ ὑπὸ) means to have the *capacity* of 'acting or being acted upon'; and I endorse Heidegger's way of construing this argument and conclusion (namely that here in the *Sophist* Plato determines τὸ ὑπὸ as δύναμις κοινωνίας).
If so, however, what does this mean — that τὸ ὄν is determined as ὀμοιώσις κοινωνίας? It means, in my view, that, in order for something to be, it has to be capable of communion, of interaction with something else. But because 'to be' is always 'to be a such-and-such thing', it means that the such-and-suchness, or whatness, is actually determined as being due to a 'capacity of communion'.

In other words: each ἐτέρως (and so each sensible thing) is 'caught' in a particular net of κοινωνίας; and this net of κοινωνίας is what determines its what (6). Now, every κοινωνία in which an ἐτέρως is 'caught; has a 'direction', a πρὸς τι; and this πρὸς can be either πρὸς ἔστωτόν (cf. 256 b 1 —in which case we say that that ἐτέρως is in κοινωνία with ταύτων), or πρὸς ἔτερων (cf. 255 d 1—in which case we say that that ἐτέρως is in κοινωνία with θατέρων). (At 255 d 1 Plato clearly determines the notion of θάτερων as 'that which is always relative to other', τὸ ἔτερων ἄλλο πρὸς ἔτερων; cf. also d 5-6; that is: the 'state of being ἔτερων', i.e. 'other than' or 'different from', is the 'state of being in a relation to other', πρὸς ἔτερων.) The identity of an ἐτέρως, however, is due to the κοινωνία with other ἔτη; in other words: whatness is due to otherness. How then does Plato determine this notion of otherness?

5.2.3. ἔτερων as μὴ ὄν

In the Sophist the notion of otherness is first determined as μὴ ὄν; this comes in two parts.

In the first one (which begins at 231 and ends at 238), Plato starts from the ψευδὴς ὁμοίωσις between two ὄντα (e.g. that between a philosopher, a statesman and a sophist, cf. 216 c-217 a, or that between a wolf and a dog —cf. 231 a). This ψευδὴς ὁμοίωσις between two ὄντα is then determined as a κοινωνία between an ὄν and a μὴ ὄν; and then the μὴ ὄν is determined as another ὄν, i.e. as a θάτερων ὄν (238 a 5), which in its turn is determined as εἴκών (236 a 8-9) (Thus, Plato starts from the question of the 'false' copy, e.g. a dog as a false copy of an wolf, and ends up with that of the 'true' copy, i.e. with the question of ἔτη qua παραδείγματα and their sensible copies). The second part (which begins at 256) starts from the question of how an ἐτέρως is related to the other ἔτη. I cannot enter here into the details of the first part; I shall say, however, a few things about the second one.

Each ἐτέρως has its own 'identity', and so it is different from all the other ἔτη. All these other ἔτη appear first as what that ἐτέρως is not, i.e. as as a μὴ ὄν which is indefinite; this is what Plato says at
5.2.4. The two kinds of ἔτερον: the ἄλλο τί and the ἀντιτιθέμενον

As I said, for Plato each ἔιδος is in κοινωνία with only a part of what it is not, i.e. with only some other ἔιδη.

Now, at 257 c 7-8 Plato says that ἢ θατέρου φύσις is cut up (κατακεκεραμισέμενα) into little bits, like ἔπιστήμη. That is: exactly as the πολλαὶ τέχναι and ἐπιστήμαι are the parts (μόρια) of the μία ἐπιστήμη (257 c 10-d 2), so, he claims, there are parts (μόρια) of the μία φύσις τοῦ θατέρου (257 d 4-5). So, how should we take this statement about the 'parts of the nature of otherness'? (11)

The way Plato puts things here is, I think, fairly confusing. But the idea itself is not. What he is actually saying, in my view, is this: each ἔιδος is in κοινωνία only with some other ἔιδη, and these other ἔιδη are of different kinds (i.e. the μία φύσις τοῦ θατέρου has μόρια). Which are then these kinds, or, to put it like Plato, which are the parts of the nature of otherness? Obviously, one may introduce here many distinctions. Plato, however, at least in the Sophist, seems to be interested only in one, that between (a) the ἔτερον as a mere ἄλλο τί and (b) the ἔτερον as an ἀντιτιθέμενον.

(a) An ἔιδος, say x, is 'caught' in a κοινωνία with some ἔιδη that are just other than itself (and each one of these ἔιδη is a mere 'other' than x; for instance: τὸ καλὸν is in a κοινωνία with τὸ σκάλαν —cf. inter alia Alc. 1, 115 a ff —and in this case the latter is, for the former, a mere ἄλλο τί).
(b) But, claims Plato, an έλεος may be in a κοινωνία with an έλεος that is its own other. To support this claim Plato chooses the example of 'the beautiful' (τὸ καλὸν) And he claims that [τὸ] μὴ καλὸν [...] οὐκ ἄλλου τινὰς έτερον ἑστιν ἢ τῆς τοῦ καλοῦ φύσεως (257 d 11). That is: some έλεος have an ἀντιτιθέμενον, 'something which is put opposite', and this kind of έτερον, namely the ἀντιτιθέμενον, is, says Plato, a part (μέρος) of έτερον (257 d 7) (12).

So, if each particular έλεος is 'caught' in a particular 'net' of κοινωνία, then the totality of έλεος is, so to speak, a structured totality. That is: the έλεος, in their totality, form a particular network of κοινωνία (13).

If so, however, what is an έλεος? If its what is determined by the particular 'net' of κοινωνία in which it is 'caught' with other έλεος, it is a συναμφότερον, a 'compound'. But, if it is a συναμφότερον, does it have parts? Or is it like a knot? And what does the κοινωνία between two έλεος actually mean? A co-presence? An adjoining, as the analogy with letters suggests? But if an έλεος is a συναμφότερον, it cannot be like a letter, it can only be like a syllable.

These two questions — 'What is the κοινωνία between two έλεος?' and 'What is an έλεος if its what is determined by the κοινωνία with other έλεος?' — remain, in my view, unanswered. Plato's discussions of the notions of διον, ἐν and μέρος (cf. for instance Prm. 158 c, or Sph. 245 b), of letters and syllables (cf. Tht. 201 ff., Pht. 277 a-278 e, Phlb. 18 a ff., etc.), and of the κοινωνία τῶν έλεον itself do not, I believe, offer any firm answer to the above mentioned questions.

5.2.5. The έλεος of κίνησις and στάσις

Now, what is the role of the other two μέγιστα γένη — κίνησις and στάσις? Plato's arguments about them have, as I said, two main conclusions.

(a) κίνησις and στάσις — although they are in communion with both τὸ δὲ (254 d 11), ταύτων and έτερον (255 b) — cannot be 'combined' with each other (they are, says Plato, άμεικτῶ πρὸς ἀλλήλων — 254 d 7-8; cf. also 250 a); and

(b) κίνησις is somehow in communion with both δὲ, ταύτων, έτερον and στάσις; that is:
   (i) κίνησις is not ταύτων and also ταύτων (256 a 10-11);
   (ii) κίνησις is not στάσις and also στάσις (256 b 6-c 4);
   (iii) κίνησις is not έτερον and also έτερον (256 c 8-9); and
(iv) κίνησις is not ὄν and also ὄν (256 d 8-9).

(But, how can κίνησις be θάτερον without becoming its opposite, i.e. without changing its φύσις into its opposite, viz. στάσις —cf. 255 a-b? And how can κίνησις and στάσις be both ταῦτα without being actually the same? Plato took a great effort to answer these questions, and his tiresome argumentation does not always seem flawless. It is, however, not my purpose here to discuss in details these arguments.)

So, how should we take these claims about κίνησις and στάσις? As in the case of the other three μεγίστα γένη (τὸ ὄν, ταῦτα and θάτερον), the discussion of κίνησις and στάσις covers more than one level; here —(a) the level of the εἰδη of κίνησις and στάσις; and (b) that of εἰδη and their sensible copies in general.

(a) The εἰδη of κίνησις and στάσις are in κοινωνία with both τὸ ὄν (254 d 10), ταῦτα and θάτερον (255 b), i.e. they exist as something determinate. But they cannot be 'combined' with each other: κίνησις is other than στάσις (255 c 11; 256 c 6), and they are ἀμείκται πρὸς ἀλήθος (254 d 7), and ἑναντία (250 a 8).

(b) Yet κίνησις, says Plato, is somehow (τῷ), in κοινωνία with στάσις (256 b 7). This claim, however, does not cover the level of the εἰδη of κίνησις and στάσις.

(i) On the one hand, this claim refers to 'what has been argued earlier' (πρότερον ἀπόδειξις —256 c 1), i.e. to the fact that within the phenomenon of knowledge (γιγνώσκειν), something which is κίνητον (i.e. ψιχή, ζωή, νοῦς — 249 a 9; or, in short: ψιχή γιγνώσκειν — 248 a and d) is in a sui generis κοινωνία with something which is ἀκέντον (i.e. the εἰδη — 249 c 1; or, in short: οὐσία γιγνώσκοντα — 248 a and d).

(ii) On the other hand, the phenomenon of knowledge is not the only instance in which κίνησις may be said to be somehow (τῷ), in κοινωνία with στάσις.

(a) As I argued, for Plato the realm of existence in general is divided into two 'subrealms': that of εἰδη qua παραδείγματα (the one that is an ὄντως ὄν) and the realm of sensible things qua εἴδωλα (the one that is only an ὄν πως). Now, every εἴδος that is, is only because it is in κοινωνία with the εἴδος of τὸ ὄν; and so, it must be also in κοινωνία with the εἴδη of ταῦτα and θάτερον. But, every εἴδος is ἄδικα κατὰ ταῦτα ὄν (cf., inter alia, Ti. 48 e 6), i.e. its what does always remain the same; and it does always remain the same, we may claim, because it is in κοινωνία with the εἴδος of στάσις. (And, if for the what of an εἴδος is responsible precisely the 'net' of κοινωνία in which that εἴδος is 'caught', we may say that that which remains the same is actually this 'net' of κοινωνία.) The sensible things, however, are copies of εἴδη; so, if all the εἴδη are in κοινωνία with the εἴδη of τὸ ὄν,
taumón and tháteron, then all sensible things participate to these three eiðeta. But, if all eiðeta are in koivwíia with the eiðos of stásis, do sensible things also participate to this eiðos?

(b) We know that for Plato a sensible thing, a γιγνόμενον ὄν, is something κίνητον; but this γιγνόμενον ὄν is, only because it 'embodies' an eiðos, i.e. something ἀκίνητον. And so, although Plato does not explicitly say this in the Sophist, one may argue that the κίνητον realm of the eiðeia is, somehow (ὥσπερ), in koivwíia with the ἀκίνητον realm of the eiðeta. (Which does not imply that the eiðeta become 'touched' by κίνησις; as Plato says in Cra. 439 e 3-5: "what is always the same [τὸ αὐτό] and in the same state [(ibid.)] can never change [μεταβάλλεται] or be moved [κινηθῇ]. But, in a way, the realm of the copies, which is kinetic, is 'touched' by stásis, insofar the copies have a relative stability, i.e. a relative what, or identity due to the unchangeable models they embody.)

To sum up: for Plato 'to be' means 'to be caught in a particular net of koivwíia', and this 'net' of koivwíia determines the 'what' of each ὄν; and an ὄν is always in koivwíia with taumón (i.e. with itself), with tháteron (i.e. with other ὄντα), and with either stásis (in which case it is an eiðos) or with κίνησις (in which case it is a γιγνόμενον ὄν that is a 'copy' of an eiðos). Now, an ὄν that is in koivwíia with stásis (i.e. an eiðos) is (somehow) in 'communion' with (i) ὄντα that are in koivwíia with κίνησις (in the way in which a model is in 'communion' with its copies); and with (ii) other ὄντα that are in koivwíia with stásis (i.e. with other eiðeta). (But, if every ὄν is always 'caught' in a koivwíia with taumón and tháteron and with either κίνησις or stásis, then it seems that only the koivwíia, with ὄν, taumón and tháteron are, so to speak, 'universal', whereas the koivwíia with κίνησις and stásis are actually not. That is: only the eiðeta of ὄν, taumón and tháteron διὰ τῶν τῶν κοινωνοῦσιν, being thus like the vowels.)

γένος and eiðos/idea seem to be synonymous (tháteron, for instance, is called both γένος and idea — cf. 256 b 8 and 255 e, respectively). Yet γένος points out something that it is not present in eiðos/idea, viz. the idea of 'descent', or 'origin'. In my view, it is this idea of origin that Plato wants to stress out when he calls the five eiðeta of ὄν, taumón, tháteron, κίνησις and stásis μέγιστα γένη; and so, he suggests that every ὄν is in koivwíia with taumón, tháteron and κίνησις or stásis, which are therefore its ultimate origins, its μέγιστα γένη.

(The eiðeta, it seems, are atemporal and their copies — temporal, cf., inter alia, Sph. 248 a 12 ff., Plt. 269 d, Phlb. 15 a-b, Ti. 27 c, 48 e ff. So, what is then the relation between κίνησις, stásis and time? This, however, is a question I cannot tackle here.

95
To sum up so far:

(i) In order to solve the πᾶνν θαυμαστῶν puzzle brought forward by the given way in which τὸ λογιστικὸν μανθάνει, Plato introduced the theory of εἴδη, which states that the 'object of knowledge', the εἴδη, are like παραδείγματα, the sensible things being but their copies, εἴδωλα.

(ii) This theory, however, should be tested, and Plato speaks in the Phaedo about two tests: one by seeing whether its implications συμφωνεῖ ἄλληλοι, and the other by attempting to include it into a wider one. And he applied (to some extent) both these tests (e.g. in the final myth of the Phaedo 107 d-108 a; and in the Timaeus, respectively) (The theory of εἴδη qua παραδείγματα brings forward another puzzle — that of the two ontological realms. In the Timaeus, Plato attempted to solve the puzzle of these two realms by including it into another theory; but that theory too, in spite of being ἱκανόν, produces another puzzle — that of the creation itself.)

(iii) In the Republic Plato claims that if we accept the theory of εἴδη, then we have to do two things: one is to attempt to determine what each εἴδος is; and the other is to attempt to determine the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory itself.

(iv) In the theory of εἴδη being is understood as whatness; and, as I claimed, in the Republic it is suggested that whatness in general is determined by the κοινωνία of εἴδη. Now, the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory itself (called τὸ ἄγαθον) is that which determines the community of εἴδη. This ἀρχή, however, remains something μόνη ὀρθάθει (517 c 1). But, if we cannot determine the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of εἴδη, we can better determine the notion of being qua whatness. This is what Plato undertakes in the Sophist.

(v) In the Sophist Plato claims explicitly: if we put things in these terms — i.e. if speaking is about εἴδη and if some words unite with one another, and some not — then we have no choice: we have to admit that the εἴδη are σύνθετα and that they form a particular κοινωνία.

(vi) In the Sophist being is determined as whatness; and whatness in general is determined as being due to κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων (14). In other words: each εἴδος (and so each sensible thing) is 'caught' in a particular net of κοινωνία; and this net of κοινωνία is what determines its what (15). If this is so, however, i.e. if whatness is due to κοινωνία, that means that whatness in general is due to otherness, for κοινωνία is κοινωνία with others.

(vii) In the Sophist the notion of otherness is first determined as μὴ ὄν; and Plato distinguishes between two kinds of ἔτερον qua μὴ ὄν: the ἄλλα τὰ and the ἀντιτιθέμενον. But he did not go further than this. One may determine this particular κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων, in the sense that he may identify which εἴδη 'combine' with which. But 'What is the κοινωνία between two εἴδη?' and 'What is an εἴδος if its what is determined by the κοινωνία with other εἴδη?' are two questions that remain, in my
view, unanswered (and their 'object' remains something μήγις ὀρᾶσθαι) (16).

It is time now — after I have considered the theory of εἴδη (Chapters 1-3) and its ultimate grounds (Chapter 4-5) — to look at the task of 'finding out τί ποτ' ἔστιν ἐκαστὸν εἴδος' (Chapter 7). But first (Chapter 6), I would like to take into account the topic of ἄλληθεια — which is linked with both the theory of εἴδη and with 'τί ποτ' ἔστιν ἐκαστὸν εἴδος'.
CHAPTER SIX

The notion of ἀλήθεια

6.1. The two fields of knowledge: τὸ αἰσθητὸν and τὸ ἀναίσθητον

As I argued in 0.1.3., Socrates was faced with the fact that there are two fields of knowledge—one in which the 'experiment' is possible and where correspondence appears, accordingly, as the best criterion of truth; and another one in which the 'experiment' is not possible and where coherence appears as the only criterion of truth. The distinction between these two fields of knowledge, though in a more refined form, occurs also in Plato.

Plato claims that in knowing, the learning part of our soul deals either with embodied ἐίδη, through the bodily senses, or with the ἐίδη themselves, through speaking (cf. inter alia Phd. 99 d ff. and Tht. 185 b-186 a). But, not all the ἐίδη can be dealt with by both these ways, for some of them are embodied in sensuous copies, while some other are not. Speaking, then, can be about both the embodied and the non-embodied ἐίδη. (This idea also pointed out in the Timaeus 37 a-c, where the world-soul is said to speak about two 'fields'—that of τὸ αἰσθητὸν and that of τὸ λογιστικὸν (1); and in the Sophist 264 a 4-6, where Plato claims that 'διάνοια may occur either independently [καθ' αὐτὸ] or δι' αἰσθήσεως, in which case we can rightly call it φαντασία'.)

When speaking is about the embodied ἐίδη, it produces images on (as it were) the 'internal screen' of the soul (cf. Phlb. 39 b ff.: "when we speak, there occurs in our souls a ἡμιοιρυγὸς, a ζωγράφος, a painter, who start to paint [γράφει] in them images [ἐικόνες] of the λεγόμενα; and then one sees somehow [ὅτι πως] in himself [ἐν αὐτῷ] images [ἐικόνες] of what he previously opined or asserted [τὰς τῶν δοξασθέντων καὶ λεγόμενων ἐικόνας]", my paraphrase) (2). (In the Sophist, at 234 c ff., Plato says that one may 'deceive' other people not only with ὀρατὰ ἐίδωλα, but also with a corresponding art, which has to do with words, 234 c 2, and which can deceive by 'spoken images of all things', ἐίδωλα λεγόμενα περὶ πάντων, c 6; and at 235 a ff., the τέχνη σοφιστική is called a τέχνη εἰσωλοτοική, although the sophist, we are told, is concerned with φαντάσματα, 236 b 7, not with 'realistic' ἐικόνα, a 8, and so his τέχνη εἰσωλοτοική is actually a τέχνη
When speaking, however, is about the non-embodied εἴδη, we may infer, it does not produce images on (as it were) the 'internal screen' of the soul.

Knowledge then has, for Plato, two main fields: τὸ αἰσθητόν (or the non-abstract field), which is the field of knowing εἴδη by looking at their embodiments either 'in reality', through eyes, or on the internal screen of the soul, where they were projected by that type of speaking that produces images; and τὸ ἀναίσθητον (or the abstract field), which is the field of knowing through that type of speaking that does not produce images (3).

Now, ἀλήθεια, I shall argue, occurs in the fields of both τὸ αἰσθητόν and τὸ ἀναίσθητον (although Plato tends sometimes to reduce the question of ἀλήθεια to that of ὀψις, to the effect that, when he speaks about the ἀλήθεια that occurs within the field of τὸ αἰσθητόν, he takes into account only the ἀλήθεια that occurs in seeing — as he does for instance in some passages from the Philebus).

6.2. ἀλήθεια within τὸ αἰσθητόν

6.2.1. The ἀλήθεια that occurs in seeing

Let us now consider what Plato says in the Philebus about the ἀλήθεια that occurs in seeing. His argument comes in two parts.

(i) If a man sees an object that comes into his view from distance and indistinctly [μὴ πάνω σαφῶς], and wants to decide [κρίνειν] about what he sees, he will start [through διάνοια — cf. 38 e 6-7] to speak to himself or to his companion (asking 'What is that object which catches my eye there?' and then answering). The conjunction between [sight] [in text: αἰσθήσεις] and μνήμη [cf. Thc. 163 e: 'a man who sees something acquires from that moment knowledge of the thing he sees, and this knowledge is the μνήμη of that thing'], together with the παθήματα that accompany them, may be said to write [γράφειν] (as it were) λόγοι in our souls.

(ii) When sight [together with μνήμη and with the παθήματα that accompany them] writes what is true [ἐλένθη], the result is that true opinion [ἀλήθεις δόξαι] and ἀλήθεις λόγοι spring up in us, while when the internal scribe [γραμματέως] that I have suggested writes what is false [μὲνεῖν] we get the opposite sort of δόξα and λόγοι.

(Phlb. 38 b-d, my paraphrase)

In a few places, Plato says that knowing something through the learning part of the soul (i.e., in my terms, dealing with the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον) is an act performed by διανοιγόμενοι, which takes place
within the 'medium' of λέγειν (cf. Tht. 185 c, 189 e-190 a, Sph. 263 c, 264 a, Ti. 71 b, etc.). And this way of putting things may suggest that knowing something through the senses (i.e. dealing with the field of τὸ αἰσθήτων) is an act which is not performed by διανοεῖσθαι, and which has nothing to do with speaking. But this is not what Plato believed. He believed that knowing is an act performed by the learning part of our soul — either through senses, or through itself, by speaking (cf. Tht. 184 d ff.); yet the learning part of the soul is, as Plato says in Tht. 185 c, a διὰ τὴς γλώττης σύμμηκτος, a 'faculty that works through the tongue, i.e. through speaking'. So, we may infer, even when it knows through the senses, it must somehow know through speaking too. This idea is not explicitly expressed in the Theaetetus, but it is in the Timaeus and the Philebus.

In the Timaeus, the world-soul is said to speak about two 'fields' — that of τὸ αἰσθήτων and that of τὸ λογιστικόν; I paraphrase the passage from 37 a-c (using some segments from Cornford's translation, 1937):

[...] whenever the world-soul is in contact [ἐφαπτομεν] with anything that has dispersed existence [σκεδασμήν ὀυσίαν] or with anything whose existence is indivisible [ἀμέριστον], it is set in motion all through herself and tells in what respect precisely, and how, and in what sense, and when, it comes about that something is qualified as either being ταύτων or άτερων in respect to any given thing, whatever it may be, either in the world of τὰ γιγνόμενα, or in the world of τὰ κατὰ ταύτα ἔχοντα ἀεί. Now whenever the λόγος takes place concerning the ταύτων and άτερων of an ὅν which belongs to the sphere of τὸ αἰσθήτων, then arise δόξαι and πίστεις, which are βεβαιοι and ἀληθείαι. But whenever the λόγος takes place concerning the ταύτων and άτερων of an ὅν which belongs to the sphere of τὸ λογιστικόν, then νοῦς and ἐπιστήμη are necessarily achieved [which are, most obviously, also βεβαιοι and ἀληθείαι].

The learning part of the human soul, we are told in the Timaeus, is a copy of the world-soul, for it is made out of the same (though less pure) ingredients (i.e. σύμμηκται, ταύτων and άτερων — 41 d); and it copies, in its revolutions (περιφεραί), the revolutions of the world-soul (90 c-d; cf. also 47 b-c). So, we may infer that what Plato says about the world-soul at 37 a-b covers the human soul too; that is, we may infer that the human soul too will 'produce' in its revolutions (περιφεραί) a λόγος with itself, which deals either with the field of τὸ αἰσθήτων or with that of τὸ λογιστικόν (i.e. that of τὸ ἀναίσθητον). That is: when the learning part of our soul knows through the senses, it also knows through speaking.

Let us now go back to the passage from the Philebus I quoted above.
First, it says that seeing is a process of 'writing true or false λόγος in the soul'. That is: when I see something with my soul through my eyes, 'the γραμματεύς that dwells in our soul' (see 39 a 7) starts to 'comment' the seen image. And it is this speaking that accompanies seeing that makes sight to become sharper (cf. σφών, 38 c 5); in other words, it is this accompanying speaking that ἔγειν εἰς φῶς that which we see.

(ii) Here there occurs for the first time the question of truth. What is true or false, that is, is not my mere seeing with the soul, is what I believe I see, i.e. it is my δόξα about what I see. But this δόξα does not appear at the level of 'perceiving'; it appears when my soul begins to 'write', i.e. to speak, about what it perceives (4).

So, what is ἀλήθεια at this level? It is a criterion of truth, namely the correspondence between what is seen by me and what I believe I see.

6.2.2. ἀλήθεια and speaking in general. The ἀλήθεια that occurs in speaking about τὸ αἰσθητῶν

As I argued, Plato distinguishes between two main fields of knowledge, that of τὸ αἰσθητῶν (or the field of embodied — i.e. non-abstract — εἶδος) and that of τὸ ἀναίσθητον (or the field of non-embodied — i.e. abstract — εἶδος); and for him speaking can be about either of them.

Now, Plato makes this distinction also in the Sophist (cf. 264 a 4-6: 'διάνοια may occur either independently [καθ' αὐτό] or ἑι' αἰσθήσεως' — my translation). But here in the Sophist he speaks about τὸ λέγειν and τὸ ἀληθές/ψευδές λεγόμενον in general; he formulates, that is, the question of speaking and that of true/false speaking in a way that covers both speaking about τὸ αἰσθητῶν and speaking about τὸ ἀναίσθητον. His whole argument (as I see it) comes in three main parts (which I shall mark in what follows by a, b and c).

(a) λέγειν as a σύνθεσις of words.

For Plato speaking, λέγειν, is not ὄνομάζειν. It is, as he claims in the Sophist, at 261-3, a 'putting-together' (a σύνθεσις — 263 d 3, or a συμπλοκή — 262 c 6) of the two main kinds of words (ὄνοματα or λόγοι), namely nouns (called also ὄνοματα) and verbs (ὁμάτα) (cf. 261 e 5-262 a 1, 262 b-e, 263 d; cf. also Th. 202 b 4 and 206 d 2). And, he argues, it is precisely this πλέγμα (262 d 6), i.e. this 'net' (or 'network', to use a modern word) of nouns and verbs, not the mere act of naming (ὄνομάζειν — 262 d 3), that 'deserves' the name λόγος
Now, a σύνθεσις of words (or a λέγομενον), he says, is a λόγος
τινός (cf. 262 e 5-6), i.e. a λόγος about something, τι, which we may
call its 'subject' (cf. 262 c 5-6; cf. also 263 c 10-11); a λέγομενον,
however, is a λέγειν τι κατά τινός, i.e. a σύνθεσις between a 'subject'
(the καθ' σου λέγεται τι) and a 'predicate' (the τι); and this σύνθεσις is a
δηλοῦν, a 'letting-appear-as' of the 'subject' (cf. what Plato says at 263
a ff.). (Rendering δηλοῦν by 'let appear as', I agree, may sound
'tendentious'; but I do not see any major objection to this reading; the
proper meaning of δηλοῦν is 'to show', 'to make visible' — which bears
the idea of 'providing access to the way something looks like') (6).

(b) The σύνθεσις of words and the κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων.

(i) In the Sophist Plato claims explicitly (a) that some εἴδη
συμφαίνει ἀλλήλοις, while others do not (cf. 253 b 11); and that some
words too, in their turn, συναρμόττονται ἀλλήλοις (cf. 261 d), while
others do not; and (β) that the very possibility of speaking derives
actually from the κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων (cf. 259 e "any discourse [λόγος]
we can have owes its existence to the κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων") (which
implies that speaking in general is about εἴδη, cf. also Prm. 135 b-c).

(ii) At first sight, it seems that Plato suggests a rather bizarre
view, namely that words form a particular 'network' which 'depicts'
the objective structured totality of εἴδη. That is: if speaking in
general is about εἴδη, and if the εἴδη are in a given, particular
κοινωνία, then — it seems to follow — every σύνθεσις of words
'depicts' an objective συμπλοκή τῶν εἴδων. Yet Plato is far from
suggesting such a view.

(iii) In Sph. 234 c ff, he says that one may 'deceive' other
people not only with ὀρᾶτα εἴδωλα, but also with a corresponding art,
which has to do with words (234 c 2), and which can deceive by
'spoken images of all things', εἴδωλα λεγόμενα περὶ πάντων (c 6); cf. also
232: through these εἴδωλα λεγόμενα the sophist may make everything
appear as something else: the divine things (τὰ θεῖα — 232 c 1), all
that is visible in sky and earth and everything of that sort (ὅσα
φανερὰ γῆς τε καὶ οὐρανοῦ καί τῶν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα — c 4), γένεσις and
οὐσία (c 8), the laws or any political matter (νόμοι [καὶ] σύμπαντα τὰ
πολιτικά —d 1), and each and every τέχνη (d 5) (so that it appears
that nothing has been left out — φαίνεται γὰρ όντων δὴ σχεδὸν οὐθὲν
ὑπολιθεῖν). That is: in every 'field', words can be combined in ways
that do not 'depict' reality — i.e. not every σύνθεσις of words 'depicts'
an objective συμπλοκή τῶν εἴδων.

Now, the τέχνη σοφιστική, says Plato, is a τέχνη εἰσώλοποική
(235 a ff.), which —being concerned with φαντάσματα (236 b 7) and
not with 'realistic' εἴκονα (a 8) — is actually a τέχνη φανταστική (c 4).
That is: the realm of reality is 'made' by the actual, given way in which the εἴδη are 'combined' (see the already mentioned occurrences of περιφέρει τα at Phdr. 265 e 2: to divide εἴδη following their 'objective articulation' —as Hackforth translates, and at 266 b 6). But, besides this realm of reality, there is also the 'realm' of φαντάσματα, i.e. — if I may use this term — the realm of phantasy.

The locus of this 'realm of phantasy' is the soul (viz. the 'learning part of the soul'), which can put together, by speaking, both non-abstract εἴδη ('producing' εἴδωλα λεγόμενα) and abstract εἴδη. And it can 'provide' in this way φαντάσματα περὶ πάντων εἴδων. So, Plato's claim that "the complete separation of each thing from all is the utterly final obliteration of all discourse [πάντες λόγοι], for our speaking [λόγος] is possible because of the communion [συμπλοκή] between the εἴδη" (Sph. 259 e), should be taken, I think, like this: the very possibility of speaking (be it a speaking whose σύνθεσις of words 'depicts' an objective συμπλοκή τῶν εἴδων, or a speaking whose σύνθεσις of words 'depicts' a fantastic συμπλοκή τῶν εἴδων) derives actually from the fact that the εἴδη (that which speaking is about) are not ἀσύνθετα.

(iv) In the Phaedrus, however, Plato claims that this field of φαντάσματα is not, as it were, boundless (cf. 261 e: "[...] wherever men speak we find this single art [i.e. rhetoric]... which enables people to make out everything to be like everything else [πᾶν πάντι διόμενων], within the limits of possible comparison [...]") — my italics; this is, I must say, Hackforth's translation; in the original Greek, this phrase is less clear and, I agree, may be construed in several different ways). In Hackforth's reading, however, Plato seems to say here that, in principle, we may put together in a σύνθεσις any words we like; but, in fact, our choices are limited (we cannot, for instance, say anything we like about a given 'subject'; in other words, the number of 'predicates' that we can associate with a given 'subject' is limited). Now, what does Plato actually mean by 'the limits of possible comparison'?

When two words are in a σύνθεσις, and when they συναρμόστουσιν ἀλλήλοις, the resulting ἄρμονία/συμφωνία refers (as I argued in 2.2.2., b, β) to a σύνθεσις πράγμα, i.e. to a statement (cf. Sph. 262 e 1: τὰ [λεγόμενα] ἄρμοντα λόγου ἀπραγμάτευτος), which is determined as a succession (νέξις) of words (τὰ ἐφεξῆς λεγόμενα — 261 d 8) that has meaning (τὰ λεγόμενα δηλούντας ἑαυτήντα — e 1-2). Thus, we can read the above-quoted phrase from Phdr. 261 e like this: in speaking 'we can make out everything to be like everything else', i.e. we can, through a σύνθεσις of words, let any εἴδος appear as being determined by any εἴδος; but, only 'within the limits of possible comparison', that is: we can, through a σύνθεσις of words, let
any εἰδός appear as being determined by any εἰδός as long as this 'appearance' makes sense (and has, accordingly, a meaning for us). If so, then, we may say, that which limits the possible combination of εἰδη through speaking (or, in other words, that which limits the 'realm of phantasy' that speaking is able to produce) is meaning; which is to claim that 'the realm of phantasy' is limited by the boundaries of intelligibility (7).

(c) τὸ ἀληθὲς καὶ τὸ ψευδὲς λεγόμενον.

The fact that besides the realm of reality ('made' by the actual, given way in which the εἰδη are 'combined') there is a realm of φαντάσματα ('made' by all the intelligible ways, however fantastic, in which the εἰδη may be 'combined'), is that which makes possible the existence of falsity. In the Sophist, the way Plato puts things in regard to this issue of falsity is this:

(i) If in a λεγόμενον, its 'subject' appears as it actually is, then that λεγόμενον discloses that which it is about as it actually is; in short: if so, then that λεγόμενον is ἀληθές (cf. 263 b 4-5: λέγει δὲ... ὁ [λόγος] μὲν ἀληθῆς τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν, i.e. the λόγος in which things are spoken as they are is ἀληθές).

(ii) If, on the contrary, in a λεγόμενον, its 'subject' appears as it is not, then that λεγόμενον hides, as it were, that which it is about (the notion of 'hiding' is not actually expressed in the text; it may, however, be easily inferred from the whole context; and in Phdr. 261 e, where Plato discusses the question of ψεύδος qua lie, it occurs explicitly —cf. e 4-5: [...] καὶ ἠκούσατο καὶ ἀποκοιτισμένον εἰς φῶς ἔγειρον; in short: if so, then that λεγόμενον is ψευδές (cf. 263 b 7: ὁ δὲ δὴ [λόγος] ψευδής ἔτερα τῶν ὕπτων, i.e. the λόγος in which things are spoken other than they are is ψευδής). (The issue of ψεύδος is also discussed in, as I said, Phdr. 261 ff. and in Hp.Mi., but here what is really at stake is the question of lie, not of falsehood in general, as in the Sophist.)

Now, as I claimed, a σόνθεσις of a 'subject' and a 'predicate' may be said, generally speaking, to be a δῆλον, a 'letting-appear as' of the 'subject'; but this 'appearance as' of the 'subject' is not the same in the two fields of knowledge; that is: in speaking about τὸ αἴσθητον the 'appearance as' of the 'subject' is not the same as in speaking about τὸ ἄναθητον.

In his last public appearance, Dennis Potter mentioned a true anecdote from the times when television started to leave behind radio broadcasting: asked by a journalist why does he prefer radio to television, a young child answers that he finds the scenery better on radio programmes. This anecdote echoes a point which Plato made in the Philebus, and which clarifies what the 'appearance as' of the 'subject' is in the field of τὸ αἴσθητον.
(i) When we speak, there occurs in our souls a ἰδονηματική, a ἡγούμενος, a painter, who start to paint [γράφει] in them images [εἴκόνες] of the ἱεράτευμα; and then one sees somehow [ὁρᾷ πως] in himself [ἐν αὐτῷ] images [εἴκόνες] of what he previously opined or asserted [τίς τῶν δοξασθέντων καὶ λεγόμενον εἰκόνας].

(ii) [...] the images [εἴκόνες] of true opinions [ἀληθεῖς δόξαι] and λόγοι are true [ἀληθεῖς], whereas the images of false opinions [ψευδεῖς δόξαι] and λόγοι are false [ψευδεῖς].

(Phlb. 39 b-c, my paraphrase)

(i) Now, what Plato says in the above quoted passage from the Philebus is this: if I speak about the embodied εἴδη (i.e. if I deal with the field of τὸ ἱεράτευμα), this will produce in my soul images of those εἴδη (and this is something that does happen to everyone of us — cf. 39 c 1-2: ἣ τοῦτο ῥῆξ ἐστι γεγραμμένον παρ᾽ ἡμῖν; σφόδρα μὲν εὖ). (This point is also made in the Sophist: at 234 c ff., where Plato says that one may deceive other people not only with ὅψατα εἰδώλα, but also with a corresponding art, which has to do with words, 234 c 2, and which can deceive by 'spoken images of all things', εἰδώλα λεγόμενα περὶ πάντων, c 6; and at 235 a ff., where the τέχνη σοφιστική is called a τέχνη εἰδωλοποιική, although the sophist, we are told, is concerned with φαντάσματα, 236 b 7, not with 'realistic' εἴκονες, a 8, and so his τέχνη εἰδωλοποιική is actually a τέχνη φανταστική, c 4). (This 'view', if I may say so, occurs also in Aristotle, who claims that the metaphorical speaking — which is grounded on terms that belong to the field of τὸ ἱεράτευμα — 'brings something before eyes', πρὸ ὀμάστων ποιεῖν, cf. Rh. 1410 b 33 and 1411 b 21-25; cf. also Po. 1459 a 7-8: τὸ γὰρ ἐμ' ἐμφανίζειν τὸ τὸ ὑμῶν θεωρεῖν ἑπεξεργάζεται ἐκείνῃ; and it is also adopted by various modern authors — for details see Ricoeur's 1975, 283 ff. discussion of the issue of 'verbal icon'.)

(ii) And here there occurs for the second time the question of truth. If I speak about the embodied εἴδη, this will produce in my soul images of those εἴδη; and they, these images, may be true or false. So, what is ἀλήθεια at this level? It is a criterion of truth, namely the correspondence between that which I speak about and that which my speaking 'projects' on the 'internal screen' of my soul.

To sum up: in the field of τὸ ἱεράτευμα, truth appears as a criterion of truth, understood as the correspondence between an image (either as an εἰδώλον proper or as an εἰδώλον λεγόμενον) and that 'reality' which the 'image' refers to. Now, how did Plato put things in the field of τὸ ἱεράτευμα?
6.3. ἄληθεια within τὸ ἀναίσθητον

In the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον the truth about things is reached through speaking. But 'speaking about τὸ ἀναίσθητον' is not the same as 'speaking about τὸ αἰσθήτων'. Speaking about τὸ ἀναίσθητον can be done through abstract or non-abstract terms; I shall deal with the question of 'speaking about τὸ ἀναίσθητον in non-abstract terms' in 8.3.1.; here, in what follows, I would like to say a few things about 'speaking about about τὸ ἀναίσθητον in abstract terms'.

(a) First, in the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον the abstract speaking does not produce proper images; when we say that 'virtue is knowledge', or that 'knowledge is good'; or when we say that the sophist 'comes' from "the art of contradiction making, descended from an insincere kind of conceited mimicry, of the semblance-making, derived from image making, distinguished as a portion, not divine but human, of production, that represents a shadow play of words" (Sph. 268 c-d) — we do not see images on the internal screen of our mind.

(b) Secondly, in the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον the 'results' of abstract speaking cannot be confronted with 'reality', as in the field of τὸ αἰσθήτων the image that results from speaking can be confronted through sight, with the 'reality' which the 'image' refers to; the 'reality' of τὸ ἀναίσθητον cannot be grasped directly, and we cannot check whether the 'results' of our speaking correspond with it. Thus, in this case, we cannot use the criterion of correspondence.

As I argued in 0.1.3., Socrates was faced with the fact that there are two fields of knowledge — one in which the 'experiment' is possible and where correspondence appears, accordingly, as the best criterion of truth; and another one in which the 'experiment' is not possible and where coherence (on which the Socratic elenchus is grounded) appears as the only criterion of truth.

A similar, yet far more refined view is held also by Plato; for him, in 'speaking (in abstract terms) about τὸ ἀναίσθητον', the criterion which can tell us something, indirectly, about it is what we may call the συμφωνία τῶν λέγομενων, or, with a modern expression, the coherence of a body of beliefs (this point has been supported, through different arguments, by various commentators, such as Waterfield 1989, 50-3, or Fine 1990, 86 ff., 97 ff.). Coherence, however, may be taken either as 'consistency', or as 'implication', or as 'explanation'. But, as I argued in 2.2.2., Plato's συμφωνία cannot be reduced to either of them. For him, the λέγομενα that συμφωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις are those λέγομενα that are consistent and hang together in a 'significant way' (which may be construed as a relation of implication, or explanation between them). That is: in speaking (in abstract terms) about τὸ ἀναίσθητον we cannot confront our λέγομενα.
with 'reality' via another means of knowledge; here, the only criterion of truth is the συμφωνία of our λέγομενα: if they are consistent and if they hang together in a significant way they may be true (i.e. they may correspond to reality). In short: for Plato, in some cases, coherence is the only thing we have, and so it may be taken as a criterion of truth. ("Spices", says Lehrer 1990, 131, "may enhance the flavour of good ingredients, but if the ingredients are spoiled, enhancing the flavour increases the risk of our consuming food that is dangerous to our health. Explanation, simplicity, and informativeness are but the spices of truth." To paraphrase Lehrer, we may say that, according to Plato, in some cases the only thing that we can eat are the spices.)
CHAPTER SEVEN

The \textit{μέθοδος} \textit{that ἀληθεύουσιν τί ποτ' ἔστι ἐκαστὸν ἐἴδος}

As I argued in Chapters Four and Five, Plato claims that, once we accept the theory of ἐἴδη, we have to determine (i) \textit{what each ἐἴδος is} (cf. R. 531 d, 532 e); (ii) \textit{what τὸ ἄγαθον ἐστὶ} (which is 'the limit of the intelligible') (cf. R. 533 b); and (iii) \textit{what the ἐἴδος in general is} (a task which, as I argued in Chapter Five, is undertaken in the 
Sophist). Now, all these three aims can be reached by following \textit{particular μέθοδος} (cf. R. 532 e 1); but Plato does not tell us much about these \textit{μέθοδος} — with the exception of those that may lead us to the determination of \textit{what each ἐἴδος is}.

7.1. \textit{ὁρίζειν τὰ ἐἴδη: the quest for definitions}

For Plato, as I argued, the 'is', the \textit{ens} of a \textit{res}, equals \textit{τὸ quidditas, whatness}; but for him not \textit{all} the characteristics that form the 'what' of something are, ontologically, equal. That is, for Plato there is an 'ontological hierarchy' of the characteristics of a thing, for only some of them form its \textit{ἀρετὴ} (to use a word which he used sometimes in the early dialogues to designate the 'essential side' of something); to put it in the Aristotelian scholarly jargon, an \textit{ἐἴδος} has 'accidental' and 'essential' features (cf. Metaph. 1051 b 9 ff.) (1). (Neither Plato, nor any of his predecessors, put this distinction as clearly as Aristotle; but, I think, it is rather safe to claim that in some of the pre-Aristotelian thinkers there is to be found, in one form or another, this belief that each thing has an 'essential side' — for which they use mostly the words \textit{φύσις} and \textit{οὐσία}.)

For Plato, however (like for Socrates — see 0.1.3.), the 'object' of knowledge is the \textit{κατάνωσις} of 'things'; for what we we actually know are \textit{relations} between \textit{ἐἴδη} (cf. Cra. 438 e: "What other way can there be of knowing [things], except through one another [ἐν ἄλληλαιν], when they are akin to each other [συγγενῆ] and through themselves?"; and Th. 186 a, "[the ἐἴδη] seem [...] to be things whose being [οὐσία] is considered, one in comparison with another [πρὸς ἄλληλα], by the soul [...]"; these two passages \textit{may} be taken as covering the knowing of \textit{ἐἴδη} by both seeing and speaking; yet most of the places in which this idea is pointed out, that to know is to
know the κοινωνία τῶν εἶδων, occur in a context where at stake is the question of knowing by speaking — cf. for instance Sph. 253 e 1: the aim of knowledge is "to distinguish in what ways the εἶδη can or cannot combine [κοινωνεῖν δύναται"] (2). So, to know the 'essential side' of an εἶδος is to know its essential κοινωνία with other εἶδη.

In his early and middle periods, Plato believed that the λεγόμενον which reveals the 'essential what of something' (the λόγος τῆς εὐστάχιας, which should be distinguished from a mere description — cf. Lg. 895 d 4) is a ὀρισμός (cf. also R. 507 b 2-3: 'we say that many things are and define them through a λόγος [stoiχεῖον τῷ λόγῳ] — my paraphrase). In the Meno, for instance, although the so-called theory of εἶδη is not fully developed, Plato claims very clearly that an εἶδος can be expressed by a λεγόμενον qua ὀρισμός (e.g. 'shape is the only thing which accompanies colour' — 75 b; 'shape is the limit of a solid' — 76 a; or 'colour is an effluence from shapes commensurate with sight and perceptible by it' — 76 d). (A ὀρισμός is then an oratio that 'reflects' the ratio, 'the essential inner λόγος' of an εἶδος).

Most of Plato's early dialogues aim at achieving a ικανὸς ὀρισμός. Yet, as we know only too well, they all fail in this attempt (and, besides, in Plato there is not a proper μέθοδος toward a ὀρισμός). Their results, nevertheless, are not entirely negative, for they state a few aspects of the ὀρισμός question.

(i) One is that a ὀρισμός is a λεγόμενον in which that which is to be defined is linked with other things. Put it in the terms I used in the last chapters, a ὀρισμός is a λεγόμενον which attempts at showing the essential κοινωνία of an εἶδος with other εἶδη.

(ii) Another one is that the search for these essential κοινωνίαι starts from something already known, from a προγνωσκόμενον, i.e. from a number of κοινωνίαι assumed as certain. That is: the search for definitions does not take place against a tabula rasa, but against a preliminary understanding (3).

(iii) And another one is that the failure of our attempts to achieve a ικανὸς ὀρισμός shows that our preliminary knowledge (on which the whole inquiry is grounded) is, in most of the cases, not flawless, for it either does not match the reality, or is contradictory or unjustifiable. But not in all cases: occasionally, our attempts to achieve a ικανὸς ὀρισμός show that some items of our preliminary knowledge are reliable — either because they are obviously true (when they match reality, or are coherent, or are deducible from something known as certain), or obviously false (in which case they are usually marked by the words γεγονός, ἀτομον, ἀδύνατον or ἀλογον).

What should we do then, if we do not want to give up our attempt to find a ικανὸς ὀρισμός? Well — Plato seems to suggest in his early dialogues, which all fail to reach one — there is nothing we
could do about it: we must accept our failures and acknowledge the 
\textit{aporia} we reached. In the \textit{Meno}, however, he introduces a quite 
promising \textit{μέθοδος}; but this \textit{μέθοδος} is not, as it might appear to be at 
first sight, aimed at reaching a definition. This \textit{μέθοδος} has a less 
ambitious task.

7.2. \textit{The μέθοδος from the Meno}

7.2.1. \textit{The geometrical analogy (86 e-87 b)}

This \textit{μέθοδος} is first explained by an analogy, which is actually 
a problem of geometry (86 e-87 b).

The problem is about the possibility of a given \textit{χωρίς} to be 
inscribed in a given circle as a triangle (86 e-87 a 1) (4). This 
passage, having so many difficulties, could scarcely fail being over­
interpreted. In 1935, Gueroult (1935) counted over a hundred 
interpretations. The most interesting ones belong to Butcher (1888, 
219-25), Benecke (1867, see Bluck, 1961, 447 f.), Farquharson (1925, 
21-6), Cook-Wilson (1903, 222-9), Gaiser (1964, 264-82), Sternfeld 
and Zyskind (1977, 206-11) (a presentation and critical discussion of 
some of these solutions are to be found in Bluck 1961, Appendix); yet 
not all of them are very convincing. There are, I think, three major 
requirements for any interpretation of this passage: (i) to respect its 
grammar (although this is far from being clear); (ii) to formulate the 
geometrical problem in such a way as to be soluble with the 
mathematics of that time (not with, say, some theorems from Euclid's 
\textit{Elements} which were unknown at that time); and (iii) to be simple 
enough (which is a strong requirement, due to three main reasons: 
first, the problem was supposed to be understood by someone like 
Meno, who is not a mathematician; secondly, Plato does not give too 
many details about it, as if he considers it to be rather simple; and 
thirdly, its function is to offer a helpful analogy for what Plato is 
going to talk about later, and a helpful analogy should be at least 
reasonably simple).

Like Thomas (1980, 167-70), I am rather inclined to take 
Butcher's and Benecke's solutions as being the most plausible. Both of 
them respect the three requirements mentioned above.

According to Butcher's interpretation the passage 87 a 3-7 may 
be reconstructed as follows:

If the figure [rectangle ABCD] is such that when applied to the 
given line [BH] of the circle, it falls short by another figure 
[rectangle CDEH] \textit{similar} to the one just applied [ABCD], then one 
conclusion follows [i.e. the triangle BFD, which is equal in area to 
the rectangle ABCD, \textit{can} be so inscribed], and if this is impossible
another conclusion follows [Thomas, 1980, 168; for Butcher's diagram see Annex 1, Fig. (1)].

According to Benecke's interpretation the passage 87 a 3-7 may be reconstructed as follows:

If the figure [square ABCD] is such that when applied to the given line [AL] of the circle, it falls short by another figure [square CDLM] identical to the one just applied [ABCD], then one conclusion follows [i.e. the triangle ACL, which is equal in area to the square ABCD, can be so inscribed], and if this is impossible another conclusion follows [Thomas, 1980, 168; for Benecke's diagram see Annex 1, Fig. (2) (5)].

I favour, as Thomas 1980 does, Benecke's solution, mainly because of its visual simplicity, which has to be, as I said, an essential characteristic of any plausible interpretation of this geometrical problem.

The details of this geometrical problem are rather obscure, but, as Robinson 1953, 114 claims, 'irrelevant for the methodological point'; what is important, however, is, I think, the 'lesson' of this problem: when we cannot find an answer to a question (e.g. 'It is possible for this figure to be inscribed as a triangle in this circle?'), we have, in order to pursue our investigation, to ask another question ('What happens if we apply this figure to a certain line of the given circle?'), which can be answered, and whose answer will allow us to deduce the answer to the first question. In other words: if we cannot prove directly a given proposition y, we should find another proposition x, equivalent to y, so that if x is true, then y is true, and if x is false, then y is false; and this proposition x, until it is proved or disproved directly, is a hypothesis (6).

7.2.2. Socrates' application of the μέθοδος (87 b-89 e)

Now, the μέθοδος that is explained, analogically, by this problem of geometry (86 c-87 b), is then applied by Socrates himself (87 b-89 e). Socrates' application is extremely long and not always very clear; I think, however, that it can fairly be represented like this.

(a) If virtue is knowledge, it is teachable (87 b 2-87 c 9).
(i) Question A: Is virtue teachable?
(ii) Hypothesis A: Virtue is knowledge.
(iii) Answer A: If virtue is knowledge, then virtue is teachable.

(b) If virtue is good, it is knowledge (87 c 10-89 a 8).
(i) Question B: Is virtue knowledge? (That is: Is hypothesis A true?)
(ii) Hypothesis B: Virtue is good.
(iii) Answer B 1: If virtue is good, and if only knowledge is good, then virtue is knowledge (87 c 10-d 10).
(iv) Answer B 2: If virtue is good, then it is beneficial as well; and, since something is beneficial only when it is accompanied by knowledge (for knowledge is beneficial — cf. 88 d 5-89 a 8), then, if virtue is beneficial, virtue is knowledge (87 d 11-88 c 6) (7).

(c) Virtue is not teachable for there are no teachers of it (89 a-c 3)
(i) Apparently virtue is teachable, for it is certainly not achieved by nature. (If virtue was achieved by nature, then there should be experts among us who could recognize the naturally good at an early stage; but there are not such experts, and so virtue cannot be achieved by nature) (89 a-b).
(ii) But, on the other hand, if virtue was teachable, then there should be teachers of virtue; but there are not such teachers (8), and so virtue is not teachable (89 c 5-89 e 3). (And, being not teachable, virtue is not knowledge — 99 a) (9).

So, what can be said about this μέθοδος;

First, here in the Meno there is change of focus. Almost all early dialogues aim, as I said, at achieving a διδασκάλης, but they all fail. In the Meno the topic of διδασκάλης occurs throughout the dialogue (cf. 71 b, 72 c, 73 d 1, 74 a 10-11, b 2-4, 75 a 3-4, 8, 86 d-e, 87 b, 100 b, etc.). But the μέθοδος introduced here is not focussed on achieving a definition of virtue (i.e. of the essential κοινωνία of the εἶδος of virtue with other εἰδή, but on establishing a particular feature of virtue on the ground of its κοινωνία with other εἰδή). That is: the μέθοδος introduced here does not actually aim at reaching a definition: it aims not at finding the essential κοινωνία of an εἶδος, but at establishing a few particular κοινωνίαι of it.

Secondly, it introduces a trick, which is based on the use of ἐπεξεργασία and which should be used when we cannot prove or disprove directly a proposition (10). The trick is very simple: if we cannot prove or disprove directly a given proposition y (say 'virtue is teachable'), we should find another proposition x (e.g. 'virtue is knowledge') (which, until it is proved or disproved directly, is a hypothesis), equivalent to y, so that if x is true, then y is true, and if x is false, then y is false (11). If the hypothesis x can be proved or disproved directly (as it seems to be the case with the hypothesis of the geometrical problem), then we are in a position to draw a conclusion about y. But what if, in its turn, x cannot be proved or disproved in a direct way? In this case, claims Plato, we should find another proposition z (say, 'virtue is good'), so that if z is true, then x is true, and if z is false, then x is false (and so, consequently, knowing that x is true or false, we can infer whether y is true or false) (this kind of arguing is very akin to the geometrical method of ἀπεικόνισις). (Why, however, is the hypothesis 'virtue is good' not, in its turn,
deduced from another hypothesis? Because, it seems, it is thought to be sound enough — cf. ἡ ὑπόθεσις μὲνεὶ ἡμῖν, 87 d."

To sum up: according to the μέθοδος offered by the Meno, when we cannot prove or disprove directly a given proposition $y$, we should find a hypothesis, i.e. an equivalent proposition $x$, so that $y$ is true if $x$ is true, and false if $x$ is false (this finding of a hypothesis is a heuristic process; that is: in order to be laid down, a hypothesis must first be found — cf. 2.1.).

As I argued in 2.1., for Plato the truth-value of a ὑπόθεσις qua statement, at the moment when it is being hypothesized, is not yet known. So, how can we, according to the Meno, assess the truth-value of a ὑπόθεσις qua statement?

7.2.3. Testing a hypothetical statement

A hypothesis $y$ could be tackled from two different directions: from its premisses or from its consequences.

(i) If $x$, then $y$; and $x$: hence $y$.
(ii) If $x$, then $y$; and non-$x$: hence non-$y$.
(iii) If $y$, then $z$; and non-$z$: hence non-$y$.
(iv) If $y$, then $z$; and $z$: hence $y$.

(i) is a valid argument in *modus ponens*; (ii) is an invalid argument, because it commits the fallacy of denying the antecedent; (iii) is a valid argument in *modus tollens*; and (iv) is an invalid argument because it commits the fallacy of affirming the consequent.

Now, the μέθοδος introduced in the Meno states, strictly speaking, only (i) as a possible test of a hypothesis ('if virtue is knowledge, then virtue is teachable'); but the last section of Socrates' argument (89 c 5-e 3) suggests that (iii) may also be taken as a possible test ('if virtue was teachable, then there should be teachers of virtue; but there are not such teachers, and so virtue cannot be teachable'). (Here the consequence of a statement is assessed by an 'empirical test'; but a consequence may also be assessed by a 'consistency test': if it is consistent with our current stock of beliefs, or with a body of statements accepted as true, then that consequence is true as well.) (The last section of Socrates' argument, viz. 89 c 5-e 3, implies, nevertheless, that 'if there are teachers of virtue, then virtue is teachable'; it suggests, in other words, that (iv) may also be a test. As I said, (iv) is not a valid argument (12); in my view, however, Plato seems to suggest that this argument should not be taken as proving the truth of $y$, but as corroborating $y$, which is a perfectly defensible position.)

This argument of reduction to falsehood ('if $y$, then $z$; and non-$z$: hence non-$y$') is very much used by Plato, especially in the early
dialogues, and Socrates often rejects a hypothesis because its consequence is \( \delta\lambda\gamma\gamma\nu(\text{Hp. Ma. 303 c 3}) \) or \( \delta\delta\nu\gamma\alpha\tau\omicron(\text{Hp. Ma. 303 d 4}) \) (cf. also \textit{Chrm.} 172 c, e). (Sometimes in Plato there is not a reduction to falsehood, but to absurdity — which is a form of falsehood, cf. Robinson 1953, 23; in this case a consequence is rejected not because it is \( \delta\lambda\gamma\gamma\nu \) or \( \delta\delta\nu\gamma\alpha\tau\omicron \), but because it is \( \epsilon\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron \) or \( \gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\omicron\omicron \).) (An example of such a \textit{reductio ad absurdum} occurs also in the \textit{Parmenides} (13).)

Now, as I said, the \( \mu\epsilon\theta\omicron\omicron\omicron \) introduced here in the \textit{Meno} does not actually aim at reaching a definition, i.e. at finding the essential \textit{k\alpha\iota\nu\omega\nu\iota\iota\iota} of an \( \epsilon\iota\delta\omicron \), but at establishing a few particular \textit{k\alpha\iota\nu\omega\nu\iota\iota\iota} of it. Why did Plato change his focus? The clearest answer, as far as I know, is to be found in the \textit{Parmenides}.

7.3. The \( \mu\epsilon\theta\omicron\omicron\omicron \) from the \textit{Parmenides}

The \textit{Parmenides} is, perhaps, the most difficult Platonic dialogue (despairing commentators have said all kinds of things about it; Brumbaugh 1961, 6, for instance, called it "the driest, most tiresome joke ever devised"). It is not my purpose here to enter in its abyss; all I am concerned with is a methodological point that Plato introduces in it.

Roughly speaking, there are two main methodological patterns in the \textit{Parmenides}: the one used by Zeno (127 a-130 a) and the one used by Parmenides (137 c-166 c). The one used by Zeno aims at testing a hypothetical statement by checking its consequences (and it is actually a \textit{reductio ad absurdum}: 'if \( y \), then \( z \); and non-\( z \): hence non-\( y \')).

The one used by Parmenides (cf. 135 c-136 a) is more complicated; roughly put, it is aimed at checking not only the consequences of a hypothesis \( y \) ('if one is', \( \epsilon\iota \ \epsilon\nu \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron \ -- 137 c-160 b \), but also the consequences of its contradictory, non-\( y \) ('if one is not', \( \epsilon\iota \ \epsilon\nu \ \mu\eta \ \epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron \ -- 160 b-166 c \). This two-part argument raises enormous difficulties. I shall leave them aside, however, and focus on the methodological point that Plato introduces here, namely the requirement to check the consequences of both a hypothesis and its contradictory.

As I said, the way our knowledge works raises a puzzle that Plato attempts to solves by introducing the theory of \( \epsilon\iota\delta\omicron \); but this theory brings forward other puzzles. Yet (as Plato made Zeno say in the first section of the \textit{Parmenides}), we have to choose the view that has 'less ridiculous consequences'; that is: the consequences of the theory of \( \epsilon\iota\delta\omicron \) are 'less ridiculous' than the consequence implied by the assumption that the \( \epsilon\iota\delta\omicron \) do not exist (cf. \textit{Prm.} 135 b-c); in other
words: if nothing was 'always the same', then we could not know anything and speaking would not be possible, for words refer to that which is 'always the same' (cf. also Thh. 183 a-b).

In the Republic Plato seems to suggest that if we, against all odds, accept the theory of ειδη, then knowledge enables us (i) to apprehend the 'ultimate assumptions' of the theory itself (i.e. τὸ ἀγαθὸν, which is 'the limit of the intelligible' —532 a 7- b 1); and (ii) to find out 'what each thing is', τὸ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἔκαστον (532 a 7, 533 b 1). This τὸ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἔκαστον refers, as I claimed, to the essential what of each εἰδος (i.e. to its essential κοινωνία with other εἰδη); and in the early dialogues Plato believed that the 'essential what' of an εἰδος can be revealed only by a λέγομενον qua ὄρισμός. But, as we know, almost all his attempts to achieve a ἱκανὸς ὄρισμός failed. Why? The answer comes in the Parmenides.

(iii) "You [, Socrates, says Parmenides,] are undertaking to define [ὅπις εἰσίθεν] 'beautiful', 'just', 'good' and each of the εἰδη [too soon], before you have had a [preliminary] exercise [πρὶν γυμνασθῇνα]" (135 c 8-d 1; cf. also 136 a, c).
(iv) This preliminary γυμνασία —'without which ἀληθέα will escape you' (d 6) and which consists of 'speaking about εἰδη' (e 1-4) —should aim at checking the consequences of both (a) the ὑπόθεσις that states the existence of an εἰδος and (b) of its contradictory, i.e. of the ὑπόθεσις that states the non-existence of that εἰδος (e 8-136 a 2). That is: "whenever you hypothesize that an [εἰδος] exists or does not exist or has any other character, you ought to consider the consequences with reference to itself and to any one of the other [εἰδη] that you may select, or several of them, or all of them together, and again, you must study these others with reference both to one another and to any one [εἰδος] you may select, whether you have hypothesized the [εἰδος] to exist or not to exist" (136 b-c). (One may say that this quotation is tendentious, because the word εἰδος does not actually occur in the text; but, I think, it is obvious that Parmenides refers to εἴδη here.)

So, why are we failing to achieve a ἱκανὸς ὄρισμός of an εἰδος? Because, Plato says, we attempt at achieving such a ὄρισμός before a preliminary training. But why is it so?

What this preliminary training provides, at a first sight, is a way to establish whether an εἰδος exists or not; if we are not sure whether an εἰδος exists or not, we should hypothesize both its existence and non-existence, and then check the consequences of each position; and, the text seems to imply, we should adopt the hypothesis whose consequences are 'less ridiculous'. But then, how can this help us to achieve a ἱκανὸς ὄρισμός of an εἰδος?
What this γυμνασία actually offers in the end is not a mere likely conclusion about the existence or the non-existence of an ἔδος. This γυμνασία does not deal with a few words, as a ὁρισμός does, but with a 'sea of words' (πέλαγος λόγων — 137 a 6). That is: like a ὁρισμός, this γυμνασία has to do with a particular ἔδος. But it is not focussed on the essential κοινωνία of an ἔδος, as a ὁρισμός is; it is, on the contrary, a διέξοδος τε καὶ πλανὴ διὰ πάντων [τῶν ἔδων] (136 e 1-2), 'a circuitous and exhaustive wandering [through the ἔδη]' (as Robinson 1953, 277 translates) — i.e. it is focussed on all the κοινωνία that a particular ἔδος (and its ἄντιτιθέμενον, its 'opposite') has with other ἔδη (an idea which is somehow prefigured in R. 402 c).

So, what Plato says here in the Parmenides seems to be this: we cannot attempt to find the ὁρισμός of an ἔδος (i.e. its 'essential' what, namely its essential κοινωνία with other ἔδη), until we have a view of all the κοινωνία that that ἔδος has with other ἔδη.

Yet why should we consider the κοινωνία of both an ἔδος and its ἄντιτιθέμενον — say, of both ἔν and πολλά, or καλὸν and κακὸν? The answer comes in the Sophist: the what of an ἔδος is determined by its κοινωνία with other ἔδη; and one of these other ἔδη is precisely its ἄντιτιθέμενον (cf. 257 d) (14). In other words: what the γυμνασία from the Parmenides aims at is a determination of all the κοινωνία that a particular ἔδος has with other ἔδη — including with its very ἄντιτιθέμενον.

At the core of the Sophist, which comes — in my view — after the Parmenides introduced this γυμνασία, is the attempt to achieve the 'essence' of the sophist. In the Sophist, however, this γυμνασία is not undertaken (which may be explained by saying that Plato was now concerned with other things, so he did not go again through what he already said in the Parmenides). Now, the Sophist, unlike almost all the earlier dialogues that aimed at achieving αἱκανὸς ὁρισμός, ends with one; but here, the form of ἰκανὸς ὁρισμός has changed; it is not, as it was suggested in the Meno, a phrase of the type 'shape is the limit of a solid' (cf. 76 a).

7.4. The μέθοδος from the Sophist

7.4.1. ὅν, ταύτων and θάτερον as that which is primarily spoken. The συναγωγή and διαίρεσις of speaking

In the Sophist Plato claims that speaking is about ἔδη, and that there is a particular κοινωνία τῶν ἔδων (cf. 252 a-e, 259 e-260 a). Now, the dialectician, i.e. the one who has achieved actual knowledge about ἔδη by speaking about them, is, says Plato, the one who is able
to "to distinguish in what ways the εἴδη can or cannot combine [κοινωνεῖν δύναται]" (Sph. 253 c 1); to discern, that is,

(i) first, the εἴδος which is 'present' in many (μίαν ἡδέαν διὰ πολλῶν) (διὰ πολλῶν means probably 'in many γνώριμα'); and then
(ii) the many εἴδη which are different from each other, but 'embraced from without by one εἴδος' (ὑπὸ μίας ἡδέων περιλεξιμένας); and then
(iii) the one εἴδος which 'evolved' in a unity through many wholes (καὶ μίαν αὐτῷ δί' ὄλων πολλῶν ἐν ἑνὶ ἴσωμαμένην) (διὰ ὄλων πολλῶν means, I think, 'through many εἴδη'); and, finally,
(iv) the εἴδη that are entirely apart and separate (καὶ πολλὰς χωρὶς πάντω λακραμένας).

(253 d)

Thus, by doing so, the dialectician will not "take the same [ταύτων] εἴδος for a different [ἑτέρων] one or a different one for the same" (253 d). And that means, inter alia, that speaking in general deals, ultimately, with τὸ ὅν, ταύτων and ἑτέρων (which is explicitly expressed in Ττ. 37 a-c).

Now, in some dialogues (Phdr. 249 b-c, 265 d-266 c, 273 c; Sph. 253 a ff.; Plt. 285 a ff.; Phlb. 16-18), Plato speaks about a procedure which consists of two 'operations' — (a) συναγωγή and (b) διαίρεσις.

(a) Συναγωγή is to 'discern' a μία ἡδέα διὰ πολλῶν εἴδων, i.e. to 'see' the εἴδος that 'embraces from without other εἴδη' (as the Sophist 253 d 7-9 suggests; cf. also 250 b); that is, 'ἐγείρει τὰ πολλάξια διεξαρμένα [εἴδη] into a single ἴδεα' (265 d 3) (and this συνορότατα — cf. συνορότατα, d 3 — of a single ἴδεα is what provides clarity to speaking, τὸ σαφές, d 6, and what makes possible the reaching of an agreement, ὁμολογοῦμενον, d 7).

(b) After one sees a μία ἴδεα διὰ πολλῶν εἴδων, claims Plato, one has to perform a διαίρεσις, i.e. a separation (cf. διαίρεσις — Phdr. 265 d 4) of the εἴδη 'embraced from without' by that single ἴδεα. (But this 'division κατ' εἴδη', e 1, should be made κατ' ἄρεσα τῇ πέφυκε, e 1-2, i.e. following their natural —'objective', as Hackforth translates — articulations, and so "we are not to attempt to hack off parts like a clumsy butcher", e 2-3. This way of putting things implies that the εἴδη 'embraced from without' by that single ἴδεα are like a body, i.e. that they are structured in a particular way; in other words, that they form a particular net of κοινωνία.)

This two-operation procedure of συναγωγή and διαίρεσις seems to be the job of διαλεκτικοί (cf. Sph. 253 d), which is an usual name for philosophers. This may suggest that only the philosophers are using it, in their attempt to determine what each εἴδος is; and the common view is precisely this — that Plato speaks here about a
philosophical method (which is usually referred to in modern exegesis as 'the method of synthesis and division'). Plato, however, says explicitly:

(i) first, that this two-operation procedure of ἰασαγωγή and διαρέσεις is a business of speaking in general (of λέγειν καὶ φρονεῖν — Phdr. 256 b 4-5; of the τέχνη τῶν λόγων — Phdr. 273 d 7, e 3; of λέγειν — Phdr. 273 e 5; cf. also Phib. 16 c: "[this procedure] is the instrument through which all [πάντα — my italics] discoveries ever made in the sphere of τέχνη have been brought to light"); that is: it is speaking in general, through the συναγωγή and διαρέσεις of various ἐδών, which 'establishes' their κοινωνία;

(ii) and secondly, that only the philosophers, in their speaking, through their συναγωγή and διαρέσεις, are able to find out the actual κοινωνία that exists between ἐδών (cf. the occurrences of περιφέρεια at Phdr. 265 e 2; to divide ἐδών following their 'objective articulation' — as Hackforth translates; and at 266 b 6).

To sum up so far: in speaking, soul establishes a κοινωνία of various ἐδών, by determining their being identical with themselves (and this is done through an 'operation' that Plato called συναγωγή) and different from others (and this is done through an 'operation' that he called διαρέσεις).

7.4.2. διακρίνειν τὰ γένη τῶν ἐδῶν

The two 'operations' of speaking, namely συναγωγή and διαρέσεις, cannot be of much help in our attempt to determine the essential 'what' of an ἐδῶς, for they can only provide an 'enumeration' of the 'parts' of an ἐδῶς (i.e. the ἐδών 'embraced from without by an ἐδῶς' — cf. Sph. 253 d 7-8), and the 'enumeration of the parts of something cannot tell us what that something is' (as Plato claimed in Th. 207 a ff.). So, what should we do if we want to know the essential 'what' of an ἐδῶς (assuming that we have successfully practiced the γνωσία from the Parmenides)?

At the beginning of the Sophist Socrates raises the question of διακρίνειν, in regard to their γένος, the προσάρτως and the θέσις (216 c 2-4), in order to be able to distinguish one from another (216 a 5-c 4). Then, right after this, Socrates raises the question of διαρέσεις, in regard to their γένος, the προσάρτως, the πολιτικός and the σοφιστής (217 a 7), again, in order to be able to distinguish one from another (216 c 8-d 2). Leaving aside the first question of distinguishing between προσάρτως and θέσις, Socrates says then about his second question (that about distinguishing between the προσάρτως, the
that we, in our attempt to distinguish them, should see whether their names correspond to one γένος, to two or to three (217 a); in other words, that we should distinguish things by checking the relations between their names and their γένη (cf. Heidegger 1992 b, 248).

Now, what does Plato mean here by γένος? Usually, and especially in the Sophist, γένος is translated by 'genus', and it is opposed to εἶδος, taken as 'species'. Heidegger 1992 b, 243 ff., however, takes γένος in its literal sense, i.e. as descent (Abkunft), on the ground of a word that the Stranger uses for γένος a few lines later, at 218 c 5, namely τὸ φύλον, which means 'race', 'people', 'nation', 'clan' or 'tribe' (cf. p. 243: "[γένος is] that from which a thing comes into being as it is, the stem, the origin [of something]" — my translation). Yet what can we make out of this way of putting things — that a thing has a descent? First, however, we should ask ourselves what is a 'descent'?

We say that a man Y traces his descent from the Queen X, and we mean that that man 'originated' from Queen X via a certain number of ancestors. Thus, we may say that this line of ancestors, which began with the Queen X is responsible for the way Y looks like, for he inherited his features from his ancestors. In the Sophist, the γένος of something is, I think, to be understood as such a 'line of ancestors'.

Let us take, as Plato suggests, the clear example of the angler. First, when I want to know what an angler is, I do not deal with a particular angler; I deal with the εἶδος of angler (for, as Plato argued, we can know only 'that which remains the same' — i.e. the εἶδη). Now, the γένος of the angler, is, schematically, the following (see 219 a-221 c): τέχνη, κτησίς, χειρωτική, ἐφεστική, ἔμφρον, ἀλευτική. That is: the εἶδος of angler is 'embraced from without' by the εἶδη (cf. 219 a 8 where κτησίς is called εἶδος) of τέχνη, κτήσις κτλ. (When two εἶδη descend from a common ancestor — i.e. from the same εἶδος — they are related, συναγεσθή. This is the case with the εἶδη of the angler and the sophist; they have a common ancestor, the εἶδος of τέχνη, and they both share a segment of the line of 'ancestors' that descends from the εἶδος of τέχνη, namely: κτήσις, χειρωτική, ἐφεστική —after which they 'separate': when they reach the art of animal hunting, 'the angler is going to the seashores, rivers and lakes and angling the animals which are in them', whereas the sophist is going to 'land and water of another sort —rivers of wealth and broad meadowlands of generous youth to take the animals which are in them' — 221 d-222 a d.)

This procedure of revealing the γένος of an εἶδος is called διακρίνειν τὸ γένος (cf. Sph. 216 c ff.) (15). Now, the case of the
angler is, says Plato, ἑὔγνωστον, 'well known' (218 e 2). That is: διακρίνειν the γένος of the ἐἶδος of angler will not provide us any 'item of knowledge' that we do not already know. And yet, says Plato, following the μέθοδος (219 a 1) of this 'operation' of διακρίνειν the γένος of an ἐἴδος, we will reach precisely the answer to the τί ἐστιν question (at 217 b 2 the expression 'διαιρέσθαι the γένος of the the φιλοσοφῶς, the πολιτικός and the σοφιστής' is changed with 'διαφημίσθαι τί ποτ' ἐστιν each one of them', which suggests that the answer to the question 'What is the ἐἴδος χ?' is given by διακρίνειν the γένος of the ἐἴδος χ); in other words, this 'operation' of διακρίνειν the γένος of an ἐἴδος provides precisely the 'essential' what of that ἐἴδος, i.e. its 'essential' κοινωνία with other ἐἴδη. In short: the essential 'what' of an ἐἴδος resides in its γένος (in its σεισματικήν ἀβκυνφοί, 'essential origin', as Heidegger 1992 b, 247 put it; cf. also p. 259). (And the Sophist ends with a firm answer to the question regarding the 'essential' what of the ἐἴδος of the sophist: first, there is a συναγωγή of all the 'individual' sophists into a μία ἴδεα, which is the τέχνη σοφιστική; in other words: the ἐἴδος by the participation to which the 'individual' sophists are as they are is this kind of τέχνη, namely τέχνη σοφιστική. And then, after the διακρίνειν of its γένος has been accomplished, the ἐἴδος of the sophist appears in its 'essential' what: this ἐἴδος of the τέχνη σοφιστική comes from "an insincere kind of conceited mimicry, of the semblance-making breed, derived from image making, distinguished as a portion, not divine, but human, of production, that presents a shadow play of words" — 268 c-d.)

(The so-called method of synthesis and division, which is said to be emphasized in the Phaedrus, Sophist, Politicus and Philebus, is not, in my view, a μέθοδος proper; as I argued, it seems that this two-operation procedure of συναγωγή and διαιρέσεις is a business of speaking in general — cf. Phdr. 266 b 4-5; 273 d 7, e 3, e 5; Phlb. 16 c. That is: it is speaking in general, through the συναγωγὴ and διαιρέσεις of various ἐἴδη, which 'establishes' a κοινωνία of them. Now, what Plato says is that only the philosophers, in their speaking about various ἐἴδη, through their συναγωγὴ and διαιρέσεις, are able to find out the actual κοινωνία that exists between them; and, at least in the Sophist, he seems to claim that the μέθοδος of διακρίνειν the γένος of ἐἴδη is the most appropriate one for such a task.)

7.5. νοεῖν τὰ ἐἴδη

On the one hand Plato claims that one cannot attempt to disclose completely an ἐἴδος (τελέως ἐπιστήμη — VII 342 e; cf. also VII 342 e and Lg. 966 b) if one does not take into account its ἐἴδωλον, ὄνομα
and λόγοι. On the other hand, he argues that alone by θεωρεῖν (which 'provide' the εἴδοσιν) and λέγειν (which 'provide' the δύναμιν and the λόγος) one cannot 'reveal' how that εἴδος ἄληθῶς ἔστιν (cf. VII 343 b 1, 343 d 8–e 1). Yet by 'moving up and down from one of these entities to another', he says, we may, through the process of νοεῖν (342 d 2, 343 a 2), succeed (cf. 343 e 2–3) (Plato's terminology is not fixed; his commentator, however, for the sake of clarity, has to use certain terms with just one technical meaning; this is the case here with the verb νοεῖν).

νοεῖν is, for Plato, the ultimate mode of ἀληθεύειν; but, oddly enough, it is precisely this ultimate mode of ἀληθεύειν that he left in obscurity. Why? Maybe because νοεῖν is an 'event' which is beyond λέγειν, and so one cannot describe it adequately in words (and that is why, perhaps, he says that no 'serious man will ever think of writing down' his νευτίμενα — cf. VII 344 c). He says, however, a few things about it.

(a) First, the act of νοεῖν occurs suddenly (ἐξαδεφνης — cf. Ἱμ. 210 c 4; VII 341 c 7) (16).
(b) Yet, although it is sudden, it is like an 'expected revelation', for it is prepared by a long training, which includes moving up and down ὄντως ἄλγος, ὑφεις and αἰσθήματι (VII 344 b; cf. also Ἱμ. 210 e 3).
(c) The very act of νοεῖν is most often described in terms of an αἰσθήσεις, i.e. of a full sight (κατόψις — Ἱμ. 210 c 4; cf. also καθοριζ — 211 b 6, c 1) which reveals an εἴδος as it is (cf. Ἱμ. 210 e, 211 b, e) (17). An εἴδος, revealed by νοεῖν, however, will not take 'the form of a face, or of hands, or of anything that has to do with σῶμα; it will be neither a λόγος, nor ἐπιστήμη, nor something that exists in something else [...] for it is an αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτοῦ μονοεἰδῆς ἄει δὲν' (ὁμ. 211 a) (18).

So, what can we make out of all this? I shall try, in what follows, to offer a rather rough comment.

(i) First, why did Plato compare the act of νοεῖν an εἴδος with a sight? Because, I believe, he wanted to point out the idea that this act, as the act of seeing, implies having a direct access to its 'object'. (But the κατόψις of νοεῖν is not an actual seeing; it is like seeing only insofar it provides a direct access to its 'object'.) If so, then it means that only in νοεῖν an εἴδος, I have a direct access to it; and that in seeing an embodiment of it (in 'reality', or on the 'internal screen' of my mind), or simply in 'understanding' it through an 'abstract account', I do not deal directly with it (19).

(ii) Secondly, is there any actual μέθοδος toward this act of νοεῖν? We may say, going beyond Plato's text, that the μέθοδος which aim at disclosing the — 'essential' or not — κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων, e.g. the
μέθοδος of διακρίνειν the γένη of εἶδη, are also ways, μέθοδος, toward the act of νοεῖν τὰ εἰδή. But this would be to go too far; for the act of νοεῖν τὰ εἰδή occurs —if it occurs —after an obscure pattern, and so we cannot speak about any actual μέθοδος toward it.

(iii) Thirdly, what does in fact happen during this act? Does the κατόψεις of νοεῖν grasp the κοινωνία in which a particular εἴδος is 'caught' with other εἴδη? Or does it grasp an isolated εἴδος?

The expression κατόψεις (Smp. 210 e 4; cf. also καθορᾶν —211 b 6, e 1) means actually full sight (cf. also Wartelle's 1973, 112 comments on the occurrence of καθορᾶν in Aristotle Rh. 1409 a 33: "καθορᾶν est traduit par M. Dufour par 'voir nettement', mai le préverbe κατα- marque peut-être la nuance de complétude plus que celle de netteté"). One may say that κατόψεις supports the idea that in the act of νοεῖν there are grasped the κοινωνία in which a particular εἴδος is 'caught'. On the other hand, the expression αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ μεθ' αὐτῶν μονοεἰδῆς ἀεὶ ὅν (Smp. 211 a), which refers to an εἴδος revealed by νοεῖν, suggests a 'seeing of one εἴδος'.

As far as I am concerned, I tend to believe that, if we accept that there is such a thing as 'noetic knowledge', it must be a 'grasping of relations'. As far as Plato is concerned, he would probably say that we cannot put this experience into words, and so we just cannot speak about it.
CONCLUSIONS

HYPOTHETICAL DIALECTIC
AND METAPHYSICS

8.1. Plato's hypothetical dialectic

As I said in the Preface (see a.), Robinson 1953, v claims that, roughly speaking, there are two main methodological stages in Plato: that of the Socratic elenchus (prominent in the early dialogues); and that of the Platonic dialectic, which contains two distinct methodological devices, hypothesis (prominent in the Meno, Phaedo, Republic and Parmenides), and synthesis and division (prominent in the Phaedrus, Sophist, Politicus and Philebus).

As far as I am concerned, I construe things differently. (What follows may cause some strong reactions; I ask the reader, however, before launching his objections, to take into account what I said about my approach in section c of the Preface.)

8.1.1. A synopsis of the μέθοδος

Plato's philosophy, I hold, covers two main 'areas': (a) that of the metaphysical nature of the objects that can be known; and, once we accept the theory of ἐλέειν (which is Plato's answer to the question of the metaphysical nature of the objects that can be known), (b) that of how a particular μέθοδος can be known. These areas are investigated by means of several μέθοδοι, but Plato is not always very explicit about their patterns. Regarding these μέθοδοι, however, my conclusions are the following.

(a) Plato's answer to the question regarding the metaphysical nature of the objects that can be known comes in three main parts; but he gives an explicit account only of the μέθοδος through which the first part was achieved.

(i) The first part of the answer (which first occurs in its fullness in the Phaedo) introduces the theory of ἐλέειν, which states that the ἐλέειν are the only objects of knowledge and that they are a sort of παράσελπωματα; and this theory is achieved and tested through the μέθοδος described in the Phaedo (see Chapter Three).

(ii) The second part of the answer (which occurs in the Republic) contains two main assumptions: that within the theory of ἐλέειν being is understood as whatness and that whatness is determined
by the *κοινωνία* of *ἐίδη*; and it states that we should go beyond the assumptions of the theory and reach its *ἀνυπόθετος* ὁμοιότης, (called *τὸ ἄγαθον*), which is the cause of *whatness* in general. This *δύναμις*, however, remains something *μόνης* ὁμοιότης, as well as the *μέθοδος* which is supposed to reveal it, for Plato does not say too much on either of them (see Chapter Four).

(iii) The third part of the answer (which is fully developed in the *Sophist*) attempts to explicate and ground the two assumptions of the second part of the answer (that within the theory of *ἐίδη* being is understood as *whatness*, and that *whatness* is determined by the *κοινωνία* of *ἐίδη*). Yet the whole discussion about τὰ μέγιστα γένη, in spite of explicating and grounding to some extent the two assumptions, left a fundamental question unanswered—namely *What is the κοινωνία τῶν ἐίδων?* And unanswered remains also the question about what was the *μέθοδος* through which he attempted to ground these two assumptions (see Chapter Five). (Although the procedure through which he establishes that the *ἐίδη* are in a *κοινωνία* echoes the first step of the *μέθοδος* described in the *Phaedo*, for he argues like that: if *speaking* is about *ἐίδη* and if some words unite with one another, and some not—then we have no choice: we have to admit that the *ἐίδη* are *σύμφωνα* and that they form a *particular κοινωνία*.)

(b) Now, if we accept the theory of *ἐίδη*, in spite of all the difficulties it raises, *knowledge* in general becomes a *question of knowing the *ἐίδη*. The question becomes thus: how are we to know each *ἐίδος*. Each *ἐίδος*, however, has an 'essential' *what*, and this 'essential' *what* must be first known. In his early and middle periods, Plato believed that the *λεγόμενον* which reveals the 'essential what of something' is a *ορισμός*, i.e. a 'definition'. But, most of his attempts to achieve such a *ορισμός* failed (see 7.1.).

(iv) So, in the *Meno*, Plato introduced a *μέθοδος* that aims not at finding the essential *κοινωνία* of an *ἐίδος*, but at establishing some particular *κοινωνία* of it. This *μέθοδος* is based on *ὑποθέσεις* and it should be used when we cannot prove or disprove directly a *κοινωνία* between two *ἐίδη* (see 7.2.). Yet, why did Plato change his focus—from the essential *κοινωνία* of an *ἐίδος* to just some particular *κοινωνία* of it? The clearest answer, I believe, is to be found in the *Parmenides*.

(v) In the *Parmenides* Plato claims that we cannot attempt to find the *ορισμός* of an *ἐίδος* (i.e. its 'essential' *what*, namely its *essential κοινωνία* with other *ἐίδη*), until we have a view of all the *κοινωνία* that that *ἐίδος* has with other *ἐίδη* (including with its *ἀντιστίθεμενον*); and he introduces a *μέθοδος* which states that we should first aim at determining *all* the *κοινωνία* that an *ἐίδος* has with other *ἐίδη* (see 7.3.).

(vi) Finally, in the *Sophist* Plato claims that the *essential* 'what' of an *ἐίδος* resides in its *γένος*, i.e. in its *descent* from other
and he introduces a μέθοδος aimed at διακρίνειν the γένος of an ἔδησ (see 7.4.). This μέθοδος (which should be used, arguably, after we have applied the μέθοδος from the Parmenides) is, Plato seems to imply, able to provide us with a ἑκατὸν ὀρθοτέλος. (Although the form of ὀρθοτέλος does not refer here to a phrase of the type 'shape is the limit of a solid', as Men. 76 a states, but to a 'enumeration of the parts of a γένος, as it is claimed at the end of the Sophist; cf. also Sph. 221 d-222 a d.)

(As I argued in 7.5. for Plato all our 'epistemological dealings' with ὅμοιατα, λόγοι, ὑπερήφανος, and αἰσθήσεως should eventually aim at reaching the 'act' of νοεῖν τὰ ἔδη, which is the ultimate mode of ἀλήθεύειν (cf. VII 344 b; cf. also Smp. 210 e 3, etc.). We may say, going beyond Plato's text, that the μέθοδοι which aim at disclosing the —'essential' or not — κοινωνία τῶν ἔδην, e.g. the μέθοδος of διακρίνειν the γένη of ἔδη, are also ways, μέθοδοι, toward the act of νοεῖν τὰ ἔδη. But this, as I said at the end of 7.5., would be to go too far; for the act of νοεῖν τὰ ἔδη occurs —if it occurs —after an obscure pattern, and so we cannot actually speak about any actual μέθοδος toward it.)

Now, what does Plato say about all these μέθοδοι?

8.1.2. The dialectical character of the μέθοδοι

The μέθοδοι I briefly described above are either referred to as dialectical, or implicitly connected with διαλεκτική, dialectic, or διαλέγειν, dialogue.

(a) In the first area:
(i) the μέθοδος which introduces the theory of ἔδη (cf. Phd. 101 c; cf. also 99 d ff. and 67 a-b), and (ii) the μέθοδος which is supposed to reveal the ἀνωτάτως ἀρχή of the theory of ἔδη (cf. R. 511 b 4, c 5, 532 a 2, 533 c 7) are explicitly called dialectic; (iii) as regarding the grounding of the two assumptions of the theory that Plato undertook in the Sophist, there are no reliable hints about any particular μέθοδος he used; yet he took great effort to present his 'way of reasoning' (his μέθοδος in a very wide sense) into this matter as a dialogue between two characters (the Stranger from Elea and Socrates/Theaetetus).

(b) In the second area, the situation is this. When Plato refers in general to the μέθοδος that aims at determining what each ἔδη is (cf. R. 534 b 3, 531 c 2 ff.), he calls it dialectic. Though, when he speaks about the different types of this μέθοδος, only one —i.e. (vi), that of διακρίνειν the γένος of an ἔδη —is explicitly called dialectic (cf. Sph. 231 c 9, 253 d-e); but, again, he took great effort to present the other two μέθοδοι —i.e. (iv) and (v) —as having the form of a dialogue between two characters (Socrates and Meno in the Meno and Parmenides and the young Aristotle in the Parmenides, cf. 137 b ff.).
In short, as Robinson 1953, 70 put it, "the word 'dialectic' had a strong tendency in Plato to mean 'the ideal method, whatever that may be.'" But what does this word, 'dialectic', mean in Plato? And what is the connection between dialectic and dialogue?

In the Introduction I argued that for Socrates the assumed ignorance was that which required a μέθοδος (see 0.1.1.); that for him the locus of certainty is the communion of minds (συνουσία) (see 0.1.2.); that that is the reason for which one of the main 'elements' of his μέθοδος is the dialogue (see 0.1.3.); and that Plato's philosophical search began as it did because of Socrates' influence, i.e. because it started somehow from the results of Socrates' philosophy (see 0.2.). Now, the main 'elements' of Socratism (e.g. the assumed ignorance, or the ἔλεγχος) are often echoed in Plato texts (cf. for instance Sph. 229 c: 'the great source of all errors', 'the one very large and bad sort of ignorance', 'which may be weighted in the scale against all other sorts of ignorance put together', is 'when one supposes that he knows, and does not know'); but the 'element' of Socratism that Plato adopted throughout his work was the dialogue.

As I claimed (0.1.2.), Socrates did not write anything precisely because writing is an individual process, which cannot be done κοινώς. Plato, on the contrary, wrote a lot; but, because he, as Socrates, believed that the quest for knowledge should be done κοινώς, he was not, after all, very happy about writing philosophy.

There are two main Platonic 'attacks' against writing — one in the Phaedrus, and one in the seventh letter. These attacks are aimed at two targets: at the possibility, offered by the author's absence, to manipulate that which is written (cf. Phdr. 275 e: a text, a γεγραμμένος, may be 'ill-treated and unfairly abused, for it is not able to defend or help itself, always needing its parent to come to its help' — my paraphrase); and at the individuality of writing, as opposed to the communion of speaking (cf. Phdr. 275 d: a γεγραμμένος cannot answer to the questions of its reader: it always remains silent, πάνυ σιγή). Plato's 'attacks' on writing have been interpreted in many ways; as far as I am concerned, I think that they were meant to point out that writing is 'weak', because it cannot provide a real communion between writer and reader, i.e. a real communion of minds.

In my view, for Plato, as for Socrates, the locus of certainty is the communion of minds (συνουσία) (cf. for instance Th. 181 c: "I [Socrates] must not be alone in my opinion; you must take your share [συμμέτέχεις] in the risk, so that we may meet together whatever fate shall befall us [ἰνα κοινῷ πάσχωμεν ἀν τι καὶ δέχη]' (1)). And for him, as for Socrates, φιλοσοφεῖν is actually a συμφιλοσοφεῖν. (With a few exceptions, the main character of each dialogue is Socrates; but not a
single dialogue has as title his name: they all have as title another man's name, who is Socrates' main interlocutor. This apparent bizarrie was intended to suggest, I believe, Plato's conviction that the locus of certainty is the communion of minds.

The task of a communion of minds (συνονόμα) is to reach an agreement, a συνεμισθεμεί, about the thing sought to be known. At the beginning of the Sophist, Plato claims that all we possess in common are names (218 c 1); the thing (τὸ ἔργον), however, to which each of us gives a particular name may be different (218 c 2). Now, an agreement (συνωμολογοῦσαι, which the Stranger from Elea tries so hard to achieve — cf. 246 e 8, 247 c 1, d 7, 248 a 1, d 1, 249 c 7, 252 a 5, 253 b 9, 254 b 10-11, 256 a 11, etc.) about the thing itself (τὸ πράγμα), claims Plato, as well as the ἀληθές of a τι, can be reached only διὰ λόγων (218 c 4-5; cf. 253 b 10).

That is: a communion of individual minds is possible only through the medium of λόγος, language; and that is why for Plato the path, μέθοδος, towards certain knowledge (by which ἐπιστήμη is achieved) is a τῶν λόγων μέθοδος (Sph. 227 a 8; cf. also Smp. 202 a 6-7: how can it be ἐπιστήμη without λόγος?; see also R. 533 b, 534 b; Sph. 253 b 10; Phlb. 57 e-58 a, 59 a, 61 e). But a communion of individual minds through the medium of λόγος is actually a δια-λόγος; and so, the μέθοδος, toward certain knowledge is not a mere τῶν λόγων μέθοδος, it is a δια-λεκτική μέθοδος (R. 533 b 3, c 7). (As I argued at the beginning of Chapter Two, given this ambiguity that μέτα has in compounds, the word μέθοδος implies both 'a path that goes towards something' and 'a path that is covered together', i.e. with, μέτα, others. So, if he did coin the word μέθοδος, he managed to find a word which suits rather well his view according to which the locus of certainty is the communion of minds.)

To conclude: Plato's μέθοδοι are dialectic, in the sense that they are supposed to be undertaken through δια-λεγέμεν, dialectic, because he believed that the locus of certainty is the communion of minds and that such a communion is possible only through the medium of λόγος, language; and the fact that Plato chose to write dialogues —i.e. copies, εἰκώνες, of living (δια-)λόγοι (cf. Phdr. 276 a) — is, in my view, a symbolic gesture, designed to point out precisely this belief of his (2).

(In the Sophist 263 e Plato claims that thinking, διάνοια, is "the inward dialogue [διάλογος] carried out by the the soul [ψυχῇ] with itself without spoken sound"; and in the Theaetetus 189 e-190 a he goes even further and says that "when the soul is thinking [διανοηοῦσα] it is simply talking to herself [διαλέγομαι] asking questions and answering them, and saying yes or no." One may claim that these two passages do not support the idea that dialectic implies
a *communion* of minds as the *locus* of certainty. In my view, however, this claim—that thinking is a *dialogue*, or a sequence of questions and yes-and-no answers—is nothing but an exaggeration. We 'hear' sometimes, in our minds, the hubbub of many voices—like a character from Samuel Beckett's last writings—or even proper dialogues, but to say that thinking is a dialogue, let alone a sequence of questions and yes-and-no answers, is either a naivete or an exaggeration. As far as I am concerned, I cannot but take this claim as an exaggeration that Plato made deliberately; and I think that its sole aim was to point out his belief that the *locus* of certainty is the *communion* of minds; in other words: he believed so strongly that in thinking certainty can be achieved only by a *communion* of minds through the means of *dialogue*, that he, for the purpose of emphasizing this belief, claimed, obliquely, that even the *individual* thinking, as an inferior copy of the paradigmatic *communal* thinking, must have the form of a dialogue.)

8.1.3. The hypothetical character of dialectic

As I said, Plato's philosophical search covers two main 'areas'—(a) that of the *metaphysical nature* of the objects that can be known and (b) that of the *eiση* themselves; and both these areas are investigated by μέθοδος which, as I argued, are *dialectical*; they (with one exception), however, are, in one way or another, connected with the use ὑποθέσεις.

(a) In the first area:
(i) the μέθοδος which introduces the theory of *eiση* aims at finding, using and assessing ὑποθέσεις (cf. Phd. 100 a-101 e);
(ii) the μέθοδος which is supposed to reach the 'limit of the intelligible' (i.e. the ἄνωτότος ἀρχή) aims at 'destroying' ὑποθέσεις (R. 533 c 7-d 1); and
(iii) the μέθοδος which introduces the view that in the theory of *eiση* being is understood as *whatness* and that *whatness* is determined by the κοινωνία of *eiση* starts from a hypothetical argument (if speaking is about *eiση* and if some words unite with one another, and some not—then we have no choice: we have to admit that the *eiση* are σύνθετα and that they form a particular κοινωνία—cf. Sph. 259 e-260 a; cf. also 252 a ff.).

(b) In the second area:
(iv) in the *Meno* Plato introduces a μέθοδος which should be used when we cannot prove or disprove directly a κοινωνία between two *eiση*; and this μέθοδος, which aims not at finding the essential κοινωνία of an *eiσος*, but at establishing a few particular κοινωνία of it, is based on ὑποθέσεις.
(v) in the *Parmenides* Plato introduces a μέθοδος which aims at determining *all* the κοινωνία that an *eiσος* has with other *eiση*
(possibly as a preparation for determining what are its essential
components with other eidos), and which is also based on
upokeistis; and, finally,
(vi) in the Sophist Plato seems to suggest that the essential
'what' of an eidos resides in its genos, i.e. in its descent from
other eidos; and he introduces a mevodos aimed at diakrinen the
genos of that eidos, which is not based on upokeistis.

As I argued in 2.1 the word upokeistis has in Plato various
meanings ('theory', 'statement', 'starting point for discussion', etc.);
and the main determination of a upokeistis qua theory or statement is
that its truth, although probable to some extent, remains to be
established. Now, he (as far as I know) does not use the adjective
upokeistikos. Had he use it, I believe he would have meant by it not
only something connected with the use of upokeistis, but also what we
mean by hypothetical, i.e. something not yet surely proved as true or
false.

All these mevodos I mentioned above can be called hypothetical
in this sense, because — when they deal with the field of to
anaistheion (and, apart from the situations in which at stake is
determining a non-abstract eidos, this is always the case) their
results, even if they are not explicitly said to be obtained ex
upokeistov, remain, to a greater or smaller extent, uncertain. At the
end of Chapter Two, I argued that the mevodos which introduces the
theory of eidoi (theory which belongs to the field of to anaistheion) is
grounded on the symphonia of our legomeina; and at the end of Chapter
Six I argued that the mevodos in general which aim at determining the
abstract eidoi themselves is also grounded on the symphonia of our
legomeina. As I argued in the above mentioned chapters, the symphonia
of our legomeina is a criterion that does not guarantee truth; a result,
that is, grounded only on the symphonia of our legomeina, is not fully
justified (although its truth could be very likely). That is why the
mевodos which introduces the theory of eidoi and the mevodos which
aim at determining the abstract eidoi themselves are hypothetical, in
the sense that all they can offer are hypothetical results. And so, to
risk a general formula, we may say that Plato's methodology is both
dialectic and hypothetical: or, that his dialectic (as a general term for
his methodology) is hypothetical. (Thus, for me, unlike for Robinson,
the Platonic methodology is not very different from the Socratic one,
which is, however, less elaborated and which is based, mainly, only
on one procedure, that of exlegein; because both methodologies are (i)
dialectic, in the sense that they are supposed to be undertaken
through dia-legein, dialectic, because for both Socrates and Plato the
locus of certainty is the communion of minds, and such a communion
is possible only through the medium of logos, language; and (ii)
hypothetical, for the results achieved through these methodologies —
grounded as they are mainly on the συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενον — remain
not fully justified.)

(If so, however, then in Plato there is a rather different
situation that in most of other Greek thinkers. The Greek thinkers
tended to ground their arguments about that which is beyond the
reach of our experience on foundations, not on coherence —if I may
use these modern terms. They called sometimes these foundations
ὑπόθεσεις; and they provided, roughly speaking, two solutions for
assuring the 'firmness' of a foundation. (i) The Greek geometers
suggested to accept, conventionally, that the foundation, the ὑπόθεσις
of an ensuing argument is sure and continue our investigations as if
it were so — in which case their foundation is what we usually call a
postulate, i.e. a proposition conventionally accepted as true for the
sake of our investigations. And (ii) Aristotle suggested that we
should accept as the foundations of our arguments only those ἀρχαί
which are evidently sure —in which case his foundation is what we
usually call an axiom, i.e. a statement for which no proof is required,
because its truth is self-evident. The problem of the certainty of
'what could be put under as a ground' for our reasonings, which
Greek philosophers tried so desperately to solve, ended up, however,
in the Sceptic aporia: either an unsupported agreement or an infinite
regression. Plato, however, attempted to solve this aporia by
introducing coherence as a possible criterion of truth. For other
details about all this and for the unique place that Plato has among
Greek thinkers as regarding the use of the word ὑπόθεσις, and the
implications of it, see Annex II.)

8.2. Hypothetical dialectic and metaphysics

As I said in the Preface (see b, 1), Robinson 1953 claims that
the Platonic hypothetical method (as he construes it) is not linked
with the Platonic metaphysics. For, argues Robinson, Plato did neither
achieve his metaphysics through this method (which is
recommended, but not used); nor did he derive this method from his
metaphysics (in which case he must have asked "what it is in the
nature of things and the nature of men that makes [...it] desirable", or
"suitable" — p. 178). (As I said, Robinson 1953, 178 claims that "if a
method is suitable, that must surely be because the reality sought to
be known is such and such, and the human mind that seeks to know
it is such and such"; but, he believes that "Plato's insight did not go as
far as that" — p. 178).

In my view Robinson was wrong. So far, I showed that the
criterion on which Plato's μέθοδοι are grounded is coherence
(συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων) (see 8.1.3.). In what follows, I will show that Plato made an attempt to prove that both human mind and 'reality' are harmonic, i.e. that coherence is immanent in both reality and thinking; and that this 'correspondence' between his main methodological criterion (συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων) and the metaphysical principle of ἀρμονία is what makes his μέθοδοι suitable.

8.2.1. The correspondence between the συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων and the ἀρμονία τῶν ἔλεγαν

(a) As I argued, in the Sophist Plato claims that τὸ ὑν, ταῦτα καὶ τὰ άλλα διὰ τὸ πάντοτε κεκοιμηνηκέναι (cf. 255 ε, 256 α and 259 α). And that means that reality in general is thought as whatness, and that whatness in general is thought as being caused by the κοιμηνία with others. In less abstract words: (i) reality is reduced to ἔλεγαν; (ii) the ἔλεγαν exist as having an identity (a what); and (iii) the identity of every ἔλεγαν (and so of every sensible thing) is thought as being caused by the κοιμηνίαι in which that ἔλεγαν is 'caught' with other ἔλεγαν. The 'world of ἔλεγαν', however, is, according to Plato, not a chaos, but a κόσμος τῶν ἔλεγαν; in short: the κοιμηνία τῶν ἔλεγαν is, we may say, a ἀρμονία. (When he said that philosophy is the μεγίστη μονιμία — Phd. 61 α 3-4; cf. also R. 548 b 9; Ti. 88 e 5 — he might have thought that this way of putting things is appropriate because philosophy, like μονιμία in general, is concerned with ἀρμονίαι.)

(b) In the Timaeus Plato produces the same arguments about world-soul and human soul. The two arguments run as follows.

(i) The world-soul
(ii) The soul of the universe is framed by the Demiurge from οὐσία, ταῦτα καὶ άλλα (35 a) (I will not enter into the details concerning the 'indivisible' and 'divisible' kinds of οὐσία, ταῦτα καὶ άλλα and the division of the world-soul into harmonic intervals — for which Cornford 1937, 60 ff. offers very valuable comments); that is: the soul of the universe is an ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἀρμονίας μεμελημένη (35 b 3; cf. also 37 a 2-4).

(β) From this μεμελημένη the Demiurge made two rings (36 b-c) (the rings of sameness and of difference —35 α), which he first divided in certain proportions (b) and then set them in motion (c-d). I cannot enter here into the complicated problems regarding the divisions and the motions (φορά, περιφορά or περισσοτέ) of the two rings (for which Cornford 1937 is, again, of invaluable help). What is important, however, is that the composition of the world-soul (cf. 37 a 1), as well as its motions (i.e. the motions of its rings) (cf. 47 d 2-3) are harmonic.
(ii) The human soul
(a) The learning part of the human soul (τὸ λογιστικὸν) is a copy of the world-soul: it is made out of the same (though less pure) ingredients (i.e. οὐσία, ταύταν and θάτερον — 41 d).
(b) From this μετέχουσα the Demiurge made two rings (the rings of sameness and of difference — 43 e ff., 44 d), which he first divided in the same proportions as those of the world-soul (43 d, cf. also Cornford 1937, 149, n. 1) and then set them in motion; but its revolutions are not as those of the world-soul, for they are perturbed by various things, e.g. by the inflow of nourishment or the sensations coming from without (ἐξοθεν δύσθεσι), "which draw in their train the whole vessel of the soul" (44 a) (cf. also 43 a ff., 47 b, 90 d). Thus, when a soul whose revolutions are troubled "meet with something outside [...] they show themselves mistaken and foolish [about what falls under ταύταν and what under θάτερον]" (43 c-d). Yet, if one take care of his soul, "we might reproduce the perfectly unerring revolutions of the god and reduce to settled order the wandering motions in our [revolutions]" (47 c; Cornford's 1937 translation); and so the learning part of the soul will eventually imitate the harmonies (ἀρμονίαι) and revolutions (περιφοραι) of the world-soul (90 c-d; cf. also 47 b-c). Thus, not only the composition of the human soul, but also its motions are harmonic.

Now, what does this mean — that the composition and the motions of the world-soul and the human soul are harmonic? But first — what it is actually at stake in Plato's claim that the world-soul is a 'mixture' of οὐσία, ταύταν and θάτερον?

The world-soul is said to 'participate (μετέχουσα) in λογισμὸς and ἀρμονία (36 e 6-37 a 1), and to have an 'intelligent' (ἐμφάνονος) and eternal life (36 e 4). Now, what it actually 'does' in its eternal life is to 'perform a sort of revolutions (περιφοραι) which eventually produce a λόγος (cf. 37 b ff., 47 b, 90 c-d). That is: what it 'does' in its revolutions is to know. I paraphrase the passage from Τί. 37 a-b (using some segments from Cornford's translation, 1937):

[...]: whenever the world-soul is in contact (ἐφαπτόμενος) with anything that has dispersed existence (τοιχείων οὐσίας) or with anything whose existence is indivisible (ἄμεροστον), it is set in motion all through herself and tells in what respect precisely, and how, and in what sense, and when, it comes about that something is qualified as either being ταύταν or ἔτερον in respect to any given thing, whatever it may be, either in the world of τὰ γιγαντια, or in the world of τὰ κατὰ ταύτα ἔχουσα ἄσι. Now whenever the λόγος takes place concerning the ταύταν and θάτερον of an ὅν which belongs to the sphere of τὸ αἰσθητόν, then arise δόξα and πίστεις, which are ἴθαι and ἀληθείας. But whenever the λόγος takes place concerning the ταύταν and θάτερον of an ὅν which belongs to the sphere of τὸ λογιστικόν, then νοῦς and ἐπιστήμη are necessarily achieved [which are, most obviously, also ἴθαι and ἀληθείας].
As I claimed in 7.4.1., in *speaking*, soul establishes a *κωινωνία* of various *εἴσης*, by determining their being *identical* with themselves (and this is done through an 'operation' that Plato called *συναγωγή* and *different* from others (and this is done through an 'operation' that he called *διάφρεσις*). That is: in knowing through *διάφρεσις* (which takes place within the 'medium' of λέγειν —cf. SpP. 263 e, Thet. 189 e-190 a), soul deals, ultimately, with οὐσία, ταύτων and θάτερον.

So, when Plato claims that the world-soul and the human souls are a 'mixture' of οὐσία, ταύτων and θάτερον, what is at stake is *the question of knowledge*, not a question of *physical* 'anatomy'. If so, then Plato's claim — that, from an *epistemological* point of view, the world-soul and the human souls are made out of οὐσία, ταύτων and θάτερον — means that soul in general, in its way towards knowledge, deals with οὐσία, ταύτων and θάτερον *because* it was made in such a way as to deal with οὐσία, ταύτων and θάτερον. Put in modern philosophical terms: the way we know the objects we encounter in our experience is 'construed' according to what is already given in us, i.e. according to our *transcendental* 'elements' (viz. οὐσία, ταύτων and θάτερον).

But, as I said above in (a), in the *Sophist* Plato claims that the μέγιστα γένη of τὸ δύναμις, ταύτων and θάτερον διὰ πάντων κεκοιμημένα (cf. 255 e, 256 a and 259 a); which means that the ultimate 'elements' of *reality* (be it *transcendent* or *immanent*) are *the same* as the *transcendental* 'elements', viz. τὸ δύναμις, ταύτων and θάτερον (3). And the similarity does not stop here.

To go back to the previous question, namely what does this mean —that the *composition* and the *motions* of the world-soul and human souls are *harmonic*? Due mainly to Kant, we know what the notion of transcendental is aimed at, and we may speak about it in a highly abstract way. That is why, we are prone to regard with suspicion Plato's speaking about 'that which is already given in our mind' in terms of 'two rings that were divided and set in motion by a Demiurge'. But these are his terms (which he tells us not to take in their letters —cf. 29 b-d, 30 b, 48 d, 53 d, 55 d, 56 a a, 57 d, 59 c, etc.), and the way he puts things implies that for him 'that which is already given in the soul' (what we call transcendental) has three 'elements', which were put together in a harmonic way, and which are in harmonic motions; it implies, in short, that the *structure* and the *dynamics* of the transcendental are *harmonic*.

But, as I said above in (a), for Plato the *transcendent reality* (i.e. the 'world of εἴσης') is a ἀρμονία (for the εἴσης form not a chaos, but a κόσμος); and that means that the *transcendent reality* (and, to some extent, its copy, i.e. the *immanent reality*) are not only 'made from
the same elements' as the *transcendental*, but that they *are* in the same way, namely in a harmonic way (4). (Now, what does harmonic mean in all this? One may say that it means 'according to some particular proportions, which may be expressed mathematically' — cf. *Tl.* 35 b-36 d. But this answer will only hide the fact that ἀρμονία remains here a rather obscure word, and that that which is designated by it recedes from us.)

To conclude:

(i) As Robinson 1953, 178, I believe that "if a method is suitable, that must surely be because the reality sought to be known is such and such, and the human mind that seeks to know it is such and such". But unlike him, I do not believe that "Plato's insight did not go as far as that" (p. 178).

(ii) Plato argued that the *transcendent reality* (and, to some extent, its copy, i.e. the *immanent reality*) are not only 'made from the same elements' as the *transcendental* (i.e. τὸ ὅν, τοῦτον and θάτερον), but that they *are* in the same way, namely in a harmonic way.

(iii) So, we may say that the μέθοδοι which aim at determining the abstract εἶδη, as well as the μέθοδοι that introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη, are suitable (to use Robinson's expression) because the criterion on which they are grounded, i.e. the συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων, corresponds to the principles of both 'the reality sought to be known' (ἀρμονία τῶν εἶδων) and to that of 'the human mind that seeks to know it' (ἀρμονία τῆς ψυχῆς). In short: I claim that Plato's μέθοδοι in general are suitable because their criterion is coherence, and coherence is 'immanent' in both reality and thinking.

There remain, however, two things that need to be clarified. One is the difference between the 'levels' at which the two groups of μέθοδοι function; and the other is the relation between the methodological criterion of coherence and the metaphysical principle of coherence in the case of the μέθοδοι that introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη. The first one, I think, can be clarified rather easily and I shall discuss it in what follows; the second one, however, raises more problems and I shall deal with it *in extenso* in 8.2.2.

The μέθοδοι which aim at determining the abstract εἶδη themselves function, so to say, in the field of τὸ ἀναλόγεςτον (i.e. in the field of 'abstract matters'), but *at the level* of εἶδη. And they aim at determining the κοινωνίαι that exist between particular abstract εἶδη —'courage', 'justice', etc. —by relying on a criterion, the criterion of coherence (συμφωνία), which corresponds to the metaphysical principle of both the investigated transcendent reality (the κοινωνίαι that exist between particular abstract εἶδη) and the transcendental,
viz. the principle of coherence (ἀρμονία). That is why, we may say, they are suitable.

The μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη function also in the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον, but at a meta-εἶδη level, i.e. at a level that has as its object the very level of εἶδη and everything that this level of εἶδη presupposes.

In Chapter Four I showed that in the Republic Plato claims that there is something beyond (ἐπέκεινα) οὐσία in 'dignity' (ποιεῖσθαι) and 'power' (δυνάμει) (509 b 8)—which he calls τὸ ἀγαθόν; that is: οὐσία (understood as whatness) has an origin, an ἀρχή (cf. the expression ἦ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχῆ, at 511 b 7), namely τὸ ἀγαθόν (cf. also 509 b 8, where it is said that τὸ ἄγαθον provides, προσεύναι, οὐσία of all εἶδη). And this origin, Plato says, is 'the limit of the intelligible' (532 a 7–b 1). Yet, when he starts speaking about τὸ ἀγαθόν, he refers to it as ἦ τοῦ ἄγαθου ἰδέα (508 e 2–3). Why then, does he name ἰδέα 'that which is beyond all ἰδέαι and determines them all?'

In Chapter Five I showed that in the Sophist Plato claims also that there is something 'present' in all εἶδη—namely τὸ ὅν, ταύτων and θάτερον. These three 'elements' are also at 'the limit of the intelligible', he suggests; and he claims that they make possible the οὐσία (i.e. the whatness) of every εἶδος (for they make possible the κοινωνία τῶν εἰδῶν). Yet, he call ἰδέαι these three 'elements' that are 'beyond' all ἰδέαι (cf. for instance the expression ἰδέα τῆς θάτερου at 255 e). Why?

Because the meta-εἶδη level, like the 'level of εἶδη', is investigated by the same means, i.e. by speaking; and for Plato speaking does always operate with εἶδη. We can, that is, understand this meta-εἶδη level only by speaking about it (although, arguably, we may say that one can also know it through the act of νοεῖν); and speaking can operate only with εἶδη. In short: we can understand the very notion of εἴδος (and everything that belongs to this 'meta-εἶδη level') only by using some particular sui-generis εἶδη, like ἦ τοῦ ἄγαθου ἰδέα or ἦ τοῦ ἀθανάτου ἰδέα. (Today, however, this idea of circulus vitiosus is seen as a triviality.)

So, the μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη operate also with εἶδη, and, I believe, they also determine the κοινωνία that exist between these sui-generis εἶδη (for these εἶδη too are σύμβολα, like, for instance, the very εἶδη of τὸ ὅν, ταύτων and θάτερον).

Now, since these sui-generis εἶδη are abstract, the μέθοδοι that operate with them (i.e. μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη) cannot but rely on the criterion of coherence (συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων) (cf. for instance the account on the μέθοδοι that introduces the theory of εἶδη from the Phaedo 100 a ff.). Thus,
we may say (generalizing, I know) that the μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἶδη are also suitable, because they rely on a criterion, the criterion of coherence (συμφωνία), which corresponds to the metaphysical principle of both the investigated 'meta-reality' (the κοινωνία that exist between particular εἶδη that concern the 'meta-εἶδη level') and the transcendental — viz. the principle of coherence (ἀρμονία).

8.2.2. From συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων to ἀρμονία τῶν εἶδων and from ἀρμονία τῶν εἶδων to συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων

In philosophy of science there is a very sharp distinction between the two main contexts in which a scientific theory may be discussed: the context of justification and the context of discovery (these way of putting things was consecrated by, inter alios, Amsterdamski 1971). In discussing a scientific theory within the context of justification, one is concerned primarily (or exclusively) with its validity; whereas in discussing a theory within the context of discovery, one is concerned primarily with its genesis. In the field of sciences, both the scientists themselves and the philosophers of science have tended to consider the genesis of a theory as being of little scientific (and philosophical) importance (although, it is usually argued, this may have a psychological, historical or sociological one).

I would like, in what follows, to say a few things about the genesis of Plato's claim that transcendent reality (and, to some extent, its copy, i.e. the immanent reality) are not only 'made from the same elements' as the transcendental, but that they are in the same way, namely in a harmonic way. But I am not concerned here with psychological, historical or sociological aspects of this genesis; I am concerned with a philosophical aspect.

This philosophical aspect refers to the fact that Plato began his philosophical search by assuming a methodological principle (συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων) which led him to a conclusion that justified it (i.e. to the conclusion that transcendent reality and the transcendental are harmonic). So, we may ask, what justified this methodological principle at the moment of his application, i.e. before it led to its justifying conclusion? This question may be answered in several ways, by assuming either that it was Plato's own intuition which made him rely on a principle that later proved to be fully justified; or that the justifying conclusion (or a part of it) was, in nuce, already present in his mind when he started to apply it.

No one can pretend that he has the right answer to this question, for there is too little to rely on in terms of textual evidence. None the less, I want to suggest very tentatively the answer which I believe is the most plausible.
Plato, as I argued at the beginning of Chapter One, started from the 'topic' of man, that for him is, essentially, that part of the soul (τὸ λογιστικὸν) which aims at achieving knowledge. And he might have realized, somehow, that συμφωνία (or coherence in a wide sense) is, to use Ewing's expression, 'immanent in all our thinking' (apud Bonjour 1985, 101). (In other words: the idea that the transcendental is harmonic, which was later explicated, was assumed, I think, in one form or another, from the very beginning.) And it is this view, that συμφωνία is 'immanent in all our thinking, which, probably, led him to the conclusion that reality too must be harmonic.

The relation between a philosopher's metaphysics and his logic has been the subject of many debates. Usually, what was at stake in these debates was the question of foundation, that is the question of 'which is founded on the other' —metaphysics on logic, or logic on metaphysics. (In this century the tendency was, I think, to conclude that one's logic is, eventually, the foundation of his metaphysics.)

Plato's position, however, is rather clear: even if, arguably, a logic assumption (i.e. the assumption that συμφωνία is 'immanent in all our thinking) led him to a certain metaphysical framework (that reality must be harmonic), for him logic is grounded on metaphysics. That is: eventually, he argues that the συμφωνία that is immanent in all our thinking is grounded on the the fact that reality is harmonic.

All this, it seems to me, is, to some extent, expressed in the Sophist. If we put together some of the claims Plato brought forward in this dialogue, and complete them in a particular way (which I find rather plausible), we can obtain the following argument.

(a) From συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων to ἀρμονία τῶν εἴδων.
(i) If speaking is about εἴδη and if some words unite with one another, and some not (261 d 5-7), then we have to admit that the εἴδη are συμφωνέται and that they form a particular κοινωνία (252 a ff.) (see 5.1.). That is: since there is a κοινωνία of words, there must be a κοινωνία of εἴδη.
(ii) Words, however, συμαρμόττομαι ἄλλοις (261 d; cf. also 262 e 1.
(iii) So, we may continue his argument, since there is a συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων, there must be a ἀρμονία τῶν εἴδων.
(iv) And, if thinking is the same thing as speaking (cf. 263 e: "τί διάνοια καὶ λόγος are the same thing"; see also Sph. 264 a), we may say that the conclusion that reality must be harmonic is derived from the premise that συμφωνία is immanent in all our thinking.

(b) From ἀρμονία τῶν εἴδων to συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων.
(i) But the very possibility of speaking derives actually from the κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων (cf. 259 e "any discourse [λόγος] we can have owes its existence to the κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων") (5).
Some έλθων, however, συμφωνεῖ, while others do not (253 b 11). That is: ηθών ελθών is actually a ἀρμονία/συμφωνία.

So, we may continue his argument, it is this ἀρμονία τῶν ελθών on which is grounded the συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων (6).

And, if thinking is the same thing as speaking (cf. 263 e), we may say that the premiss that that συμφωνία is immanent in all our thinking is grounded on the conclusion that reality is harmonic.

To sum up: Plato assumed the methodological criterion of coherence because he believed that coherence is 'immanent in all our thinking' (though he expressed this idea explicitly only later, in the Timaeus), and because he felt that this belief justifies the use of such an analogical methodological criterion. Through this methodological criterion, however, he eventually reached the belief that reality too is coherent; but he did not think that he arrived at this belief because he used the methodological criterion of coherence. He, on the contrary, thought that it is the coherence of reality which actually fully justifies the use of coherence as a methodological criterion.

8.3. Dialectic, metaphorical language and metaphysics

As I said in the Preface (b, 1) and at the beginning of 8.2., Robinson 1953 claims that the Platonic hypothetical method (as he construes it) is not linked with the Platonic metaphysics. For, he argues, Plato did neither achieve his metaphysics through this method (which, in spite of being recommended, is not used), nor derive this method from his metaphysics. Robinson 1953, however, has a different opinion about the Platonic metaphysics and what he calls 'Plato's methods of analogy and imagery' (p. 222). His position, as far as I can see, is this.

(a) The method of analogy
(i) Plato is not always very enthusiastic about analogies (cf. Euthd. 298 c, Chrm. 165 e and 166 b, Men. 73 a, Phd. 99 e, R. 337 c, etc.) (215 ff.) Yet, he uses them a lot—especially in the middle dialogues, where he should have used the recommended hypothetical method (pp. 209 ff.).
(ii) Plato, however, believed that "analogies' or geometrical equalities are frequent in reality and basic to its structure" (cf. the passage of the Divided Line from the Republic, Philh. 16 d, T1. 31 c, etc.) (p. 209); and "his Pythagorean conviction indicates one simple rule of method: 'look for proportions in reality, for they are there and you will find them'" (p. 209).

(b) The method of imagery
As regarding images, "according to what [Plato] says about them he ought never to use them" (p. 220-1); although, in Cro. 432 c he
claims that "there is such a thing as correctness in imagery (εἰκόνος ὑπεράκτις)" (p. 218), which implies that "there must be legitimate occasions for its use" (p. 218). Plato, however, uses images in excess (cf. the Republic, the Timaeus, etc.) (pp. 218 ff.).

(c) Conclusion
So, we may say that Plato's "employment of analogy" is, to some extent, "supported by his own views on analogy"; but his "use of images is condemned by his own views on images and imitation" (p. 222).

To sum up: according to Robinson, Plato's methods of analogy and imagery are linked with his metaphysics. For he used them and (partially) achieved his metaphysics through them. And, in the case of the method of analogy, he derived it, somehow, from his metaphysics, for he suggested that this method is suitable because it corresponds to a metaphysical principle ('the presence of analogies in reality').

As far as the 'method of analogy' is concerned, Robinson was, I think, right. But he was wrong, in my view, about the 'method of imagery'. In what follows, I shall argue that this method too is derived from the Platonic metaphysics, although this derivation is implicit. I shall not, however, put things in Robinson's terms.

The expression 'Plato's methods of analogy and imagery' (by which Robinson wanted to cover the use of all Platonic metaphors, analogies, myths, allegories, etc.) is not, I think, very appropriate; and there are two main reasons for that. One is that the difference between 'analogy' and 'imagery' is quite difficult to define; and the other is that to speak about a method of analogy/imagery would be to go far beyond Plato's intentions.

Plato's dialectic (or, with a more specific expression, 'Plato's μέθοδος in general) does (do) resort, in various degrees, to metaphors, analogies, myths, allegories, etc., i.e. (to use the safest general formula) to a metaphorical language. But he does not say anything about a pattern or a rule that has to govern the use of metaphorical language; so here everything seems to depend on one's own poetical skills, i.e. on how μουσική one is. (When he said that philosophy is the μεγίστη μουσική — Phd. 61 a 3-4; cf. also R. 548 b 9; Ti. 88 e 5 — he might have thought that this way of putting things is appropriate not only because philosophy, like μουσική in general, is concerned with ἀφορμή; but also because philosophy has to resort, to some extent, to metaphorical language, whose use depends on the help given by Muses, not on any μέθοδος designed by man (7).) In short: for Plato, it seems, the use of metaphorical language is not (and, arguably, cannot be) reduced to a certain μέθοδος. I prefer, however, to put my claim in terms of the correspondence between Plato's philosophical use of metaphorical language and his metaphysics (not
in Robinson terms, i.e. as the derivation of Plato's method of imagery from his metaphysics).

(I am aware that the following interpretation exaggerates things, more or less; but, I believe, the articulation of a view that occurs only implicitly in a philosophical text may sometimes be brought to light only by exaggerating things. I am also aware that my interpretation simplifies things, more or less; for, given the limited space I have here at my disposal, I did not take into account all the passages that concern the question of metaphorical language in Plato.)

In my view, the most important distinction that has to be made within the field of metaphorical language is that between the use of metaphorical words and the use of metaphorical discourses (e.g. myths, allegories, etc.). In Plato's texts this distinction is evident; but he does not discuss it or say anything explicit about the use of metaphorical language. He says something explicit only about philosophical myths. Now, my argument comes in two parts. First (in 8.3.1.) I shall argue that Plato's use of philosophical myths is linked with his metaphysics, because its heuristic pattern ('to partially unconceal something aio-ooav|Tov by something aiov|T|Tov') is metaphysically justified by the 'participation' of what is aiov|Tov in what is aiov|T|Tov.

Then (in 8.3.2.) (with all the risks implied by generalizing the results achieved by a rough analysis of a complicated question), I shall claim that, in Plato, on this heuristic pattern is grounded the philosophical use of metaphorical language; and conclude that for him the philosophical use of metaphorical language is linked with his metaphysics, because its heuristic pattern is metaphysically justified by the 'participation' of what is aiov|Tov in what is aiov|T|Tov.

8.3.1. The philosophical use of myth

As philosophical matters are concerned, Plato's favourite kind of metaphorical discourse is the myth. Why does he resort in these matters to myths? So far, there have been suggested various answers; for instance: (i) because he wanted to give a religious ground to his philosophy (cf. the theories of Baur and Windelband — apud Frutiger 1930, 152 ff.); (ii) because Plato's time coincided with the climax of the Greek myth (cf. Friedländer 1958, 171); or, as Hegel 1971, 108 himself argued, (iii) because of Plato's own inability, Unvermögen, to think with abstract concepts.

In my view, none of these answers touches the heart of the matter. For Plato, a myth is, to put it very roughly, a λεγόμενον which 'carries (φέρει) something over (μετά)', that is, an embodiment in
which a 'thought' has been 'transferred' (με-αφεδε-αι) (cf. for instance Ῥί. 26 c 9: "we [, namely Critias, Timaeus and Hermocrates,] will now disclose the city that Socrates described to us yesterday [i.e. Socrates' thoughts about an ideal πολιτεία] by transferring it into the 'story' of the ancient city of Athens and Atlantis [τὴν πόλιν... ὥν μετανεγκόντες ἐπὶ τὰληθέσει]" —my paraphrase; cf. also, inter alios, Marignac 1951, 25) (at 26 c 9 Socrates' account about the ideal πολιτεία is called a myth, and at 26 ε 5-6 the myth of the ancient city of Athens and Atlantis is called an ἀληθινὸς λόγος; but, Plato's clin d'œil is, I think, evident) (8).

For Plato, however, such an 'embodiment' is neither a mere fiction, nor an ἀληθινὸς λόγος (as some do believe —cf. Ῥεγ. 523 a; cf. also Φδρ. 244 a and 253 c); for him, a myth is, "taken as a whole, false, but there is truth in it also [τὸ τε μὴν ὑστερήσειν τὸ ἀληθινον ἀληθινον, ἐφευγέτες καὶ ἀληθέσει"] (Ῥ. 377 a 5-6); it is, in other words, if I may use an expression from Ῥ. 382 b 10-c 1, an ὑπερτέρων ὑμάμενον ἀληθινον (9). To conclude: for Plato a myth, in spite of not being supported by a rigorous 'demonstration' (ἀποδεείξεις — cf. Φδ. 92 d, θῆ. 162 c), has a certain heuristic 'power' (cf. Ῥ. τὸ εἰκότων λόγων ὑμαματίζει —Ῥ. 48 d 1-2), for it may reveal a part of the truth (cf. Ὑπ. 215 a 6; εἰκότων τοῦ ἀληθινοῦ ἐπίκεια; cf. also Ῥ. 53 d-e).

So, the right answer to the question about why Plato resorts to myths in his dealing with philosophical matters is, I hold, this: because he believed that they rely on a heuristic pattern which may reveal a part of the truth (10). What does then this heuristic pattern actually consist in?

Plato did not give an explicit answer to this question; but the context in which he used the majority of his philosophical myths may throw a light on what his answer might have been.

As I argued (see 8.1.1.), Plato's philosophy covers two main 'areas': that of the metaphysical nature of the objects that can be known; and that of how a particular ἐνδος can be known. Now, the majority of Plato's philosophical myths are used in the first 'area'; that is, the context in which he used the most of his myths is that of designing and testing the theory of ἐνδος.

To be more precise. As I said at the beginning of 8.1.1., Plato's theory of ἐνδος comes in three main parts; and, at least in the first two of them, there are philosophical myths galore. For instance: the final myth of the Phaedo 107 d-108 a (an eschatological myth with many subsequent versions), which is, in my view, linked with one way of testing the first part of the theory of ἐνδος (this test is about seeing whether the implications of the theory συμφωνεῖ ἀληθῶς — for details see Chapter Three); the myth of the Cave from the Republic, which is linked with the second part of the theory of ἐνδος (see Chapter Four), etc. (In the Sophist, however, where the third part of
the theory is developed, Plato attempted to discuss the whole matter in abstract terms and avoid the use of myths or other metaphorical devices — see Chapter Five). Whereas in the other area, that of how a particular ἔδος can be known (where at stake is reaching the ὀρμός or determining the γένος of a particular ἔδος), Plato, as far as I can see, tends not to use any myth (or other metaphorical device) (11).

Now, this 'area' of the theory of ἔδη belongs to what I called the 'field of τὸ ἀναίσητον', i.e. to the field of 'abstract matters'; whereas the myths which attempted to embody various aspect of this theory have a visual content (myths, I believe, are always visual — cf. Marignac 1951, 24: "L'image peut être un mythe: elle connaît alors son développement maximum") (12). If so, then the heuristic pattern on which the use of myths is grounded consists in turning something ἀναίσητον into something αἰσητόν (i.e. in turning an 'abstract matter' into a 'non-abstract' one), in such a way that a part of the truth is revealed.

Now, what is to turn something ἀναίσητον into something αἰσητόν in such a way that a part of the truth is revealed? It is, roughly put, to 'frame' for something ἀναίσητον, through speaking, an αἰσητόν embodiment, in such a way that that embodiment unconceals a part of that which is embodied in it. If I may use Plato's terms from the Philebus 39 b-c, to speak about about τὸ ἀναίσητον in non-abstract terms is to put back to work 'the ζωγράφος that dwells in our souls' (see Chapter Six).

If so, however, there remain then two important questions to be answered: what would be, in this case, the criterion of truth? And how can a part of something ἀναίσητον be unconcealed by something αἰσητόν?

The first question first. How can we know whether a certain myth is an οὗ πάνυ ἀκρατὸν ψεύδος or a mere ψεύδος? How can we know, in other words, whether one's 'inner ζωγράφος' has framed an 'image' that reveals a part of the truth? Plato, to the best of my knowledge, does not offer any answer to this question. But, if we continue his line of though (as I see it), then the most probable answer is this.

(i) The requirement of coherence (i.e. of the συμφωνία that should exist between the λέγομεν which form a myth) is, obviously, too weak to act as a real criterion of truth (although it remains a necessary requirement of a myth that is an οὗ πάνυ ἀκρατὸν ψεύδος).

(ii) So, in order to decide whether a myth has or not some truth in it, we have to confront the αἰσητόν embodiment it provides for an ἀναίσητον 'reality' with that very 'reality' and check if the embodiment unconceals any of its parts.
(iii) But, such a confrontation (unlike a confrontation that takes place entirely in the field τὸ αἰσθητὸν) is tinged with a subjective bias. That is: we may have different opinions about how much of an abstract reality is portrayed in a myth and how well that reality is portrayed in it. That is why, in the case of speaking about about τὸ ἀναίσθητον in non-abstract terms, there is not a strong criterion of truth.

Let us now turn to the other question. How can a part of something ἀναίσθητον be unconcealed by something αἰσθητόν? That is: how can one's 'inner ζωγράφος' turn something that is not visual into an εἰδωλον λεγόμενον, a spoken image? To the best of my knowledge, there is no explicit answer to this question in Plato; but there is one, I think, which is implicit.

In the Philebus Plato speaks about a ζωγράφος that 'dwells' in our souls (who, when we talk about the field of τὸ αἰσθητὸν begins to 'paint images'); and he calls this ζωγράφος (at 39 b 3) a δημιουργός. The occurrence of this word, δημιουργός, makes one think of the 'Demiurge of the universe'. Is there any link between them? Apparently, it is not. But (to paraphrase Plato's way of introducing the issue of πόλις in R. 368 d), the Demiurge's creation 'describes in larger letters' the same poetic act of framing for something ἀναίσθητον an αἰσθητὸν embodiment, in such a way that that embodiment unconceals a part of that which was embodied in it. That is: both the Demiurge (when he creates the universe) and man's 'inner ζωγράφος' (when he creates a myth for an abstract matter) unconceal, partially (the Demiurge through τοῦς, the 'inner ζωγράφος' through λέγειν), something ἀναίσθητον by an αἰσθητὸν embodiment (13).

Now, to go back to our question — how can one's 'inner ζωγράφος' turn something that is not visual into an εἰδωλον λεγόμενον, a spoken image? Implicitly or explicitly, Plato claimed many times that language in general depends on ontology (cf. for instance Sph. 259 c: the very possibility of speaking derives actually from the κοινωνία τῶν εἰδών).

If so, however, then we may say that the question of embodying something ἀναίσθητον into an εἰδωλον λεγόμενον depends on the more general, ontological question of embodying that which is ἀναίσθητον (the νοητον ζῷον or the εἶδη in general) into sensible things. We may say, in other words, that a particular kind of metaphorical discourse, i.e. the myth (as an οὔ πάνυ ἄκρατον ψεύδος, viz. as an image that partially discloses an abstract matter) is possible because, ontologically, sensible things are images that partially disclose their non-visible models. (Or, otherwise put, when one's 'inner ζωγράφος' turns something that is not visual into an εἰδωλον λεγόμενον, he repeats the archetypal gesture of the Demiurge,
who turned a non-visible model into an ἐσκοτοῦσαν παρατούσαν.) Thus, we may conclude that in Plato the 'true myth' relies on a on heuristic pattern ('to partially unconceal something ἀναίσθετον by something αἰσθητόν') that has a metaphysical justification ('the ontological participation of what is αἰσθητόν in what is ἀναίσθετον').

8.3.2. The philosophical use of metaphorical language and its metaphysical justification: the 'participation' of τὸ αἰσθητόν in τὸ ἀναίσθετον

All the claims I have made above are about Plato’s philosophical myths. Could one generalize these claims and apply them to Plato’s philosophical use of metaphorical language?

I cannot engage here in a large-scale analysis of the question of metaphorical language in Plato. I believe, however, that such a generalization is legitimate. I believe, that is, two things.

(a) First, that on this heuristic pattern ('to partially unconceal something ἀναίσθετον by something αἰσθητόν') are grounded the philosophical uses of both metaphorical discourses and words.

(i) To extend my interpretation of Plato’s philosophical use of myth to his philosophical use of metaphorical discourse in general does not raise, I think, major objections. That is: if the philosophical use of the most representative kind of metaphorical discourse (viz. myth) is grounded on this heuristic pattern ('to partially unconceal something ἀναίσθετον by something αἰσθητόν'), then one may claim relatively easily the same about the philosophical use of metaphorical discourse in general.

(ii) To extend, however, my interpretation of Plato’s philosophical use of myth to his philosophical use of metaphorical words may seem, at first sight, more problematic. Plato does not refer, explicitly, to what happens when a word is used figuratively in a philosophical context. But his philosophical metaphors —e.g. ἐίδωμα, γένος or τὸ ἀγαπάω — are, obviously, names of non-abstract notions given to abstract ones; so, we may say that they too aim at framing for something ἀναίσθετον an αἰσθητόν embodiment, in such a way that that embodiment unconceals a part of that which is embodied in it.

To make a short digression: philosophy has always resorted to metaphors (either because, as Ricoeur 1975, 369 ff. put it, philosophy, due to its 'nouvelle manière de questioner', 'met le langage en état de carence sémantique', p. 369, and so it has to use 'des mots du langage ordinaire en vue de répondre à [...] cette carence de dénomination', p. 370; or because 'le discours philosophique recourt, de façon délibérée, à la métaphore vive afin de tirer des
significations nouvelles de l'impertinence sémantique et de porter au jour de nouveaux aspects de la réalité à la pointe de l'innovation sémantique", p. 370). The question of metaphor is extremely complicated; and the countless studies on semantics, logic, rhetoric, linguistics, etc. that have clustered round it cannot be surveyed within a lifetime. I cannot enter here into the details of any 'theory of metaphor'. In my view, however, in philosophy, in most of the cases, the use of metaphor is grounded on this heuristic pattern of revealing an abstract notion (or an aspect of an abstract notion) by the attempt to 'embody' it, as it were, into a non-abstract notion (14).

To sum up so far: I believe that, in Plato, the philosophical use of metaphorical language in general is grounded on this heuristic pattern ('to partially unconceal something ἀναφέρον by something αἰσθητόν').

(b) Secondly, I believe that for Plato the philosophical use of metaphorical language is linked with his metaphysics, because its heuristic pattern is metaphysically justified by the 'participation' of what is αἰσθητόν in what is ἀναφέρον.

I believe, that is, that in Plato (i) the distinction between speaking in non-abstract and abstract terms is grounded on the distinction between intelligible and sensible reality; and (ii) the fact that we can express (partially) abstract ideas through non-abstract terms is grounded on the fact that the sensible is a 'manifestation' of the intelligible.

As Ricoeur 1975, 366 put it, the idea that meta-physics and meta-phorical discourse correspond to each other in their attempt to "emporte les mots et les choses au-delà..., meta..." (p. 366) "revient à dire que tout l'usage de l'analogie, en apparence neutre au regard de la tradition 'métaphysique', repose à son insu sur un concept métaphysique d'analogie qui désigne le mouvement de renvoi du visible à l'invisible; la primordiale 'iconicité' serait ici contenue: ce qui, fondamentalement, fait 'image', ce serait le visible tout entier; c'est sa ressemblance à l'invisible qui le constituerait comme image; conséquemment, la toute première transposition serait le transfert du sens de l'empirie dans le 'lieu intelligible'" (15). (A view which was adopted by other philosophers, such as Heidegger, who claimed that 'the metaphorical exists only within metaphysics' — 1957, 89).

As I said, in the Timaeus 29 b Plato claims that all 'accounts' are 'akin', (αὐγενεῖτε) with the ὄντα that they describe; so, he argues, an account about what is only a changing εἶρων (29 b2-3; 92 c 7) (i.e. the visible universe) of a 'lasting and stable' (μόνων καὶ βέβαιον — 29 b 6) παράδειγμα (28 b 7; 29 b 4) (i.e. the 'intelligible' universe) — precisely because it is 'akin' to what is not μόνων καὶ βέβαιον — can
only be εἰκός (cf. 29 b 5-c 2, d, 30 b, 48 d, 53 d, 55 d, 56 a, 57 d, 59 c, 68 b, 69 b, 90 e), viz. 'probable'.

Plato's philosophy itself is, mainly, about that which is μόνιμον καὶ βέβαιον; nonetheless, his philosophy is rather εἰκός than βέβαιον. If I may use these terms in a different context, I would say that the Platonic work and its exegesis are also συγγενεῖς: the work being more εἰκός than βέβαιον, its exegesis can only be an εἰκός ἐρμηνεία. And so it is my interpretation of Plato's hypothetical dialectic (and my reconstruction of his philosophical search as a whole) — εἰκός.

As Plato, however, I believe that an εἰκός account, even if it is not supported by a rigorous 'demonstration' (ἀπόδειξις — cf. Phd. 92 d, Thet. 162 e), has a certain δύναμις (cf. ἢ τῶν εἰκότων λόγων δύναμις — Ti. 48 d 1-2) that may lead to truth (cf. Smp. 215 a 6: ἢ εἰκὼν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἐνεκε; cf. also Ti. 53 d-e). I believe, that is, that my εἰκός ἐρμηνεία — even if it sometimes relies, as Plato's philosophy itself, only on the συμφωνία of various hypotheses — may lead us to some part of the truth.
Truly the fabric of mental fleece, / Resembles a weaver's masterpiece, / Where a thousand threads one treadle throws, / Where fly the shuttles hither and thither, / Unseen the threads are knit together, / And an infinite combination grows. / Then the philosopher steps in / And shows, no otherwise it could have been: / The first was so, the second so, / Therefore the third and fourth are so; / Were not the first and second, then / The third and fourth had never been.

This is what Mephistopheles, in Goethe's Faust (verses 1922-33), says to a student-to be in philosophy (translation taken from the Oxford University Press edition, 1954). Arguably, none of the great philosophers was Mephistophelian; but these words of Mephistopheles, I believe, applies to all of them: they all saw that the fabric of mental fleece resembles a weaver's masterpiece, where a thousand threads one treadle throws; and they all attempt to prove that the way their thoughts are knit together no otherwise it could have been. And Plato is no exception.

My way of construing Plato's philosophical search can fairly be represented like this:

(i) Plato starts from the puzzling, given way in which our knowledge works. 
(ii) Then he solves this puzzle by revealing the existence of a sort of transcendent universal aspects that are actually the only objects of knowledge — the εἴληφη.
(iii) And he ends up by claiming:
   (a) that the actual 'reality' consist of these universal aspects (which are somehow embodied by the sensible objects);
   (b) that 'reality' is 'harmonic' (i.e. the universal aspects form a 'structured totality');
   (γ) that the human intellect is of a 'harmonic' nature (i.e. it can deal only with 'structured totalities');
   (δ) that knowledge aims at revealing both the transcendent universal aspects that recede from their immanent embodiments and the structure of the transcendent reality (i.e. the way the universal aspects are structured); and
   (ε) that knowledge, in order to be true, has to be 'harmonic', or 'coherent' (coherence being, in that field of knowledge which is beyond sensible experience, the only criterion of truth).

In short, the moral of Plato's philosophical search seems to be this: if we want to explain the puzzling way in which our knowledge works, we will find out that our explanation brings many other questions forward, as in a weaver's masterpiece a thousand threads one treadle throws. Now, some of these questions we cannot solve, and they, in
their turn, brings other questions forward. But, in spite of ending up with various unsolved questions, our explanation no otherwise it could have been.

Whitehead's 1929, 62 famous saying, that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato", is usually taken with a pinch of salt. A poet, says Plato in the Ion (533 e and 536 a), is hung upon his Muse, and upon the poet are hung the actors, the choric dancers, the masters of the chorus and the undermasters. How could we, to 'develop' this way of putting things from the Ion, not take with a pinch of salt a saying which implies that all Western philosophers are nothing but choric dancers hung upon Plato (who, arguably, is hung himself upon a Muse)? And yet, I believe, Whitehead's saying is an exaggeration that points out something true about the European philosophical tradition, namely that this tradition has tended to follow the Wegmarken of Plato's philosophical search (1).

First, European philosophy, in most of the cases, has been an idealism, i.e. an attempt of the T to understand the world not from the things which are 'outside' him, but from himself. That is: most of the major European philosophers (e.g. Descartes, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche or Heidegger), like Plato, started to reveal 'reality' from the question of man. "What we know in the world around us is our own spirit, and when our understanding 'penetrates' into a thing, it actually 'penetrates' into the interiorness of the self" — this seems to be the message of the majority of European philosophers (2).

Secondly, most of the European philosophers have ended up by dealing, in one form or another, with some of the main themes of Plato's 'theory of οὐσίαν': the 'universals' that are the actual objects of knowledge, the relation between these 'universals' and 'reality', the opposition 'transcendent—immanent', the 'harmonic structure' of 'reality', the 'correspondence' that exists between the transcendent, transcendent and immanent 'structures', the 'coherence' of knowledge.

So, we might say, not only Plato's philosophical search, given its starting-point (the puzzling way in which our knowledge works), no otherwise it could have been; but also the majority of the European philosophical 'doctrines', as long as they start from the question of man, no otherwise they could have been — i.e. Platonic.

In 1934 Einstein published a collection of essays entitled Mein Weltbild, in which there is an 'entry' called "Wie ich die Welt sehe", 'how do I see the world'. At this point I would like to say few things about — to paraphrase the above-mentioned 'entry' of Einstein's book — wie ich die Philosophie sehe.
In my view, philosophy, in its most glorious form, is an attempt that aims at revealing, in its entirety, the given way in which 'reality' is. A philosopher, that is, is not a creator proper, a Demiurge, for he does not bring anything into being; he only tries to bring an entire 'receding reality' to light. Now, the 'reality' with which the philosophers have dealt along the history of philosophy has been itself in a process of becoming. Parmenides and Hegel were not confronted with the same 'reality'. Most of the European philosophers, however, have focussed on those aspects of 'reality' that do always remain the same. And so, we may say, they all have attempted to bring to light the same things, although their 'stories' are different.

All this, I believe, should not be very controversial. If so, however, then Whitehead's saying, read in these terms, implies that even their 'stories', in most of the cases, are not actually different; which amounts to say that most of the European philosophers — in their attempt to reveal, in its entirety, the given way in which 'reality' is — have followed the Wegmarken of Plato's philosophical search.

Now, is this is a confirmation of Platonism? In other words, does this prove that Platonism managed to reveal the 'basic aspects of reality' as they actually are? I cannot engage here into a large-scale analysis of this issue, and I do not know what its conclusion would be. I am inclined to believe, none the less, that such an analysis will lead toward an affirmative answer to the above-mentioned questions. (In which case, to understand Plato will prove to be not only a question of understanding the beginning of our philosophical tradition, but also a question of understanding us and the way reality appears to us.)

Yet I can state this much of all writers in the past or future who profess knowledge of the matters to which I devote myself, whether on the ground of having learned them from me or others, or as a discovery of their own. It is, in my opinion, impossible that they should understand one whit of the business.

This is what Plato wrote in the seventh letter (341 b-c, translation from Taylor 1934, 201). The most striking thing in this passage is the sureness of Plato's tone. Where does this sureness stem from? One can only speculate; as far as I am concerned, I would rather not, and end, platonically, with a an unsolved question.
ANNEX I

Three figures regarding the geometrical problem in the *Meno* 86 e ff.

Figure (1)

Figure (2)

Figure (3)
ANNEX II

Hypothesis and metaphysical topography

1. The literal sense of ὑπόθεσις

For us, the word 'hypothesis' has, roughly speaking, only one meaning: a theory, or explanation which is still uncertain, usually because its predictions have not yet been fully confirmed. For the Greeks it was different: "We should realize", says Sextus Empiricus, "that things are called ὑπόθεσις in many different senses" (M III, 3; translation from Barnes 1990, 90).

The Greek word ὑπόθεσις had numerous meanings: 'intention', 'purpose', 'advice', 'pretex', 'occasion', 'excuse', 'actor's role', 'subject proposed for discussion', 'subject of a poem or treatise', 'supposition', 'premiss', 'starting-point', 'beginning' (cf. LSJ). Confronted with all these meanings we may be inclined to ask that very Socratic question: What, if any, is their common feature? The attempt to answer this question, I am afraid, is likely to end up in a Socratic way. That is why I shall focus in what follows on the literal (perhaps original) sense of the word ὑπόθεσις, which I shall take then as a 'reference' in discussing its usages in philosophical contexts.

The noun ὑπόθεσις and the verb ὑπότισμα derived from the verb τίθημι, 'to place, put, set'. The preposition ὑπὸ, which means 'under' (Lat. sub) or 'by', denotes in compounds mainly what is 'under', e.g. ὑπὲρ ('to be under'), ὑποβάθμι ('to go under'), or ὑποτίθημι ('to place under', 'to place under as a foundation', or 'to lay down'). ἔσος means 'placing', 'settling', or simply 'position' (1); and ὑπό-θεσις means, accordingly, in its proper sense, 'a placing under', although in usage it denotes 'that which is placed under', das Untergelegte. Yet a ὑπόθεσις, according to the vast majority of its usages, is not something merely placed lower than something else, but something placed under something else as a foundation (cf., inter alios, Rosenmeyer 1960, 398). That is why a cat placed under a table cannot be called a ὑπόθεσις, whereas a stone (ῥήτος) placed (θέμελιν) as a foundation (θεμέλιον) for a house can (for the associations between θεμέλιον and ὑπόθεσις see for instance Sextus M III 10 and 12).

A ὑπόθεσις, however, namely something which is laid down as a foundation for something else has, roughly speaking, three determinations. (a) First, the putting of something as a foundation must be performed by an agent. (That which is used as a foundation may not be created by the agent himself, but its putting as a
foundation is his 'gesture'; a stone, for instance, which lays as the foundation of a building, may not be created by the builder himself, but it is the builder who turns it into a foundation.) (b) Secondly, the putting of something as a foundation for something else precedes the standing of that something else over its foundation — as it is the case with the foundation of a house, which is 'laid down' before the house proper is built (hence the meanings of 'starting-point' and 'beginning' of the word ὑπόθεσις). (c) And thirdly, that which lies under something else as a foundation supports that something else; when I place something under something else, so as they are firmly pressed against each other, that which was placed under, because of what we call the force of gravity, bears the weight of that under which it has been placed. Because of this situation, 'that which is under', a ὑπόθεσις, supports that which is over, for which it is like a στήλη, βάσις, ground.

These three determinations of the literal, perhaps original sense of the word ὑπόθεσις were preserved, to a greater or lesser extent, in many of its metaphorical usages, where 'that which was placed under as a foundation for something else' became 'the reason for doing or saying something else'. 'An intention', 'a purpose', 'an advice', 'a pretext', 'an occasion', or 'an excuse' of an action is something which has been settled by somebody before the action begins, and so it acts as the ground of that action; 'an actor's role' is something which has been settled by somebody before the performance begins, and so it is the ground of the actor's 'behaviour' on stage; 'the subject proposed for discussion' is something which has been settled by somebody before the actual discussion begins, and so it acts as ground of that discussion; 'the subject of a poem or treatise' is something which has been settled by somebody before the writing begins, and so it acts as ground of that writing; and 'a supposition' or 'premiss' of a reasoning is, obviously, something which has been settled by somebody before a reasoning begins, and it acts as the ground or starting-point of that reasoning (2).

2. The philosophers’s ὑπόθεσις

2.1. The grounded world. The ontological ἀρχή as 'that which lies or stands under as a foundation of the world'. ὑποκείμενον and ὑπόθεσις

As I argued in 1.3., the idea that every thing in our world (as well as the world itself) must have an 'origin' (i.e. ἀρχή, φύσις or αἰτία) is, in one form or another, to be found in all major Greek thinkers (cf., inter alios, Burnet 1908, 10-11). This idea, however, that nothing comes into being out of nothing, was left unjustified by
the Greek thinkers; and so, we have to take their belief in the existence of 'origins' as a given postulate of their thinking. But the Greek philosophers did not left unjustified only their belief that every thing in our world must have an ἀρχή — they also left unjustified their localizations of the ἀρχαί.

If claiming anything about the Presocratic philosophers was not such adventurous a business, I would say that for them the 'origins' of the world, the ἀρχαί, are thought as supporting the world κάτωθιν, 'from below'. For Thales, for instance, the earth lies on water (cf. fr. A 14: γῆν ἐφ' ὕδατος κείσθαι; cf. also fr. A 12); if ὕδωρ here means ἀρχή (as in: ἄρχην τῷ παντὸς ἐλναὶ καὶ τέλος τῷ ὕδωρ, Hyppolytos, Haer. I 1), then Thales' 'principle' (i.e. water) is a sort of θεμέλιον of the world (γῆ). Also, Anaximenes' ἀέρ (fr. A 5,13-14), as well as Hippasos' (fr. 7, 9-10) and Heraclitus' (fr. A 5, 14) νῦν, are all referred to as a ὀ πόσις which 'lies under', ὑποκείμενη.

Given the fact that all we know about the Presocratic philosophers comes from a few fragments preserved by some late authors in their own writings, we may only guess what their intentions were. This 'localizing the origin' of the world under the world, however, was not meant, I guess, to be taken literally.

One may say that physically, because of what we call the force of gravity, everything needs a support, a ground; and so the fact that each αἰκονοθήματα, 'edifice', for instance, must be supported by a θεμέλιον, is a fact given as such to human experience. Thus, one may speculate, because of this vorhanden situation — as a German philosopher might put it — the Greeks were inclined to think that somehow not only any aedificatio, but every single ὄν must have, metaphorically speaking, a ground, a basis. In other words, one may speculate that because of this situation the Greek philosophers were inclined to think that everything which exists 'relies', as it were, on a 'foundation', which, as a foundation, precedes it and so stands as a beginning, ἄρχη, for it. We cannot, however, construe any sophisticated argument on these fragments, because they actually belong to relatively late authors, who often tend to speak about their own 'ontological principles' as being 'localized under' (3).

Nonetheless, in the above fragments it is suggested that the 'origins' of the world, the ἀρχαί, are (in my view poetically) 'localized' under the world. (And later on, the Greek philosophers started to use the words ὑπάρχων and ὑπαρχεῖν instead of ἀρχή.) If so, one might expect to find the word ὑπόθεσις used in connection with the notion of ἀρχή. Yet the word ὑπόθεσις, which had a glorious destiny in epistemology, was somehow avoided in the Presocratic ontology — and the reason for this is not, I think, its prefix, ὑπό-, but its root, θέ-; for the Presocratics thought their ontological 'grounds', their ἀρχαί,
not as 'put under', ὑποθέμεναι, but rather as merely 'laying under', ὑποκειμέναι.

The Greeks, it seems, had a propensity to think 'that which holds a city' as 'something laid down (θέμενον) for the city'. That is why, perhaps, the two roots of the verb τίθημι (θέ- and θη-) are to be found in many expressions which refer to 'that which holds a πόλις': its law (θέμις, θέμα, θεμός), its justice (θεσμοσύνη), its legislation (νόμοθεσία), its constitution (θέμιον), its written statute (τεθμός) or its treatises (συνθεσία, συνθήκαι) — they all are being 'laid' by a νομοθέτης. But a law or a treatise can be 'put' in a city because they are, as it were, 'products' of men (cf. for instance Plato Hi.Ma. 284 d 4: τίθενται τὸν νόμον οἱ πολιτείμναι) or, sometimes, of gods (cf. for instance Xenophon Cyr. VI, 6: παρὰ τοὺς τῶν θεῶν θεσμοὺς). (The beginnings of the Athenian democracy, as Ostwald 1969 convincingly argued, are characterized, inter alia, by the change from the usage of θεμός, a 'statute' imposed, 'put', upon a people by a νομοθέτης, to that of νόμος, a 'statute' accepted — 'distributed among', cf. νέμω, 'to distribute' — by a people as 'valid and binding' — see Oswald, p. 55.)

The Greek philosophers, when they speak about that which supports ontologically something else, prefer to use the words ὑποκείμενον and ὑπόστασις (which had illustrious careers in ontology) and not ὑπόθεσις (4). And a possible reason for this may be the fact that for them the ontological ἀρχαί are not 'products' of either men or gods (as a law or treatise is), and so they cannot be referred to (in my view, I repeat, poetically) as being 'put under the world'. ὑποθέμεναι, to support it: they can only 'lie', κειμέναι, or 'stand', ἴσταμέναι, 'under' it. Yet, when they speak about that which supports epistemologically something else, they seem to prefer the word ὑπόθεσις to others, such as ὑπόκηφις, 'assumption', or (why not?) ὑπόνοια, 'meaning which lies at the bottom of something' (e.g. at the bottom of an argument).

2.2. ὑπόθεσις as the θεμέλιον of reasoning. The epistemological ἀρχαί as 'that which is put under as a foundation of reasoning'. Geometers' and Aristotle's ὑπόθεσις

Aristotle claims that only the ἀρχαί which are sources of motions "are called ἀρχαί in the strict sense" (EE 1222 b 20 ff.). This strict sense of ἀρχαί, continues Aristotle, "is not found in ἀρχαί incapable of movement, for example in those of mathematics, although the term is indeed used of them by analogy" (b 25 ff.) In short: the ontological ἀρχαί are, in Aristotle's view, not to be mistaken for the epistemological ἀρχαί.
For Aristotle (as for many other Greek philosophers, e.g. Sextus—cf. Met. III 4 and 5) the epistemological ἀρχαί are the beginnings of demonstrations, ἀρχαί ὑποθέσεων (cf. Met. 1013 a 15 ff. or Ph. 195 a 18 ff.). These ἀρχαί, unlike the ontological ἀρχαί, were thought as 'being put' by somebody as the beginnings of an ensuing argument, and as preceding and supporting it, in the way a foundation (θεμέλιον) precedes and support, say, a house (5). Sextus for instance makes this comparison: "The setting up of the horoscope ἀρνοσκόμος" — he says — "is the ἀρχή, and, as it were, the θεμέλιος of astrology" (Met. V 50). That is why Aristotle, together with many other Greek philosophers, compared the ἀρχή τῶν ὑποθέσεων with a 'foundation', θεμέλιον, or with 'something put under the ensuing argument as a foundation', i.e. with a ὑποθέσεις (cf. inter alia, Metaph. 1013 a 16: τῶν ὑποθέσεων αἱ ὑποθέσεις) (6).

A foundation proper, however, can support 'that under which it has been placed' only if it is resistant enough, βέβαιον, i.e. able to bear the weight of 'what is over'. An epistemological ὑποθέσεις, that is: an ἀρχή τῶν ὑποθέσεων, should, as a foundation proper, be reliable too, that is βέβαιον, firm, trusty, sure, in a word: true. (Cf. Demosthenes II, 10, 5, although this passage, as a 'Siaipeap purist' would say, deals with the ground of an action, not of a reasoning: "Just as the foundations of a house and a ship and other such structures must be very strong, so the ἀρχαί and ὑποθέσεις of actions ought to be true and just" — apud Rosenmeyer 1960, 398.) In Against the Mathematicians (III 10) Sextus says (I paraphrase): "if what is hypothesized is not true — that is, as the saying goes, if the foundations are rotten [σκεροῖ θεμέλιον] — we may hypothesize it a myriad times, the conclusion which follows will be that of an inquiry which starts from non-existing ἀρχαί". Because, continues Sextus a few lines later (III 12), any ὑποθέσεις, as any foundation (θεμέλιος), must be firm (βέβαιον), if what follows is to be agreed upon, otherwise, as the geometers will say, the ὑποθέσεις are 'out of place' (ἀτόποι).

"Sometimes" — claims Epictetus (diss I vii 22-3) — "it is necessary to postulate [αἰτήσαι] a ὑποθέσεις as a sort of basis [ἐπιβάλλει] for the ensuing argument. Now should one accept every offered ὑποθέσεις? And if not every one, then which?" (translation from Barnes 1990,106). In other words, how can we assess the stability, the certainty (τῷ βέβαιον) of what lies as a foundation of our arguments? This question of how certain are the foundations of our reasoning was actually one of the Greek philosophers's obsessions, and that is why the concept of hypothesis, understood as that which is laid down as a premiss and starting-point of a reasoning, plays a key role in the works of many geometers and mathematicians from
different schools, and in those of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Neoplatonists and the Sceptics.

How then, to go back to our question, can we assess the stability, the certainty of what lies as a foundation of our arguments? If we exclude Plato, we may say that the Greek thinkers provided, roughly speaking, two solutions.

(a) According to the *Meno* 86 e, where Socrates proposes to make a hypothesis as the geometers do, it seems that the Greek geometers suggested to accept, conventionally, that the 'foundation', the ὑπόθεσις of an ensuing argument is sure and then continue our investigations as if it were so. (In this case ὑπόθεσις means what we usually call a postulate, i.e. a proposition conventionally accepted as true for the sake of our investigations. In Greek mathematics, however, the word ὑπόθεσις may also mean a presupposition, a definition, or an ἀρχή (7).)

(b) Aristotle, on the contrary, suggests that we should accept as the 'foundations' of our arguments only that which is evidently sure. In *Posterior Analytics* (72 a 20 ff.) he claims that "among the first principles or ἀρχαί on which any science is based there will be hypotheses" (apud Barnes, 1990, p. 93). It is not very clear how Aristotle separates from the group of the first principles the subgroup of 'hypotheses'. What it is important, however, is that for Aristotle laying down a hypothesis P means the assertion of P as a first principle, i.e. as a first truth (an Aristotelian hypothesis is what we usually call an axiom, i.e. a statement for which no proof is required, because its truth is self-evident — see, *inter alia*, *APo*. 76 b 14-5 and 23-4). Since the first principles are evidently true, 'hypothesizing' them is not at all an approximate, uncertain operation, as it was the geometers's 'hypothesizing' according to the *Meno*.

In the history of Greek philosophy, the confrontation between these two meanings, a postulated ground and a self-evident ground, was won by the latter. The word ὑπόθεσις was used more and more to name a 'principle', whose truth is self-evident (8). Here for instance is an example from a late author, Alexander of Aphrodisias

Hypotheses are first principles of proofs, because there is no proof of such propositions, i.e. of first principles, but they are posited as evident and known in themselves [ἀποδείξεως] [...], and what is assumed without proof they call an hypothesis (or even, more generally, a thesis) and say that it is hypothesized [translation from Barnes 1990, 94].

(in *APr* 13.7-11)

And, if we rely on Sextus' testimony, even the Greek geometers started to mean by ὑπόθεσις a self-evident ἀρχή:
The geometers, seeing the mass of problems which dog them, retreat into what they think to be a matter safe and free from danger, namely the postulating of their geometrical first principles by hypothesis [τὸ ἐξ ὑποθέσεως αἰτίεσθαι τὸς τῆς γεωμετρίας ἀρχής] [translation from Barnes 1990, 95].

(M III 1)

The problem of the certainty of 'what could be put under as a ground' for our reasonings, which the Greek philosophers tried so desperately to solve, ended up, however, in the Sceptic aporia: either an infinite regression or an unsupported agreement. According to Sextus for instance "those who assume something by hypothesis and without proof are satisfied by a bare assertion [ψιλὴ φῶς] alone" (M III 7, translation from Barnes 1990, 97). Because for him a ὑπόθεσις, even if it is an allegedly self-evident ἀρχή (as, for instance, the three ἀρχαί on which Asclepiades tried to ground his medical science — cf. M I 157, 188, 279, etc; cf. also Barnes 1990, 97, n. 8). And so for Sextus the hypothetical mode leads to a suspension of judgement (ἐποχή), because, being concerned not with proving that something is true, but only with agreeing that something is true, it lacks any value:

The mode from an hypothesis occurs when the Dogmatists, being thrown back ad infinitum, begin from something which they do not establish but claim to assume simply and without proof by virtue of an agreement [translation from Barnes 1990, 98].

(M III 1)

That which was placed under, seems to be the conclusion of Sceptic philosophy, in order to support that under which it has been placed needs, in its turn, a ground. Otherwise, as long as 'that what is placed under' is not itself supported by something else, a ὑπόθεσις cannot be more that a groundless ground. Yet Plato, long time before the Sceptics, by using the criterion of the συμφωνία τῶν λόγων (i.e. the criterion of coherence), suggested a possible escape from the difficulties raised by foundationalism (see 8.1.3.).

3. Plato's ὑπόθεσις

Plato used the word ὑπόθεσις in various philosophical passages; with him, however, things are (as usual) more complicated.
3.1. The suspended world. Physical and metaphysical topography in Plato

In Plato the main ontological distinction is, roughly speaking, that between (i) a changing, temporal, visible, sensuous, 'profane' realm, and (ii) an unchanging, atemporal, non-visible, intelligible, divine one (see, *inter alia*, Smp. 208 a 8-b 1; R. 509 d-511 e, 534 a 2-5; Sph. 247 c-248 a; Ti. 27 d 7-28 a). Let us not, for the moment, enter the complicated details regarding this distinction, and say only that the intelligible realm is for Plato the 'origin', the ἄρχη of the sensuous realm. And that is to say that the Greek idea, according to which our world depends on something else (e.g. on ὑπωρεία, in Thales' case), occurs also in Plato. Now, Plato, like many other Greek philosophers, *localizes* the ἄρχη of 'our' world (in his case, the so-called 'intelligible realm'); but, contrary to the mainstream of Greek philosophy, he localizes it 'above', not 'under' the world (as, for instance, it seems to be the case with Thales' ὑπωρεία, on which the world lies). (And he, like all Greek philosophers, not only left unjustified his belief that our world must have an ἄρχη — see for instance Ti. 28 a, which simply postulates it; he also left unjustified his 'localization' of this ἄρχη).

In what follows, I shall argue (a) that in Plato we have to distinguish between the physical and the metaphysical μέτωπον and κάτω, and (b) that for him, *poetically* speaking, the sensuous realm is not *grounded* upon, but *hung* from the intelligible realm (which is simply *given*, not *put* where it is by a Demiurge or any other 'agent'); then I shall (c) propose, *tentatively*, a possible explanation of Plato's metaphysical topography, and (d) conclude that, given his way of putting things, he could not use, in connection with the intelligible realm, any expressions prefixed by ὑπό-, such as ὑπόθεσις, ὑποκείμενον, ὑπομένον or ὑπόστασις.

(a) The problem of the physical orientation in Plato is an extremely complicated subject, as anyone can see from O'Brien's study (1984) on the Platonic notion of weight, with which the problem of direction is closely linked (see for instance Ti. 62 c-63 e, where the notions of 'up' and 'down' are explained in conjunction with 'light' and 'heavy', and with the movement that earth and fire have towards their 'parent element'). Aristotle claims (*Cael.* 308 a 17 ff.) that Plato does not hold an absolute view on 'up' and 'down' (9). And this opinion is supported by several passages, e.g. the *Timaeus* 62 c, where Plato says that "it is quite a mistake to suppose that the universe is parted into two regions, separate from and opposite to each other — the one a lower to which all things tend which have any bulk, and an upper to which things only ascend against their will" (10). Yet Plato, in many other passages, speaks of high and low
'regions', as he does for instance in the *Phaedo* 112 b 3, where he describes the waters of Tartarus as moving ἀνω καὶ κάτω, or in the *Phaedrus* 247 b, where he refers to the summit (ἀκραῖον) of the 'arch that is over the heaven below [ἐν τῇ ὑποστάσει ἀνωθεν]' (cf. also R. 519 b). But, if the universe, as a whole, is not parted into two regions, one lower and one upper (as it is stated in Ti. 62 c), why does Plato refer to a ὑποστάσεις 'region'?

According to the μετεφραστικόν, Plato claims in the *Cratylus* 396 b-c, the way to have a pure mind (τὸν καθαρὸν νοῦν) is 'to look upward' (ἐράν τὰ ἄνω). But, as Socrates argues in the *Republic*, the study of astronomy "does not compel the soul to look upward [εἰς τὸ ἄνω ἐράν] nor lead it away from things here to those higher things" (529 a), nor "does any other study turn the soul's gaze upward [ἀνω] than that which deals with being and the invisible [τὸ ἄνω τὸ οὐκ Τῶ]" (529 b). And, continues Socrates (529 b-c),

if anyone tries to learn about the things of sense, whether gaping up [ἄνω κεχηρώσει] or blinking down [κάτω χείλες], I would never say that he really learns —for nothing of the kind admits of true knowledge — nor would I say that his soul looks up, but down [οὔτε ἄνω ἀλλὰ κάτω], even though he study floating on his back on sea or land.

This passage from the *Republic* (see also Phdr. 249 c) states very clearly: the physical ἄνω and κάτω (which are relative, according to Ti. 62 c and to Aristotle's interpretation) are to be distinguished from the metaphysical ἄνω and κάτω (which are absolute). That is: for Plato, physically, the sensuous realm is not parted into two regions, opposite to each other, one low, and one up up (cf. Ti. 62 c); but he, given his poetical way of putting things, depicts the intelligible realm as being situated somewhere, above the sensuous realm (and the passages of the Line and the Cave from the *Republic* do not leave any doubt about this localization of the intelligible realm above the sensuous realm —see especially 515 c). (11). Thus, when he speaks about high and low 'regions' (as he does in the *Phaedrus* 247 b), he does not have in mind a physical distinction between high and low parts of the sensuous universe, but the metaphysical distinction between the intelligible and sensuous realms, to which he, in his urge to embody his thoughts in poetical images, gave a 'spatial localization: the former somewhere up, the latter somewhere down (12).

(b) Roughly speaking, an ἀρχή (e.g. Thales' ὑδώρ) is, in an ontological context, that which 'keeps' our world. In Plato's case, however, since his ἀρχή (i.e. the intelligible realm) is situated above the world (i.e. above the sensuous realm), the world is 'kept' by it ἄνωθεν, 'from above', as it is in the final myth of the *Republic* (here,
in this myth, the universe is said to be 'fastened by chains to the 
δεσμάντσθεν ήκο of a spindle', which, I believe, is a metaphor for the 
intelligible realm (13)). (For Plato, however, if I can make a short 
digression, man also is 'hung' upon the metaphysically 'higher realm', 
like an upside-down plant whose roots, being up, hold him from 
above — cf. Ti. 90 a-b (14); or like a puppet hung by cords and 
strings upon the Gods — cf. Lg. 644 d-e.)

To sum up: for Plato — unlike for some Presocratic philosophers 
and unlike for most of us — the world of becoming and man himself 
are not grounded upon, but hung (15) from something which has 
more 'ontological dignity'. Why then, metaphysically, does Plato's 
world seem to be 'upside-down'?

(c) As I mentioned earlier, the fact that each οἰκοδόμος, 
'edifice', must be supported by a θεμέλιον is a fact given as such to 
human experience. And so, because of this situation, one can think 
that everything must have a θεμέλιον and be supported, as it were, 
θεμελιοθεν, 'from the bottom'. (In other words, paraphrasing what 
Plato says at Phd. 99 c, one may think that there is a mighty and 
sustaining Atlas in every thing.) This metaphysical orientation, 
where what is down is held as 'essential', because it supports what is 
up, is to be found in many different cultures, from the ancient times 
— full of myths and philosophâmes which present the image of a 
'supported world' — to our times, where the most common metaphors 
of 'essences' are 'foundation', 'basis', or 'ground'. According to this 
orientation, however, what is 'under' is taken as what is 'secure', 
'stable' and 'firm' — in short as what is 'superior' (16). But something 
which is under something else, even if it is more secure and stable, 
tends, in many different cultures, to be regarded as 'inferior'. In 
Greek for instance, the 'better' part of a city is the ἀκροπόλις, not the 
ὑπόπολις (for the tendency to 'localize' under or down what is, 
roughly speaking, 'negative', see, inter alia, Aeschylus' description of 
Tartarus in Pr. 219-220 as a 'deep black hole', μελαμβανω τε κευμάν); 
or, to take another example, καθαρέω, 'to take down', means also, 
metaphorically, 'to humble' (cf. also ταπεινώς — which also means 
'low' and 'humble').

For Plato ἄκρος, 'high', is the attribute of excellence, of 
superiority. The 'heaven' (οὐρανός), where the gods dwell, is 'up', 
whereas the human race lives 'down below' (Smp. 190 b 8); the most 
important offices in a state are 'the highest' (Lg. 765 d-e, where the 
post of the supervisor of education is called 'the most important of 
the highest offices', ἀκροτάτων ἀρχῶν); the rulers of Kallipolis are 
called 'the highest', ἄκροι τῶν ἀρχῶν (R. 459 b 11); the men who 
are to institute Magnesia's regulations about the official posts are 
'men of the highest parts', μάλιστα ἄκραι (Lg. 753 e 5); an 
accomplished craftsman is an ἄκρος δημιουργός; a consummate
guardian is an ἀκρός φύλαξ (Lg. 965 b 6-7); and the best philosophers are the ἀκροὶ εἰς φιλοσοφίαν (R. 499 c 7; cf. also Ti. 20 a 4-5).

The Greek ὑπό, however, expresses, with Genitive and Dative, both the idea of 'under' and that of 'subjection' or 'dependence'. This 'subjection' can be a 'subordination to a person' (e.g. ἔστω ὑπὸ τινι — 'to be subordinate to a person', or ὑπὸ τινι —'under one's power', cf. LSJ), or even a 'logical subordination of things under a class' (e.g. in Aristotle's Cat. 1 b 16, cf. LSJ). In Greek then, ὑπό, 'being under' (that is: 'bellow something else'), implies, metaphorically, (i) inferiority (to some extent) (a common word for 'inferior' is ὑποθετις — literally 'something fasten', ἰδέαν, 'under', ὑπό, 'something else') and (ii) dependence (the most common Greek word for 'dependant' is ὑπήκοος —'being under command'; cf. also ὑποκείμενοι —'dependent', i.e. 'being under one's hand' and ὑποστηθισσόμενον —'to serve under the command of a στρατηγός'; and the most used verb to express the notion of dependence is ἀντί παίζομαι, which, in the passive voice, means, literally, 'to be hung upon'). It is true that the notion of 'dependence' can also be expressed in Greek "via the verb καθωμαι in combination with the preposition ἐν", "and there the perspective is opposite" (Rosenmeyer 1960, 398, n. 14). For Plato, however —perhaps because in his days the notion of 'dependence' was chiefly expressed through the preposition ὑπό (or through the verb ἀντί παίζομαι) rather than through the verb καθωμαι in combination with the preposition ἐν (or simply because he, in his mystical 'adoration' of the ἔθνη, followed that universal tendency of the religiously inclined men to 'localize' that which is 'sacred' above, and not under (17)) —it seemed more 'natural' to localize our dependent and inferior world of becoming ὑπό, 'under', that which truly is, i.e. the ἔθνη.

(d) To sum up: for Plato the sensuous realm is 'held' by its ἀντί παίζει, i.e. the intelligible realm, from above, exactly as in the Ion the poet is said to be held (ἔχεται — 536 b 1) by the Muse upon whom he hangs (ἔχεται ἐγρατησάν — 536 a 8). Thus, Plato could not use, in connection with the intelligible realm, any expressions prefixed by ὑπό—such as ὑπόθεσις, ὑποκείμενον, ὑπομένειν or ὑποστηθισσόμαι (in the case of the term 'ὑπόθεσις', besides the inadequacy of the ὑπό—there is also the inadequacy of ἐθεσίς for the Platonic intelligible realm is simply given above the sensuous realm, not put there by an 'agent' —be him even a Demiurge). And so for Plato, as for the other Greek philosophers, the word ὑπόθεσις could not be used in ontological contexts. He, however, like other Greek philosophers, used it in epistemological contexts. But here too, he seems to be unique.

3.2. The ascension towards the intelligible

Plato does not say that each μηθοδευτής that aims at achieving knowledge is an ascension (18). But he speaks about knowing the
intelligible realm in general as an ἀνάβασις — see for instance the Phaedo 109 d-e:

Although we live in a hollow of the earth, we assume that we are living on the surface, and we call the air heaven, as though it were the heaven through which the stars move. And this point too is the same, that we are too feeble and sluggish to make our way out to the upper limit of the air. If someone could reach to the summit [ἐν τοίς ἐκείνοις ἐκείνους], or put the wings to fly aloft, when he put up his head he would see the world above, just as fishes see our world when they put up their heads out of the sea. And if his nature were able to bear the sight, he would recognize that that is the true heaven and the true light and the true earth.

(Cf. also R. 517 b 4-5: "the contemplation of the things above is an ascension [ἀνάβασις] of the soul to the intelligible region [νοητός τόπος]"; 534 e: 'dialectic is the coping stone [θεριγός] of all studies'; and Phd. 101 d, R. 510 b, 515 e 1, 7, 517 a 3-5, 533 d 2-3, Phdr. 249 c, Tht. 175 c-d, Ti. 20 a 4-5 (19).

Roughly put, Plato claims that, metaphysically, man lives in an ontologically inferior world, usually without knowing that which is above him, namely the intelligible realm, and so he dwells, as it were, in hollows (or in caves, as the Cave allegory in the Republic puts it); and that man's supreme achievement is to raise himself into the 'upper region' of the intelligible realm, i.e. to 'perform an ascension', an ἀνάβασις.

For the Greek philosophers, the main task of φιλοσοφία is, roughly speaking, to know the ultimate principles of the world. For those who think that things are 'grounded', 'founded' or 'based' upon principles, the quest for those principles would be like a descent towards the profound depths of the world (hence the adjective βαθὺς, deep, often associated with θεώρημα, a thing contemplated by the mind — cf. for instance Porphyry, Plt. 14, 15ff.); whereas for those who think that things are held from the above by 'principles', or by a God, the quest for principles would be like an ascent towards the upper-most predominant heights of the world. (Again, the symbolism of initiation as an 'ascension', i.e. as a knowledge of 'what really is', is present in many ancient rituals and myths — see Eliade 1958, 104-8, who assembled a great deal of evidence on this).

In the time of Plotinus, writes Porphyry in his Life of Plotinus (16, 1-9), there were many Christians and sectarians who had abandoned the old philosophy, and who claimed that "Plato had not penetrated [πελάσαντος] to the depths of intelligible reality [ἐν τῷ βαθὺ τῆς νοητῆς οὐσίας]." But since for Plato (i) the νοητὴ οὐσία, the intelligible reality, is 'localized' above the world of becoming; and (ii) the 'knowing' of this intelligible reality which is above is (to use that phrase from the Phaedo 109 e 2-3) 'a reaching of the summit' (ἐν'
"έκρα έργεσθαι"), then those Christians and sectarians, if they wanted to express their idea in Plato's terms, should have said something like 'Plato had not reached the heights (οὐκ έλήλυθεν ἐπ' ἄκρον) of intelligible reality.' This expression (i.e. έλήλυθεν ἐπ' ἄκρον) occurs actually in the Timaeus 20 a 4-5, where Socrates says that Timaeus, besides holding the most important and honourable offices in his own state, "has reached the heights of all philosophy [φιλοσοφίας...ἐπ' ἄκρον ἀπόστησις έλήλυθεν]" (cf. also R. 499 c 7: 'the best philosophers are the ἄκροι εἰς φιλοσοφίαν'). This idea, however, that the path followed by a philosopher is an 'upward path' (as it is explicitly called in the Symposium 211 c, Republic 510 b ff. and implicitly suggested in the Phaedo 101 d) occurs also in the Theaetetus 175 c-d, where Socrates says that what a philosopher does to a novice is to "drag [him] upward to a height at which he may consent to drop the question 'What justice have I done to you or you to me?' and to think about justice and injustice in themselves [..., making him feel] dizzy from hanging [κομμασθείς] at such an unaccustomed height and looking down from mid-air" (cf. also Sph. 216 c 6-7: 'the real philosophers [ὅπως φιλόσοφοι] survey from a height [καθορμούντες ψυχεῖν] the life beneath them [τὸν τῶν κάτω βίον]'; and 246 b 7: the 'friends of forms' [οἱ τῶν εἰδῶν φιλοι —248 a 4] defend their position somewhere in the heights of the unseen [ἂνθεν ἐκ ἀοράτου]'). For Plato, then, knowledge in general is an elevation (and that is why the philosopher is —as Plotinus says, I, 3, 1-2, alluding to the Phaedrus myth, 246 c — ἐπετερωμένος, 'winged') (20).

3.3. Ascension and ὑπόθεσις

As I said in 2.1., the word ὑπόθεσις has various meanings in Plato: (i) a 'theory' (the so-called the 'theory of forms', for instance, cf. Phd. 99 b ff.); (ii) a 'statement adopted to support (or reject) another statement' (Chrm. 160 d, Prt. 339 d, Men. passim, R. 437 a.); (iii) a 'starting point for discussion' (Hp. Ma. 302 e, Chrm. 171 d, Prt. 361 b, Grg. 454 c, R. 550 c, Prm. 136 a-b, Tht. 165 d, 183 b, Sph. 237 a, 244 c); (iv) a 'starting point for practical action' (Lg. 743 c, 812 a); and (v) a 'proposed subject for discussion' — Prm. 127 d (or generally, 'the subject matter of a discussion' — cf. Lg. 812 a).

It is not my purpose here to offer a study of le-mot-ὑπόθεσις-chez-Platon-type, and so I shall not discuss all these meanings of the word ὑπόθεσις. I believe, however, that the three 'essential' determinations of the physical, perhaps original sense of the word ὑπόθεσις are to be found in (iii), (iv) and (v); for, as I argued, a starting point for discussion or for practical action and a subject proposed for discussion is something which has been settled by
somebody before the actual discussion or action begins, and so it acts as the ground of it. But in the case of the first two meanings — (i) and (ii) (which are the meanings that ὑπόθεσις has in epistemological contexts) — things are a bit more complicated.

Some Greek philosophers used the word ὑπόθεσις in epistemological contexts, with reference to an 'epistemological ἀρχή'; and, as I claimed, this may be due (to a greater or lesser extent) to the fact that the literal meaning of ὑπόθεσις fitted with their metaphorical view that the 'epistemological ἀρχή', unlike the ontological ἀρχή, being put by somebody as the beginning of an ensuing argument, are like a foundation, θεμέλιον, that precedes and support a construction.

Now, if in epistemological contexts a ὑπόθεσις is for Plato a theory or a statement, then that theory or statement is, metaphorically, put down by someone. Thus, one may claim, in Plato a theory or statement ὑπόθεσις is also an 'epistemological ἀρχή' which is thought of as a foundation, θεμέλιον, that precedes and supports a construction. Yet the textual evidence which may be invoked in favour of this view is extremely scarce; for he used the word ὑπόθεσις in epistemological contexts as if he was not bothered at all by its literal meaning (i.e. 'physical foundation'). That is why it has been argued that in Plato the word ὑπόθεσις either carries, to some extent, its literal meaning, but that this meaning is not taken into account by him (see for instance Rosenmeyer 1960, 407), or that for Plato ὑπόθεσις in general does never mean 'physical foundation' (see for instance Robinson 1953, 98) (21).

In the Republic, however, ὑπόθεσις occurs in a passage in which it is clear that Plato was very well aware of its literal meaning and that he attempted to exploit it somehow. Here, at 511 b, he compares a ὑπόθεσις with a 'rung', or 'step' (ἐπίβασις), on which one may 'get upon' toward the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή, i.e. toward the limit of the intelligible realm (I take the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή as τὸ ἄγαθόν, which is said at 532 a 7- b 1 to be 'the limit of the intelligible') (22). Here then, a ὑπόθεσις is, metaphorically, a theory (or a statement) that is put down by someone; but it is put down as that which support one's ascension toward 'the limit of knowledge', not as that which support, from below, like a foundation, an argument (or a body of knowledge). (When it is being put down, a ὑπόθεσις is, in Plato, a theory or a statement whose truth, although probable to some extent, remains to be established —cf. also Robinson 1953, 95 and Barnes 1990, 93; thus, a ὑπόθεσις cannot be, metaphorically, a βέβαια ἐπίβασις, a 'firm rung'; if so, then how could one climb on such 'unsafe rungs' toward the 'the limit of knowledge', the only firm thing —cf. R. 533 c 7-d 1)?
Plato, as I argued, supported his 'investigations' by using the criterion of \( \sigmaυμφωνία τῶν λόγων \), i.e. the criterion of coherence, suggesting thus a possible escape from the difficulties raised by foundationalism. Now, he does not develop this metaphor of the rung; if we do, and if we take into account his 'coherentism', we might say that for him the rungs on which one ascends toward the limit of knowledge are not themselves supported by something \( Βέβαιον \), i.e. by a firm foundation: the rungs, it seems to me, insofar they are \( συμφωνοῖ, support one another.\) (Most of the commentators, however, tended not to take Plato's comparing a \( ύπόθεσις \) with a 'rung' seriously (23), mainly because he does not use it elsewhere (24).)

To conclude. As I argued, in its literal sense \( ύπόθεσις \) means 'something put by somebody under something else as a foundation'. Plato did not use this word in ontological contexts, and this may be due to some extent to the inadequacy suggested by its literal meaning: (i) the Platonic intelligible realm is (metaphorically) neither a foundation which supports something else (on the contrary it is said to be above the sensuous realm), nor is it put where it is by an 'agent' (be he even a Demiurge); and (ii) the sensuous realm, although it might be said to be put by a Demiurge under the intelligible realm, it is obviously not its foundation.

He, however, used this word in epistemological contexts. His comparing the act of 'knowing the intelligible realm' with an 'ascension' corresponds, metaphorically, to his metaphysical topography, in which the intelligible realm is localized above. So, given his great interest in the proper sense of the words (see for instance the Cratylus), one may be inclined to believe (as I initially did) that he would attempt to use an epistemological terminology consistent with the metaphorical idea that knowledge in general is a sort of an ascension. But he, surprisingly, seems not be bothered by this problem; and, in his using the word \( ύπόθεσις \) in epistemological contexts, he seems to ignore its literal meaning (i.e. that of 'physical foundation') (although his comparing a \( ύπόθεσις \) with a 'rung', in R. 511 b, may be invoked as an indication that he thought about the fact that \( ύπόθεσις \) has a literal meaning after all, and about a possible way to fit it with his idea that knowledge in general is a sort of an ascension.)
NOTES

Preface

1 There is even a study entitled "Plato, Woody Allen and justice" (see Colwell 1991).

2 Why, however, would one like to understand Plato’s philosophy in the first place is another question (which I shall deal with — very briefly, however — in the Epilogue).

3 Yet the logical route that Plato’s search followed is not mirrored very accurately by the chronology of his dialogues. For it so happened that in his dialogues he mixed up things a little bit; that is to say, explicated a premise in a late dialogue, or assumed a conclusion long before he stated it explicitly — to the effect that the written trace of his whole search seems sometimes to have a fairly 'anacoluthic' character.


5 Plato’s metaphorical devices, especially his myths, were minutely described and analyzed (cf. for instance Stewart 1905, Frutiger 1930, Marignac 1951, Findlay 1978, or Elias 1984). But the vast majority of his interpreters do not think, like Plato, that such devices are the only kind of rigour that we can achieve in our attempt to understand philosophical matters. We cannot but regard his myths, allegories, analogies, etc. with suspicion, if not, as Hegel, with indifference (cf. 1971, p. 109: 'Plato’s value does not reside in his myths').

Introduction
Socratism and Platonism

1 I am indebted to Mr Alexandra Dragomir for drawing my attention to this point.

2 This 'standard' Socratic request occurs throughout the early dialogues — see for instance Ht. Ma. 295 b: "[...] you [Hippias], I suppose, will easily discover it [viz. what beauty is] once you are alone. Still, I beg you most earnestly to discover with me here, or, if you please, let us look for it together as we are now doing."

3 A term used many times in the Socratic dialogues (see for instance La. 196 b 6, Ly. 223 b 3, Prt. 338 e 7, etc.).

4 Vlastos 1983, 72 argues that in the dialogues before the Gorgias Socrates "describes the elenctic refutation of p by saying that non-p has become evident to us" (ἐφανερώθη ἐμπειρώθη) (cf. Prt. 353 b 5-6; Euthphr. 15 c 1-2; R. 335 e 5, etc.) or by observing that the interlocutor now 'sees' (δειδώμεθα — Euthphr. 11 a 3) or 'knows' (ἐπιστήμη — Prt. 357 e 1) that non-p. But here, in the Gorgias, continues Vlastos, Socrates claims that his thesis has been proved true (479 e), "or, equivalently, by a powerful metaphor, [...that it has been] 'clamped down and bound by arguments of iron and adamant' (508 c - 509 a)" (p. 71). Moreover, thinks Vlastos, the Gorgias contains textual evidence (472 b-c, 474 a, 474 b, 482 a-b) for supporting the claim that, in this dialogue, Socrates is making the
following assumption: "Anyone who ever has a false moral belief will always have at the same time true beliefs entailing the negation of that false belief" (p. 52). In a note from the same volume (1983), however, Vlastos concludes that this assumption from the Gorgias does not occur in any other dialogue, which means that we have to take it as "Plato's present to his teacher" (p. 74).

5 Both Vlastos 1983, 29 and Waterfield 1989, 44 claim that this is the formal pattern of the most prominent form of elenchus; not the one suggested by Robinson, which runs, according to them, as follows:

(i) $p \rightarrow (q \land r)$
(ii) $(q \land r) \rightarrow \neg p$
(iii) $p \lor \neg p$
(iv) Therefore $\neg p$

6 All the Socratic dialogues (including those whose authenticity is not beyond any doubt) are centred around this reaching of a ὑμολογία —see for instance Hpm. 2 (294 c 8, 299 c 2, 303 d 4-6); Alc. 1 (109 c 3, 11 b 3, c 1, 112 c 5, d 5, 113 b 6, 115 c 7, 116 c 9-10, 133 c 18, d 10), etc.

Chapter One
Plato's way of putting the question of knowledge

1 According to the Timaeus 69 c-71 d, each part of the souls has a 'bodily seat': τὸ λογιστικὸν —the head; ὁ θυμός —the heart; and τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν —the belly (for details see Cornford 1937, 281-6). Some scholars, however, may argue that Plato did not constantly believe in the tripartition of soul; for tripartition is not mentioned in the Phaedo, which works, apparently, with a rough opposition between soul (seen as rational) and body (seen as the source of desires); and in the Laws it seems to disappear.

2 Cf. also Hpm. Mi. 376 c 2, where knowing something is put in terms of resting from a wandering (παύσαμεθα τῆς πλάνης). This idea, however (that sure knowledge has to remain the same) is also, I think, at the core of Plato's saying that 'to know' is 'to keep having knowledge' — cf. Phd. 75 d 8-10: "to know' [τὸ εἰδέναι] means simply 'to retain' the knowledge which one has acquired, and not lose it" (cf. also Smp. 208 a 1-2.).

3 Cf. also Philb. 17 e: "The unlimited variety [τὸ ἀπειρον] that belongs to and is inherent in the particulars [i.e. in the 'realm' of what is ἄλλοτε ἄλλως] leaves one, in each particular case, an unlimited ignoramus." What I believe this statement says is this. The field of knowledge stretches from the μέγιστα γένη, the 'widest genera', to the 'lower' εἴδη, the 'narrowest species'; but it does not contain that part which is right under the 'narrowest species', i.e. the ἀπειρον, ἄλλοτε ἄλλως realm of individuals. That is: even when I look at, say, a particular ant, I cannot know its most specific part, that which is ἄλλοτε ἄλλως.

4 And the Stranger from Elea himself is called a θεός ἐλεγκτικός (Sph. 216 b 5-6).
Chapter Two
The μέθοδος towards theories

1 In this passage he does not actually use the word μέθοδος; but he used it earlier, at 97 b 6, and it is obvious, from the context, that here, at 100 a ff., he speaks about a possible μέθοδος out of aporetic situations.

2 Cf. Méridier 1909, 234: "[...] selon toute apparence, [le mot μέθοδος est une création de la langue philosophique, qui l'a forgé pour son usage. Peut-être Platon en est-il l'auteur. En tous cas, c'est chez lui qui nous le trouvons pour la première fois [...]."

3 Cf. 1897, 419: "In earlier dialogues, as Phaedo (79 e, 97 b) and Republic (435 d, 510 b-c, 531 c, 533 b-c, 596 a), this word [μέθοδος] had not yet a fixed meaning and was equivalent to 'argument', 'study', or 'way of reasoning'. In the Phaedrus μέθοδος (269 d, 270 d) is used in the same primitive meaning of 'way of reasoning'. In the Theaetetus (183 c) it means 'hypothesis' or 'theory'."

4 Cf. 1897, 419: "But in the Sophist there appears for the first time a 'logical method', essentially different in form and contents from the σταλεκτηκή μέθοδος of the Republic (533 c), which meant no more than the study of dialectic, or vision of the idea of Good."

5 Cf. for instance K. 515 e: the one who left the Cave in order to see the light of the sun had to be drag out by force (cf. βία — 6), for the 'ascent' is 'rough and steep'.

6 Cf. also the beginning of Discours de la méthode ("[...] la puissance de bien juger et distinguer le vrai d'avec le faux, qui est proprement ce qu'on nomme le bon sens ou la raison, est naturellement égale en tous les hommes") and the Timaeus 51 e ("mind [νοῦς] is the attribute of the gods and of very few men").

7 Earlier on, at 85 c-d, Simmias alludes to this 'procedure', when he said: "It is our duty to do one of two things, either to ascertain the facts, whether by μαθεῖν or by εὑρέσειν, or, if this is impossible, to select [λαμβάνειν] the best and least refutable [δυσεξελεκτήτατος] human λόγος, and use it as a raft to ride the seas of life — that is, assuming that we cannot make our journey with greater confidence and security by the surer means of a divine λόγος."

8 And what is at stake in that which precedes Socrates' intellectual history (namely the topic of the immortality of the soul) is also a body of statements (cf. τὰ εἰρήμενα — 85 c 1, d 9, and τὰ λεγόμενα — 85 c 4, which are translated as 'theory'/'theories' by Tredennick).

9 Some scholars (like, for instance Archer-Hind in his edition of the Phaedo), claimed that a Platonic hypothesis is always a definition. But this claim is easy to refute, since in Plato there are so many hypotheses which are not definitions (e.g. the hypothesis that 'many exist' — cf. Prm. 136 a 6; cf. also Robinson 1953, 100). Some other scholars claimed that all hypotheses in Plato are 'statements of existence'. But Plato calls 'hypotheses' many statements that do not posit the mere existence of something (e.g. 'virtue is knowledge' — Men. 87 c 4), and in the Parmenides 136 b 7-8 he says explicitly that one may hypothesize either "that anything whatsoever exists or does not exist or has any other character [ἄλλο πάθος πάσχοντος]." Rather seldom, Plato does
hypothesize the existence of something — cf. for instance Prm. 136 a 6 (where it is hypothesized that 'many exist').

10 Cf. also Barnes 1990, 92: "In the Platonic tradition, hypothesizing has primarily an heuristic function."

11 The verb TΩT|πι (and its cognates) is used by Plato throughout the dialogues, and it may mean: 'to hold a view, 'to regard as' (R. 331 a, 334 c, 352 d, Phl. 257 b, Sph. 246 e), 'to assume' (Phd. 79 a, R. 340 a, 430 a, Thg. 191 c), or 'to judge' (Phl. 275 b). All these meanings, however, bear the idea of 'holding' or positing a provisional statement whose truth, although probable to some extent, remains to be established; cf. Robinson 1953, 95: "If you posit (τεθεσαί) a proposition, then that proposition 'stands' (κείται) until you withdraw it (ἀνατίθεσαι) or replace it by another (μετατίθεσαι)."

There are degrees of confidence in a hypothesis, from simple acceptance (Phlb. 13 b) to strong confidence (R. 437 a, Phd. 92 d). When, however, a hypothesis is posited under a strong agreement of two interlocutors, it is a ὁμολόγημα (or ὁμολογία) (cf. R. 437 a, Thg. 165 c). (Although it is not a general rule, a ὁμολόγημα is not put under elenchus.) (There are in Plato, also, rhetorical hypotheses, due to pedagogical reasons; but, as Robinson 1953, 97 claims, 'Plato very rarely speaks of hypothesizing a proposition that one knows at the time to be false. His conception of hypothesizing hardly, if ever, extends to shermoake-belief. [...] And] his word for assuming what you already know or believe to be false is not ῥυτ廪θεσαί but παράθεσαί.)"

12 This passage reads: "It is our duty to do one of two things, either to ascertain the facts, whether by μαθείων or by εὐθείων, or, if this is impossible, to select [λάβωντε] the best and least refutable [δυσεξελεγκτότατος] human λόγος, and use it as a raft to ride the seas of life [etc. — my italics]" (see also the occurrence of ἐλεγχείω at 85 c 5)."

13 Barnes 1990, 93 claims that: "[According to Plato] in hypothesizing that P, you do not commit yourself to the truth of P, not do you assert that P. [...] in hypothesizing that P, you do not argue for P or produce any sort of reason in favour of it." Now, if Barnes suggests that in hypothesizing that P, you do not argue for P or produce any sort of reason in its favour at all, I do not agree with him. In Plato (at least) hypothesizing has primarily an heuristic function" (as Barnes himself admits — see p. 92), for a hypothesis is a 'piece aimed at fitting into a given and incomplete puzzle'; and the 'degree of its fitting' stands as a reason in favour of it. That is: in hypothesizing that P, you argue, somehow, for P, because you have hypothesized P as a plausible hypothesis (and the plausibility is due to the 'degree of its fitting' into a given puzzle). But this 'fitting' is not a guarantiee of its truth, which remains to be established.

14 For Robinson's main arguments in favour of this interpretation see 1953, 127, 130-1.

15 Robinson's solution is the following (pp.128-9). (i) Plato's whole idea, he claims, is this: "that which follows from the hypothesis is to be set down as true, and that whose contradictory follows from the hypothesis is to be set down as false. This idea has two parts; and, since they are not contradictions (for the contradictory of that which follows from X is not 'that whose contradictory follows from X but 'that which does not follow from X'), the accurate expression of the whole idea is somewhat cumbersome."

169
Robertson interprets the inconsistency in terms of deducibility, e.g. a proposition \( q \) is inconsistent with \( p \) if non-\( q \) is deducible from \( p \); and if \( p \) is true, then \( q \) must be false (e.g. if the proposition \( p \): 'I have only one brother' is true, then the proposition \( q \): 'I have three brothers' is inconsistent with \( p \) because its negation, namely the proposition non-\( q \): 'I do not have three brothers', follows from \( p \)). In this case, we have an acceptable criterion to establish which propositions are true (those which are deducible from a true hypothesis) and an acceptable criterion to establish which propositions are false (those whose negations follow from a true hypothesis). (ii) Thus Plato has in mind both deducibility and inconsistency, but these two ideas "cannot be neatly expressed by a single verb and its negative, because they are not contradictories but contraries". So, Plato sacrifices a part of his meaning and chooses an appropriate metaphor for 'consistency-inconsistency', which are actually contradictories.

16 I very well know that \( \mu \nu \sigma \iota \kappa \eta \) is, as Cornford 1937, 158 (n. 4) put it, "a wide term, including poetry and the thought conveyed in it"; but this does not mean that \( \mu \nu \sigma \iota \kappa \eta \) does not sometimes hints primarily to music (as, I believe, it is the case here).

17 Whereas \( \rho \nu \mu \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \zeta \) refers (roughly speaking) to a \( \tau \acute{\alpha} \xi \varsigma \) of sounds qua durations (cf. Lg. 665 a; cf. also Smp. 187 b7-c 2).

18 The modern terms 'symphony' and 'harmony' refer to a \( \tau \acute{\alpha} \xi \varsigma \) of simultaneous pitches (i.e., roughly speaking, to chords), whereas the Greek \( \sigma \mu \mu \phi \omicron \nu \omicron \alpha \omicron \omicron \) and \( \alpha \rho \mu \omicron \omicron \omicron \alpha \omicron \omicron \) refer to a \( \tau \acute{\alpha} \xi \varsigma \) of consecutive pitches (i.e., roughly speaking, to melodies).

19 Thus, Robinson’s claim — that "there is no passage in which \( \sigma \mu \mu \phi \omicron \nu \omicron \alpha \omicron \omicron \) or \( \delta \tau \alpha \phi \omicron \nu \omicron \epsilon \iota \omicron \) (or its cognates) certainly indicate deducibility or the absence there of" (1953, 127) — seems to be refuted.

20 The cosmology of the Timaeus is a 'collection' of theories — metaphysical, physical, physiological, theological, etc. That is why, when Timaeus says that his \( \lambda \gamma \omicron \omicron \omicron \) about the gods and the generation of the universe may not be altogether \( \delta \mu \lambda \alpha \omega \omicron \omicron \omicron \) (which, as I said, can be taken as a synonym for \( \sigma \mu \mu \phi \omicron \nu \omicron \alpha \omicron \omicron \)), he speaks about theories that may not \( \sigma \mu \mu \phi \omicron \nu \omicron \alpha \omicron \omicron \) \( \alpha \lambda \lambda \iota \lambda \omicron \omicron \omicron \).

21 In some metaphorical usages, \( \alpha \rho \mu \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \alpha \omicron \omicron \) and \( \sigma \mu \mu \phi \omicron \nu \omicron \alpha \omicron \omicron \) are said to imply not a mere \( \tau \acute{\alpha} \xi \varsigma \), but a \( \kappa \omicron \sigma \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \) (cf. R. 430 e; cf. also Tī. 47 d 6).

22 The 'probability' that is at stake here is not the 'probability' of the Sophists, which Plato contrasted with truth in Phdr. 267 a 7.

23 Cf. also Waterfield 1989, 51: "[\( \sigma \mu \mu \phi \omicron \nu \omicron \alpha \omicron \omicron \) does not imply a chain of successive inferences \( p \rightarrow q \rightarrow r \ldots \),] where each stage is checked for validity of inference from the preceding one. [...] In the first place the consequences are \( \alpha \pi \omicron \omicron \omicron \) ('from') the starting point, not one another: no succession is envisaged, but rather \( p \rightarrow (q \cdot r \cdot s) \). In the second place, the consequences are checked \( \alpha \lambda \lambda \iota \lambda \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \) ('with one another'), not merely with each previous one."

24 The consequences of a statement are usually well marked by one of the following expressions: (i) \( \sigma \mu \beta \alpha \gamma \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \) (Hp. Mi. 369 a 4-5, Men. 87 a, Thī. 165 c 10, 164 b, Chrī. 164 b 9, Grg. 408 e, Prm. 142 c); (ii) \( \tau \acute{\alpha} \sigma \mu \beta \alpha \gamma \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \omicron \) (Grg. 495...
Chapter Three

The μέθοδος towards theories and
the theory of εἶδη (I)

1 Plato's usage of the word παράδειγμα raises a number of difficulties, mainly because of the ambiguity this word, which may mean both (i) an instance or example, i.e., in a broad sense, a copy of something; (ii) a model for something; and (iii) an exemplary instance of something (cf. LSJ). All these three meanings are to be found in Plato. (i) The Greek παράδειγμα is usually rendered by 'model', and so the main sense of the verb from which it derives, παράδεικνυμι, is to a certain extent, lost. παράδεικνυμι means 'to portray', i.e. 'to represent so and so'; its result, a παράδειγμα, is then, etymologically speaking, a sort of an embodiment, an instantiation or, in a broad sense, an example (cf. Men. 77 a 9-b 1), i.e. an 'entity' in which another 'entity' is portrayed', (ii) In Plato, however, the word παράδειγμα is mostly used as referring to what is a model of something. In the Timaeus, for instance, παράδειγμα means 'the model of the universe' (cf. 28 a 7, 37 c 8, 38 b 8-c 1, 39 e 7, 48 e 5, 49 a 1) which is contrasted with its sensible copy — ὑγιής, 37 c 7, εἰκών, 29 b 3, c 1, 37 d 7, or μιμήσις, 38 a 7, 51 b 6). (iii) Plato claims very often that we have to use, in our philosophical inquiries on a difficult 'case', a clearer and simpler, yet similar one, i.e. an exemplary instance; and he uses here the word παράδειγμα (see Thet. 154 c; Sph. 226 c, 251 a; Plt. 277 d; cf. also Aristotle Rh 1356 b 3). (This sense of παράδειγμα is somehow situated between the other two, since an 'exemplary instance' of something is a 'copy' which is the most 'close' to its model.) And he himself uses sometimes this procedure (called by some scholars 'the method of παράδειγμα'). For instance, the attempt to understand the sophist is made through the παράδειγμα of the angler (Sph. 218 e-221 c); the attempt to understand the statesman is made through the παράδειγμα of the weaver (Plt. 279 a-283 α); the attempt to understand the τέχνη σοφιστική is made through the παράδειγμα of τέχνη πολιτική (Sph. 233 d ff.).

2 So, when Plato claims that an εἰκών is not, he does not mean that that εἰκών does not exist at all; that is: he does not claim, like Parmenides (cf. Sph. 258 c ff.), that ὅν and μὴ ὅν are completely separated (cf. 237 a: εὐ γὰρ μὴ ποτε τοῦτο ὅλα ἦν ϕησίν, εἰναι μὴ ἐπὶ τοῦτο, ἄλλα εὐ τῷ τῷ ὅφει ὅδε ἐν ἐν ἐν ὅπως ἐν ἐν ἐν ἐν); when Plato claims that an εἰκών is not, what he actually means is that that εἰκών does not exist ὅντως, as a παράδειγμα does. (ὅντως means here ἐπὶ ἐπὶ, cf. Sph. 240 b 10; cf. also R. 515 d, where μᾶλλον ὅντα seems to mean ἐπὶ ἐπὶ ἐπὶ ὅντα; that is: an ὅντως ὅν is an ἐπὶ ἐπὶ ἐπὶ ὅν, a παράδειγμα, viz. an ὅν which is not a μὴ ὅν, that 'pretends' to be another ὅν.)

3 I think it may be worth noting a passage from the Republic where the idea that 'to be ὅντως qua 'to be ἐπὶ ἐπὶ' (as a model is) is not separable from 'to be ὅντως qua 'to be unchanging'. The passage in question is 514 b 8, where Plato says that the shadows projected on the wall of the cave — which are the copies of real ὅντα, i.e. of things which are projected by the fire — are moving, φέροντας. (Plato was very much aware of the distinction between changing
and immovable beings and of the fact that his predecessors used to claim either that only the changing beings are or that only the immovable beings are — cf. Thet. 180 c-181 b and Sph. 246 a ff. He, however, rejects these traditional views and claims that both changing and immovable beings exist. For, he says in Sph. 246 a and d, there is at least one instance in which changing and unchanging beings are in Ковсив. and this instance is the phenomenon of knowledge, гивд вискев, which is a Ковсив between a пири гивд вискев, which is something κινητον — cf. 249 a 10; and an орсис гивд вискев, which is something ἀκίνητων — cf. 249 c 1; cf. also Crat. 440 a-b.)

4 In Ti. 52 a the way Plato puts things suggests that common names refer, primarily, to κινητόν, although they may also refer to the sensible embodiments of κινητον.

5 For speaking, as far as it uses common names, is about κινητόν (cf. Sph. 259 c: "any discourse [λόγον] we can have owes its existence to the συμπληκτή τῶν κινητῶν": that is, the very possibility of speaking derives actually from the ontological Κοινωνία τῶν κινητῶν, a view which implies that speaking in general is about κινητόν).

6 Plato's saying that ἀλήθεια is ἀνάμφιστη (72 e 5-6) stems, I believe, from his focussing in this dialogue on the issue of ἀνάμφιστη (which is contained by that of ἀλήθεια), not from his reducing the question of μάθησις to that of ἀνάμφιστη.

7 To actually know an εἰδώλιον, however, τὸ λογιστικὸν should deal with it only through itself, i.e. it has to speak about it and avoid looking, through the eyes, at it — cf. Phdr. 67 a 6-b 1 and 99 d ff. (something which Plato kept saying it throughout the dialogues — see R. 534 b ff.; Thet. 186 b-e, 187 a, 189 e; Sph. 227 a 8, 253 b 10; Phib. 57 c-58 a, 59 a, 61 c; Ti. 28 b ff., etc.).

8 Plato was never doubtful about soul's immortality; but, it seems, he was never too happy with the ways he imagined the likely details of 'soul's future habitations', for he came back to this issue several times, and each time he put things differently — cf. Phdr. 249 a; Phdr. 621 a-b, Ti. 41 c.

9 Cf. (i) the Phaedo 98 a 2 ff., where Socrates claims that if Anaxagoras had supported his view on causality, he, Socrates, would have been "prepared to give up hankering after any other kind of αἰτία (ἀιτίας ἄλλο εἰδώλιον)"; (ii) the Phaedo 98 c ff. and the Philebus 27 a ff., where there are distinguished a cause proper and its 'condition'; (iii) the Timaeus 46 e, where there are distinguished two kinds of αἰτία: a rational cause (embodied by a Demiurge) and a non-rational one (embodied by a rather obscure 'entity' often called 'Necessity') (for the rational and non-rational αἰτία see also the Laws 896 e ff.).

10 Cf. Aristotle Metaph. 988 a 9 ff.; Diogenes Laertius 3. 69; Simplicins in Phys. 26. 5 ff.; "Aëtius" 1.25.21 (b) = Stobaeus Eel. 1.10.16; A Sekhous, Didascalicus 9.1; Seneca Letter 65.7. (I am indebted for many of these references to R. W. Sharples' paper "Counting Plato's Principles", which he delivered at the Scottish Association for Classical Philosophy in Edinburgh on 2nd of July 1994.)
He also claims that others are generated spontaneously, τὰ ἀπὸ ταὐμάτου, but this is not a third different mode of generation; it is rather that both τὰ φύσει γεγονόμενα and τὰ τέχνη γεγονόμενα may be generated spontaneously or not spontaneously — cf. 1032 a 30 ff. and 1034 a 10 ff.

In Aristotle the explanation of the generation of τὰ φύσει ὑμνα is less clear than that of τὰ ποιούμενα. Roughly speaking, it seems that for him τὰ φύσει ὑμνα are the result of φύσις (Ph. 192 b 8 ff.; cf. also Metaph. 1032 a 13 ff.); but what φύσις is, is not clearly stated (or so I find). (For an interesting, yet somehow risqué attempt to make clear Aristotle’s obscure notion of φύσις see Heidegger 1967 and 1976.)

Since later antiquity philosophers have tended to think of causes only as efficient causes; that is why we are inclined to think that a purpose, or matter, let alone a form, can be called ‘causes’ only in a very metaphorical way. But, and this could be regarded as almost a truism, we do sometimes explain the same phenomenon in several different ways. If we accept that an explanation is an answer to a why-question (as, for instance, van Fraassen 1980 a, 42 claims), then we will have to accept that a questioner always asks his question within a determined context. Therefore, what is asked for by a question like ‘Why is it the case that p?’ is always contextually determined. (But why did Aristotle choose this productionist causes? One may speculate, as Heidegger 1984, 117 does, that the very idea of cause was brought forward by the world of producing — understood as the production of one being from another.)

There has been a lot of debate about how this expression should be taken. The meaning of the expression δεύτερος πλοῦς can fairly be put as ‘taking to the oars when the wind has failed’ (see Gallop’s 1975 commentary ad locum), which bears the idea of ‘giving another, second-best try’. Now, to what is Socrates giving a second-best try? The answer to this question is anything but obscure, for he says explicitly: “[...] I have worked out my second voyage [δεύτερος πλοῦς] in the quest of αἰτία” (99 c 9-d 1 — my italics; the original reads: ἕτε τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ζητήσασαν). That is: the expression δεύτερος πλοῦς refers to Socrates’ introducing ‘another, second-best pattern of causal explanation’, namely that by εἰδή (see also Gallop’s 1975 commentary ad locum). But why ‘second-best’?

The references to the efficient αἰτία (νούς) as ‘true’ or ‘real’ (cf. 98 c 1 and 99 b 3), suggest that Socrates considered it as being ‘the best pattern of causal explanation’ (see his referring to νούς as ‘true’ or ‘real’ — cf. 98 c 1: τὰς ὡς ἀληθῶς αἰτίας, and 99 b 3: τὸ εἰκονον τὸ ὑμνα). But, since he was unable to discover it himself or learn about them from others, he eventually came up with his own (second-best) causal explanation, namely that by εἰδή (99 c 9-d 1). (Sayre 1969, 4-5 claims that the expression δεύτερος πλοῦς does refer, in its letter, to Socrates’ explanation by ‘formal causes’ as being ‘second best’ to Anaxagoras’ explanation by ‘final causes, but he believes that this is only Plato’s irony.)

Grammatically this phrase does not raise any problem, yet its ‘spirit’ is rather difficult to render in a translation, because the accent in this phrase is an ontological, not an aesthetic one. I list below a few translations:

Cf. Thomsen 1990, 320: "The image of the craftsman's production is for Plato, as for Aristotle, a starting point for the understanding of reality" (my translation).
17 In Greek philosophy, Plato’s *Timaeus* seems to be an exception, because the theme of creation *qua* production is not to be found in other philosophers, notably in the pre-Socratic fragments (cf. Heraclitus B 30: κόσμον τούδε... οὕτως θεῶν οὕτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν). (Yet the motif of an ‘efficient’ cause occurs, in one form or another, in some Presocratics — cf. Parmenides’ δαίμον, Empedocles’ φίλακα καὶ νεῖκος, Heraclitus’ τύρος, or Anaxagoras’ νοῦς.)

18 The Greek δημιουργός is the craftsman in general (cf. Paquet 1973, 31: “Le δημιουργός, en effet, c’est l’ouvrier en général — nous dirions, le travailleur anonyme dont le métier ne se remarque plus, bien loin qu’il soit question de retenir son nom ni son rang social”). In Plato, however, as Classen 1962, 20, n. 28 points out, “δημιουργός is [...] mostly used where αἰτία is combined with ἐπιστήμη and νοῦς (Ti. 46 c 3-6, Sph. 265 c 1-9, Ly. 902 c 4 ff.).” For other occurrences of the Demiurge see also *Plt.* 269 d-270 a, 273 b-d and *Phlb.* 27 b.

19 Plato’s Demiurge is then not an omnipotent Creator, for his creation, unlike Jahwe’s, is not a creation *ex nihilo*.

20 In the *Timaeus*, matter, although it is not explicitly called an αἰτία, ceases to be an ignored ‘element’. Here in the *Timaeus* there are explicitly distinguished only two kinds of αἰτία: the rational one (αἰτία proper) and the non-rational one (συμπερίπτερος) (cf. 46 e). The relation between these two αἰτίαι, the rational and the non-rational (cf. also *Laws* 896 e ff.), and the Demiurge and ἄναγκη is not very clear. But the *Timaeus* 46 e supports strongly enough the idea that they are the same, i.e. the Demiurge is the rational cause and ἄναγκη is the non-rational one (for a similar position see Hackforth 1959). But to what does this non-rational cause belong?

Plato says that the Demiurge framed the universe out of a ‘primordial given matter’ (*Tim* 52 d). But this primordial matter is not inert: it is, on the contrary, “shaken” by chaotic δύναμεις (52 d-e), and the Demiurge has, as it were, to ‘tame’ it. (This primordial matter is a chaotically moving indeterminate mass of elementary triangles and it is first ‘tamed’ into primary bodies — cube, pyramid, etc. — see 52 ff.) Now, what is the cause of this chaotic motion? Plutarch (*De animae procreatione in Timeo* 1014 d-1015 c) claimed that Plato should have postulated an irrational soul as the cause of this chaotic motion, because soul is the only cause of motion. Yet for Plato the primordial matter is not moved by any soul, or νοῦς, because for him matter is not, as for Aristotle, passive. (Bronze, in Aristotle’s numerous examples with statues, is not “shaken”, at any stage, by any power or force. Aristotle has a highly technical conception of matter, and for him matter qua matter never exists by itself without any form; but *qua* matter it seems to be inert.) For Plato, however, matter has to be ‘tamed’, because its own nature consists of a chaotic movement (53 b). And, in my view, what causes the motion of primordial matter is its heterogeneity (cf. 58 a). Now, this heterogeneity of the primordial matter, I believe, is what Plato calls ἄναγκη; in other words, it is this heterogeneity of the primordial matter that the Demiurge and the astral Gods are said to ‘persuade’ to obey to a rational project (as things are put at 30 a 5, what the Demiurge does is to bring into order something which is disorderly, i.e. heterogeneous — ἐς τάξιν αὐτὸ ἱγιαμεν ἐκ τῆς ἄταξιας). Is then ἄναγκη more like a material ‘active’ cause, which “always produce chance effect without order or design” (46 e)? To me this seems a fairly plausible conjecture.

21 Plato’s main interest during his entire life seemed to concern the human community (his most important works — the *Republic*, the *Laws*, and even the *Timaeus* — have the topic of society as their starting point). How then does he
explain the πολιτικον? Does he use the same 'productionist' explanation? This is, of course, a very complicated problem, and it is not my intention here to enter its details; but, at a bird's-eye view, it seems that society and history are also explained, to some extent, by a 'productionist' model.

The statesman (Politicus), the legislator (Laws), the Demiurge (Politicus) — are all understood as 'makers', who 'handle' the human nature (i.e. the 'matter', the 'constituent' of the πολιτικον—cf. the Republic), by 'looking at a model'— be it Kallipolis (in the Republic, called at 472 b-473 a and 592 a-b a παραστασις), the ancient city of Athens (in the Timaeus and the Critias), Magnesia (in the Laws), or the universe itself (in the Politicus 274 d). (In the Timaeus, unlike in the Politicus, the Demiurge does not 'handle' in any way the polis, and this seems to be coherent with the 'productionist' paradigm, for, in general, a product that has been finished ceases to be in a relation with its producer, and it begins to exist for its own.) (The tendency to relate the 'space' of πολιτικον to the 'space' of πονης is not alien to the Greek culture. δημιουργος, for instance, comes from δημος and ἔργον, and so, etymologically, it means 'the one who works for the people', e.g. a 'magistrate'—cf. Aristotle Pol. 1275 b 29.; cf. also Morrow 1997, who claims that in the Laws the legislator uses the 'material at his disposal in Greek life', just as the Demiurge in the Timaeus uses the materials available to him.)

22 Cf. Vlastos 1975, 111: "The phrase 'saving the phenomena' does not occur in the Platonic corpus nor yet in Aristotle's work. [...] The phrase 'saving the phenomena' must have been coined to express the [...] credibility-salvaging operation in a case where phenomena, not a theory or an argument, are being put on the defensive and have to be rehabilitated by a rational account which solves the prima facie contradictions besetting their uncritical acceptance. This is a characteristically Platonic view."
Didascalicus 27, 1, p.129 Louis; Alexis, fr. 152 (II 353 Kock); Amphis, fr. 6 (II 237 Kock); Philippides, fr. 6 (II 303 Kock).

5 Cf. Philippides, fragment 6K. [II 353 Kock] = Stobaeus lxviii 6; Alexis, fr. 152 (II 353 Kock), and Amphis, fr. 6 (II 237 Kock). Now, the Republic 536 b-540 c, the Parmenides 136 e, the Phaedrus 275 b-277 a, the Laws 968 c-e, and the Seventh Letter 341 a-c claim that the topic of the 'first principles' is not suitable for everybody. So, why did Plato hold a public lecture on such a difficult subject as the 'good'? One of the most subtle explanation belongs to Gaiser 1980, 20-8. According to him, Plato did hold that lecture, in spite of his esoteric reserve, because at that time the consequences of a public lecture on the good were more acceptable than those of maintaining the silence; and that situation was caused by the fact that the public was informed about his doctrine by incompetent persons, who raised the suspicion about his ideas.

6 This passage has caused many controversies, mainly because the which follows the expression τὸ γίγαντον μὲν lacks in some MSS and because the ambiguity of the verb γίγαντον. It is not my purpose here to discuss these controversies, which would require far too much space (for details about them see Comford 1937, 24-5 and Hackforth 1959, 18-9). As far as I am concerned, I am inclined to keep the second .

7 Cf. Heidegger cf. 1994, 72: "Being means for Plato 'to be a what'" (my translation). For Plato, however, existentia is not only not separated from quidditas; it is also reducible to it, and this is, according to Heidegger, the main sin of Plato's ontology (cf. 1988, 50 and 1992 b, 210).

8 Owen 1986 puts the question of the Platonic being in terms of existence and predication, and he claims that Plato does not separate them, which implies that for him being in general is always the existence of something determinate, of a what (which is another way of saying that for Plato being is understood as whatness).

9 Cf. Kahn 1986, 22: "[Plato, as well as Aristotle,] systematically subordinate the notion of existence to predication [...] and in their view to be is always to be a definite kind of thing: for a man to exist is to be human and alive, for a dog to exist is to be enjoying a canine life." (That is: for Plato 'existence' is always the existence of something determinate, of a 'what', of a such-and-such being, i.e. the existence of an identity: rocks, trees, etc.)

10 At 52 a this distinction between two things is turned into a distinction between three things, for there is, claims Plato, a τρίτον γένος, χώρα, which is apprehended, as in a dream, not by senses, but by a 'bastard' λογισμός.

11 In the Symposium there is a phrase that reads: ἕ γὰρ τοι έκ τοῦ μὴ ὑπόλογος εἰς τὸ ὅν ἰσότιμον ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῆς πᾶσα ἑστὶ πολλής (205 b 8-9). First, let us ask ourselves what does Plato mean here by τὸ μὴ ὅν? We know from the Timaeus that for Plato a creation (πολυτικός) ex nihilo is not possible. So, τὸ μὴ ὅν, i.e. that from which something has been brought forth 'into being', through πολλής, is not nothing: it must be the very material from which that something, the πολυτικός, was made. The material, however, existed before it was turned into a πολυτικός, and it is said to belong to the field of μὴ ὅν; and the πολυτικός 'comes into being' later than its own material, and it is said to belong to the field of ὅν. How are we to solve this μάλα ἄνα κυρίων way of putting things? The difference between non-being and being is presented here as a
difference between 'raw material' and 'product'. What then is the main
difference between 'raw material' and 'product'? A possible answer to this
question is, I believe, to be found in the Timaeus. There the material from
which the Demiurge framed the universe was a μη διν, because, as I said, it did
not have a what. But, at the moment the Demiurge, through his ποιησις,
brought this 'whatless matter' from disorder into order (cf. 30 a 4-5: εἰς τάξιν
αὐτὸ ὑμαγεν ἐκ τῆς ἀτάξασθε), i.e. at the moment he 'changed' the πλημμελητης
καὶ ἀτακτος κίνησις into an 'orderly' κίνησις (as it is, for instance, the 'local
movement' of the planets, which is 'governed' by numbers and so, by order —
cf. Pl. 38 c and 39 c), he turned that whatless γένεσις into a κεκοσμημένου
πρᾶγμα, i.e. into a what; at that moment, in other words, he brought the
universe εκ τοῦ μὴ δυντος (i.e. from the realm of whatless) εἰς τό δόν (i.e. into
the realm of whatness). (That is: the universe begins to be only after the
Demiurge turned the ἀταξία of the primordial given matter into a τάξις, i.e.
only after it became a κεκοσμημένου πρᾶγμα — a what.) (In Phlb. 27 d the same
idea is put in different terms: the turning of γένεσις into οὐσία is achieved
with the aid of τὰ τοῦ πέρατος μέτοχα — i.e. by imposing limits upon it, and
thus by conferring it an identity, a what.)

Can we read this into that phrase from Smp. 205 b 8-9? Apart from the
Demiurge, one may claim, all other ἐπιτουργοι — be he a θυγαθός, an
οἶκοδόμος, or a ναυπηγός (cf. Gr. 503 c ff.) — when they turned their
materials into a κεκοσμημένου πρᾶγμα (cf. Gr. 504 a 1, Smp. 186 d ff., 187 a-c,
Cra. 389 d-e, Lg. 626 c, 628 a), they turned a particular what (a particular
material) into another particular what (the product). They do not work, as the
Demiurge, with a whatless material. This is, I agree, true. But, if we accept the
position of the Timaeus, that a ποιησις in general is not possible ex nihilo,
then the way things are put in Smp. 205 b 8-9 makes sense only if we take ἐκ
τοῦ μὴ δυντος as 'from the realm of whatless' and εἰς τό δόν as 'into the realm of
whatness'.

12 An interesting view is held by Fine 1990; cf. p.: "[...] Plato views the Form of
the good as the teleological organisation of things. If we so view the Form of
the good, we can explain why Plato claims both that the Form of the good is
more important than other knowable objects, and also that it is not an οὐσία.
[...] Each form is good in that it has the function of playing a certain role in
that system: its goodness consists in its contribution to that structure, to the
richness and harmonious ordering of the structure, and its having that place
in the system is part of what it is. Plato believes, then, that each Form is
essentially a good thing — not morally good, but, simply, good — in that it is part
of what each Form is that it should have a certain place in the teleological
structure of the world." (See also, for an equally interesting view, Heidegger
1984, 185: "[the idea of the good] transcends the entirety of ideas and at the
same time thus organizes them in their totality. As ἐπέκεινα, the for-the-sake
of which excels the ideas, but, in excelling them, it determines and gives them
the form of wholeness, κοινωνία, communality"; and p. 116: "the idea of the
good is the basic determination of all order, all that belongs together. In so far
as belonging together, κοινωνία, is the essential determination of being, Plato
is saying that the idea of the good is the primary bearer of this coherence,
κοινωνία.")

13 Why does Plato call this τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχῆ τὸ ἀγαθόν? The knowledge of
such an ἀρχή, he claims, is situated at the end, τελευταία (517 b 8) (exactly as
in the Cave allegory, the one who is freed into the 'outside world' is able to look
at the sun only in the end, ἀγαθόν, 516 b 3). That which is beyond being, in other words, is that which is most worth having in the field of knowledge, i.e. the ultimate ἔλεος of knowledge; and in Greek the ἔλος of something is often called ἀγαθόν (cf. Nettleship, 1951, 218-19: "both to ordinary people and to philosophers among the Greeks the good [ἀγαθόν] meant the object of desire, that which is most worth having, that which we most want [...].") This is, however, only a guess.

14 This idea is also stressed out in the Cave passage; there, the difference between the 'knower' and the 'ignorant' is expressed in terms of 'released from fetters' (cf. λυτῶ ... τῶν δεισίων, 515 c 4-5) and 'fettered' (cf. δεισίματα, 514 b 4). That is, the difference between 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' (cf. ἀφροσύνη — 515 c 5) is the difference between 'the possibility of moving around' (cf. περίστερα — c 7) and 'the inability of moving around'. But what has 'moving around' to do with 'knowledge'? And why 'the inability of moving around' is the 'origin' of 'ignorance'? The 'fettered', says Socrates, have their legs and necks fettered from childhood, "so that they remain in the same spot, able to look forward only, and prevented by the fetters from turning their heads" (514 a). That is, they, being forced to look in only one direction, cannot see the way the things which constitute their world are related to each other, e.g. how the things they see in front of them (viz. the 'shadows on the wall') are 'projected' there by a fire. In other words: 'ignorance' is caused by the 'immobility' of mind, i.e. by the absence of the possibility of 'seeing' the λογία, which exist between τὰ ὁντα. Whereas 'knowledge' can be acquired only by 'seeing' these λογία, i.e. by 'seeing' the way things are related between them (i.e., in the metaphorical language of the Cave allegory, by moving between the cave and the 'external world' and thus seeing how the shadows, the things themselves and the light that comes from the sun are related to each other).

15 But, if so, why did so many of his commentators tend to believe that the most distinctive licence of his metaphysics is the separation of what is 'spiritual' from what is 'physical'? Anyone familiar enough with the Platonic philosophy knows that the question of σοφία is always at its core. But there are so many accounts, arguments and scattered sentences about this question, that anyone who intends to begin a γνώσεως περί τῆς πλάτωνος σοφίας (to paraphrase a line from the Sophist 246 a) feels rather at a loss. It is very tempting to pick from Plato's metaphysics only the 'clear' bits and ignore the rest; and the most clear-cut Platonic metaphysical issue is that about the distinction between a changing, temporal, visible, sensuous, 'profane' realm, and an unchanging, atemporal, non-visible, intelligible, divine one. Plato was mostly concerned with the communion between these two realms (and the so-called 'theory of participation' is at stake in many of his inquiries), not with their separation. But again, the way he explains this communion is so full of obscurities, that one can easily be seduced by the much simpler possibility of taking Plato's distinction between the two realms as a complete separation.

Chapter Five
The theory of ἐίδη (III): σοφία as δύναμις κοινωνίας

1 This view according to which 'existence' is a totality may be spotted, in one form or another, in some other Greek thinkers, such Anaxagoras, who says that "... nothing can be put apart nor come-to-be all by itself, but things were originally, so they must be now too, all together" (my italics, translation taken
from Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1983; the original reads: ἀλλ' ὁμάτισσάν ἀρχήν ἐπαινεῖ καὶ μᾶλ τα ὑπότα ὁμοῦ, fr. b 6); or Parmenides, who, speaking about 'being', says that it "never was nor will be, since it is now, all together, one, continual" (my italics, translation taken from Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1983; the original reads: οὐδὲ ποτ' ἦν οὐδ', ἐσται, ἐσεὶ χην ἐστιν ὁμοῦ πάν, ἐν, συνεξές, fr. 28 B 8 5-6).

2 This issue is pointed out right from the beginning: the matter of appearing as such-and-such without really being so does not occur only within τὰ ὅρματα ὅρμα, but also within τὰ λεγόμενα, for a sophist is able, through his λεγόμενα, to make everything 'look' as anything.

3 In the Preplatonic period the question of ἀρμονία seems to belong exclusively to the Pythagorean circles; but it occurs actually in many other thinkers, (such as Heraclitus, Anaxagoras or Empedocles). The notion of ἀρμονία, however, was discussed by Plato's predecessors in four main contexts and they spoke about: (i) a musical harmony (Ion from Chios 5 B; Philolaos 6 B); (ii) a mathematical harmony (Pythagoras 58 B 15; Hippasos 15 B; Philolaos 24 B; Archytas 2 B); (iii) a harmony of the soul (Pythagoras 58 B 1, 41, 74, 85 B; Democritus 167 A; Philolaos 23 A, Hippocrates 11 B); and (iv) a harmony of the universe (Heraclitus 1 A, 22 A, 10 B, 51 B; Empedocles 18 B, 22 B, 107 B, 122 B; Philolaos: πάντα ἀνάγκη καὶ ἀρμονία γινεσθαι — apud Diogene Laertios, V III, 84; cf. also 1 B, 2 B, 6 B, 7 B). In the fields of music and mathematics things are rather clear: certain intervals and proportions are called harmonic; but what exactly is the philosophical notion of ἀρμονία remains, I think, an obscure question.

4 See Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding (Book II, chapter 27); Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (Book I, Part IV, section 2); Leibniz, Discourse on Metaphysics (9); Hegel, Encyclopedia of Philosophy (sections 53-75) and Phenomenology of Spirit; Frege, On sense and reference; Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (cf. 4.2.4.1.-3., 5.5.3., 5.5.3.0.1.-3.); Heidegger, Der Satz der Identität.

5 We are on quicksand here. On the one hand, an ἔδοξος has an identity because it is in κοινωνία with the ἔδοξος of ταύτων; on the other hand, this κοινωνία with the ἔδοξος of ταύτων is actually 'a κοινωνία with itsel' (cf. Sph. 256 a 12-b 1: "when we call κύκλος ταύτων, we speak about the μέγεθεσις, or κοινωνία [cf. b 2] between κύκλος and itself") (cf. also Heidegger 1986, 11). All that Plato says in the Sophist about the κοινωνία τῶν ἐξωθίνει in general (and about the μέγεθεσις γένη) is, as I claimed, only an approximation of a very difficult matter, and this approximation can be the subject of many objections.

6 The idea that every being is related with others is present, in one form or another, in the 'doctrines' of many philosophers. Cf. for instance Wittgenstein's Tractatus, where it is claimed that (i) the world is "a combination (Verbindung) of objects (things)' , that (ii) "each thing is [...] in a space of possible states of affairs" (2.013) and that "there is no object that we can imagine excluded from the possibility of combining with others" (2.0121). (Cf. also 2.0141: "The possibility of its [i.e. an object] occurring in states of affairs is the form of an object"). (Cf. also Whitehead, 1929, 5, where he speaks about the 'coherence of ideas': "coherence", as here employed, means that the fundamental ideas, in terms of which the scheme is developed, presuppose each other so that in isolation they are meaningless. [...] In other words, it is
presupposed that no entity can be conceived in complete abstraction from the system of the universe, and that it is the business of speculative philosophy to exhibit this truth.

7 In his Phenomenology of Spirit Hegel puts things in a very similar way; his argument may be represented like this: (i) every being 'affirms' its identity; (ii) but this affirmation of the identity of a being implies the differentiation of that being from all that it is not. And 'all which that being is not' is infinite (cf. Sph. 256 c5-6: ἐκαστόν [...] τὰν εἰδών [...] ΄ἀπερου ὤν πληθεὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν). (Hegel, however, does not stop here; by affirming its identity, he continues his argument, a being becomes related to infinity; therefore, the true essence of beings is infinity; and the essence of 'infinity' is grounded on 'subjectivity', because the 'act' of 'affirming an identity and differentiating from other identities' — 'I am I' — is a subjective act par excellence; this is my paraphrase, for details see cf. Hegel 1977, 106 ff.)

8 Cf. Heidegger's 1992 b, 556-7 comment on Sph. 256 c 5 ff..

9 If τὸ μὴ ὄν is taken as ἐπεροῦν, then it is to be counted as an εἶδως ὄν, as a form among the many others (cf. 258 c 3: τὸ μὴ ὄν ... ἐναρκημον τῶν πολλῶν ὄντων); and this is to go far beyond Parmenides' prohibition (258 c 6-7); that is: we proved, says the Stranger, not only that τὰ μὴ ὄντα [...] ἐστὶν (258 d 5) but we also 'revealed' the εἰδῶς τοῦ μὴ ὄντος (258 d 6-7).

10 Plato supports this conclusion with the case of κίνησις. His argument about κίνησις runs as follows:

(i) we must admit (cf. δομολογητέον — 256 a 10) that κίνησις is in κώμων (256 a 1; cf. also 254 a 10), and that means that κίνησις exists;
(ii) κίνησις, however, is ἐπεροῦν than ὄν (cf. 256 c 11-12: 'can we say that κίνησις is ἐπεροῦν than ταύτων, στάσεις and ὄντον but not ἐπεροῦν than ὄν?');
(iii) but, if κίνησις is ἐπεροῦν than ὄν, then κίνησις is a μὴ ὄν, for the other of 'being' (i.e. that which is not 'being') is non-being (cf. 256 d 5-10); in other words: in relation to κίνησις non-being is (cf. 256 d 11-12; τὸ μὴ ὄν ἐπεροῦ);
(iv) and this existence of μὴ ὄν, concludes Plato, extends to τάντα τὰ γένη, because the ἦ θατέρου φύσις 'operates' (ἐπεργαζόμενη) in all of them as to make (τοιεῖ) each one ἐπεροῦ than ὄν, and therefore οὐκ ὄν (256 d 12-e 3).

11 I rely very much, in what follows, on Heidegger's 1992 b, 562-69 interpretation of this segment from the Sophist. All these references to Heidegger's interpretation of Plato do not mean, however, that my approach is, to a greater or lesser extent, Heideggerian, in the sense that I read — or tend to read — Heidegger back into Plato; if, sometimes, I endorse Heidegger's views on Plato, it is because I believe that those views reflect Plato's thoughts (or, by exaggerating things, illuminate some of their latent aspects). (For one who starts his research in Plato's philosophy from Richard Robinson's book on Platonic dialectic, the references to Heidegger may seem somehow strange; and yet, surprisingly enough, Robinson studied in late 20s with Heidegger; and in his youth he was, it seems, a disciple of Heidegger — apparently in skiing
too, according to a poem he wrote in Freiburg im Breisgau and published posthumously in *Oxford Magazine*, Hilary Term, 1997, p. 8.)

12 The idea that non-being should be understood as 'other' is pointed out once more time by Plato in regard with the notion of other *qua* ἄριτιθέμενον. For he claims that every ἄριτιθέμενον, say, τὸ μῆ καλὸν, is also an ὄν, namely αὐτὸ ὃ ἐν ὧν which is 'determined' (ἐφορισθὲν — cf. 257 e 2) as the other of an ἐδης and then 'put' opposite it as another ὄν (ὅπως ἢ πρὸς ὄν ἄριτιθέμενον — 257 e 6; cf. also e 3-4). So an ἐδης — say, καλὸν — has not more being (μᾶλλον τῶν ὡντων) than its ἄριτιθέμενον (μῆ καλὸν) cf. 257 e 9-11.) They are, says the Stranger, the same (ὄμοιως); that is, we have to say that neither τὸ μῆ μέγα καὶ τὸ μέγα αὐτὸ (cf. 258 a 1-2), nor τὸ μῆ δίκαιον [καὶ] τὸ δίκαιον (cf. 258 a 4-5) ἔδη, has more being (τὸ μεγάλον τὰ μᾶλλον ἔδη) than the other (cf. 258 a 5). And, claims Plato, this is so for all other ἔδη (cf. 258 a 7).

13 So, one may claim, the so-called 'world of forms' is not like a collection of portraits, but a sort of *tableau vivant* in which each character is both a subject and a décor for the others. To go back, however, to the image of a network — can we say anything about the shape of this network? In other words: if the ἔδη, in their totality, form a particular 'net' of κοινωνία, i.e. if they are 'dispersed' in a particular way, what would be the form of this 'disposition', or 'arrangement'? At 221 d ff. he says that two συγγενῆ ὀντα (i.e. two ὀντα which are in κοινωνία, or 'combine with each other'), as it is the case with the angler and the sophist, 'start from the same 'point' (ἐν θέξιν της), go together the same road (i.e. τοῦ θέρατος, χειροτότικον, θηρευτικόν), and then they diverge (when they reach the art of animal hunting, 'the angler going to the seashores, rivers and lakes and angling the animals which are them', the sophist going to 'land and water of another sort — rivers of wealth and broad meadowlands of generous youth to take the animals which are them'). This way putting things, together with what Plato says at 253 d (that many ἔδη are "embraced from without by another ἔδη"), seems to suggest that there is a 'hierarchy' of the ἔδη, and that this 'hierarchy' has, as it were, the shape of a pyramid (a sort of a 'genus and species pyramid'); and, since in the *Sophist* Plato argues explicitly that there are five 'ultimate genera' (viz. the five μέγιστα γενι), we may imagine that the top of the pyramid is formed by these five genera. The spectrum of knowledge then begins with what is 'immediately above the individual' (which is ἀντιπαραβαίνο — cf. Phlb. 16), and ends with the μέγιστα γενι. (In seeing, one may argue, we first see the more general ἔδη, and then the 'more particular' ones.)

14 Now, what this notion of κοινωνία emerged from? One cannot but speculate. As far as I am concerned, I would say that for Plato the notion of 'being' as ἄριτιθέμενον κοινωνία 'emerged', so to speak, from the given fact that for him man exists in a world of κοινωνία. The sphere of πόλεως brings forth all the κοινωνίαι that exist between materials, tools, producer, etc. (in *Hi. Mi.* 374 e 3 man's 'relation' with tools, ὀργανα, is expressed in terms of a κοινωνία between man and tools). The sphere of πόλεως brings forth the κοινωνίαι between the πολίται (cf. *Alc. 1, 125 d* the way we live in πόλεως consists in being in communion with one another — κοινωνοῦμεν [...] πολίτειας καὶ οὐμπροϊσὶς πρὸς ἐκάκαυς —125 d 7; cf. also Aristotle *Pol.* 1252 a 1 f.: ἀλλοι πόλεις ὅρμαιν κοινωνίαν τῷ σωτηρί; the sphere of ἐρως, which is a 'longing for other' (Smp. 200 a-b), brings forth the κοινωνίαι
between the ἐρᾶσται (in Aristophanes' myth from the Symposium 'love' is a 'nostalgic' search for a lost κοινωνία — cf. 192 e 2-4; I leave aside the 'universal' character of ἐρως, which is sometimes said to drive everything towards ἀριστοποιομενον, i.e. towards a 'concordant communion' — cf. Smp. 187 a-188 d); the sphere of θεῖον brings forth the κοινωνία between men and gods (cf. Smp. 188 b 7-c 1; man are in a κοινωνία with gods through 'rite of sacrifice and divination'), and the sphere of speaking brings forth the κοινωνία between words (cf. Sph. 262 b-263 d: speaking consists in the ἀναφηκτικά and the λογοφθράντα between ὁμολογία and ἰδίματα; cf. also Thr. 202 b 4, 206 d 2). And, since (as I argued) for Plato the locus of certainty is the συνομοσία of minds, philosophy itself, in its Platonic form, requires the κοινωνία with others.

15 As I said, putting things in terms of παραδείγματα—ἐξωλα does not go very well with the idea of a κοινωνία τῶν εἰδῶν. Plato, however, says explicitly: “the best I can make of the matter is this μάλιστα ἑμοί γε καταφάνεσθαι ὧδε ἔχειν — that these εἰδη are like [ὡσπερ] παραδείγματα ἑστάναι ἐν τῷ φύσει. The other things are made in their image and are ὀμοιώματα, and this μέθοδος they come to have in the εἰδή is nothing but their being made in their image" (Prm. 132 d). That is: he admits that the most acceptable way of putting things is to say that the εἰδή are like [cf. ἑμοί] παραδείγματα. (And this ὡσπερ is pointed out by Aristotle when he says in Metaph. 1079 b 25 ff.: “to say that the εἰδή are παραδείγματα, and that other things 'participate' [παρέχειν] in them, is to use [...] poetical metaphors [παραδείγματα ἐλέγχων ποιητικάς] — my paraphrase.) It is essential, I think, for our understanding of Plato, not to forget this ὡσπερ.

16 The Sophist suggests that there are two main kinds of κοινωνία τῶν γένεων.
(i) One is the including κοινωνία, i.e. the κοινωνία that exists between two εἰδη, of which one is included ("embraced from without" — cf. 253 d 7-8) by the other. This is the case for instance with the εἰδός of anger which is included in the εἰδή (cf. 219 a 8 where θυμός is called εἰδός) of τέχνη, κτήσις, χειριστική, ἥρεμωτική, ὑποθετική, ἐνδορρο, ἀλευρωτική. (This 'inclusion' of an εἰδός form its γένος; and διεσυρέων the γένος of an εἰδός brings forward the very answer to the τί ἐστιν question, i.e. to the question 'what is that εἰδός?'; for details see 7.4.) (ii) The other is the mere relating κοινωνία, i.e. the κοινωνία that exists between two εἰδη which do not include each other. This is the case with three μέγειτα γένη —τὸ ὀν, ταύτων and θάτερον; none of them includes another in the way the εἰδός of τέχνη includes the εἰδός of κτήσις; they are, if I may say so, in a reciprocal relation, but what this relation is Plato does not even suggest.

Chapter Six
The notion of ἀλήθεια

1 The question about the ἀλήθειας of the world-soul raises few difficulties. On the one hand, Plato says that the world's body 'has no sense-organs, because there is nothing outside it to be perceived'; but, on the other hand, the world-soul exists within a body, so 'it may be imagined as having internal
fee
lings, which would be covered by the word aistheseis", as Cornford 1937, 96 put it.

2 'We remember what we have seen even if we shut our eyes' — says Socrates in Thet. 163 e. It is , in a way, the same, I believe, with the 'internal non-abstract seeing' produced by speaking: we see the 'subject' of a λεγόμενον 'even if we shut our eyes' (although here the 'image' is not 'lent' from memory and then 'projected' on the 'internal screen', here the 'image' is produced 'on the spot' by speaking); the 'internal projection', however, in both cases, is, I think, 'a keeping of an image on the internal screen', and this keeping can be performed only by memory. And so it is with 'seeing through eyes'; in Philb. 39 a 1-2 Plato claims that 'perceiving through senses' is accompanied by memory, μνήμη; if we take the case of sight, then this claim, I believe, refers to the fact that seeing is a keeping an image present (cf. also Heidegger 1988, 160).

3 This distinction between abstract and non-abstract forms raises some very difficult questions. One of them refers to the fact that we cannot determine the exact border between abstract and non-abstract forms. In the Sophist the non-abstract εἴδος of the angler seems to embody some aspects of the non-abstract εἴδος of the sophist; but does the non-abstract εἴδος of the sophist embody the abstract εἴδος of τὸ μὴ ἄν? Roughly speaking, the Sophist is divided in two main parts: one that deals with the question of what the sophist is (in which there are proposed eight definitions of him, 216 a-236 c — the first seven, and 264 d-268 d — the eighth), and one that offers a metaphysical 'theory' (236 e-264 b). Usually it is held that the first part, the one about the sophist, is just an illustration of the ontological theory developed in the second; and so, we may think that the subtitle added by the Mediaeval copyists (viz. περὶ τοῦ δύνατον, On being), should be taken as the actual title of the dialogue. Yet the title that Plato chose is The Sophist, and this dialogue starts (216 a ff.) and ends (264 d-268 d) with the question of what the sophist is. So, I think (as Heidegger 1992 b, 412), it is exactly the other way around: the part of the Sophist which deals explicitly with the sophist is not incidentally its first part; it is its first part, because the whole dialogue starts from the wonder caused by the puzzling nature of the sophist (cf. 235 b 5, 237 a, e-238 a, 241 b 7). But if this is so, and if we cannot understand what the sophist is unless we understand what τὸ μὴ ἄν is — does this mean that the non-abstract εἴδος of the sophist embodies, somehow, the abstract εἴδος of τὸ μὴ ἄν? And, if so, could we call the εἴδος of τὸ μὴ ἄν abstract? I do not know how to answer these questions, and I do not know if there is an answer to them in Plato. I believe, however, that the distinction between abstract and non-abstract forms (which is Plato), in spite of the very difficult questions that it raises, may help us to understand the way he thought several issues, such as the issue of truth. (I owe the point made in this note to Mr Alexandru Dragomir.)

4 In Thet. 165 b Plato says that 'if knowing [ἐπιστασθα] is seeing [δεικνύ], then we may say that one can both know something and not know it'; this points
out, I think, precisely his belief that seeing, as long as it is not accompanied by speaking, cannot be actual knowledge.

5 This idea that the essence of speaking resides in σύνθεσις, i.e. in relating, is to be found also in Ferdinand de Saussure: "La loi tout à fait finale du langage est, à ce que nous osons dire, qu'il n'y a jamais rien qui puisse résider dans un terme, par suite directe de ce que les symboles linguistique sont sans relation avec ce qu'ils doivent désigner, donc que a est impuissant à rien désigner sans le secours de b, celui-ci de même sans le secours de a, ou que tous les deux ne valent que par leur réciproque différence [...]

6 This appearance of the κατά  ou λέγεται τι is — as Heidegger 1994, 104 (cf. also 1992 b 180, 182) put it — not a mere φάνα, 'appearance', but a κατάφανα, i.e. an 'appearance as'. In the Sophist 251 b-c, however, Plato says: "We speak of man, [for instance,] [...] and we attribute to him colours and forms and sizes and vices and virtues, and in all those cases and countless others we say not only that he is man, but we say he is good and numberless other things. [...but there are people who believe that] we must not call a man good, but must call the good good, and a man man' (translation taken from Fowler 1928). Here, when Plato speaks about those who believe that 'we must not call a man good, but must call the good good, and a man man', he (according to Heidegger 1992 b, 501 and to many other scholars) had in view Antisthenes and his followers.

We know from Aristotle’s Topica (104 b 19 ff.) that for Antisthenes οὐκ ἔστιν ἀντιλέγειν. Now, Heidegger 1992 b, 503 ff. construes this thesis of Antisthenes as implying that speaking, λέγειν, is reduced to 'identical predications'; and he claims that the main problem that the phenomenon of speaking raises is this. On the one hand, in every speaking, that which is its 'subject', is 'posited' as one, as a ἐν; but, on the other hand, the 'subject' can be determined, in speaking, in many ways. This is, argues Heidegger 1992 b, 500 ff., precisely the problem that was envisaged by Plato in his Sophist at 251 a ff., where the Stranger discusses the question of 'how it is that we call the same thing [...] by several names' (251 a 5-6). For here, says Heidegger (p. 501), although Plato formulates the question in terms of 'a single thing' (ταύταν — 251 a 6; ἐν — b 2, 7) and 'its many names' (cf. πολλὰ ὄνομα — 251 a 5, b 4), he actually has in mind the contrast between 'a single thing' (e.g. man — cf. 251 a 8), and its many 'determinations' (e.g. 'good' — b 1). And the fact that speaking is understood by Plato as 'speaking about something as something else' is, concludes Heidegger, that which 'saves' Plato from Antisthenes' position, i.e. from the view that speaking is merely 'identical predication'.

7 Along his history, however, man attempted — with a commitment that varied from one age to another — to broaden the boundaries of intelligibility and so to extend 'the realm of phantasy'. For the modern man, for instance, the 'realm of phantasy' is far more richer than it was for the Greek of the classical period. In the terms I used above, for the modern man there are more 'combinations' of εἶδη that have a meaning than there were for the Greek of the classical period. In a way, modern art was a conscious attempt to
'combine', without any discrimination, any εἶδος with any εἶδος; to paraphrase that expression from the Phaedrus I quoted above, we may say that modern art 'makes out everything to be like everything else, ignoring completely the limits of possible comparison'.

Chapter Seven
The μέθοδος, that ἀληθεύουσι τί ποτ' ἔστιν ἕκαστον εἴδος

1 Heidegger 1994 interprets the Aristotelian distinction between the 'essential' and the 'accidental' what of an ὄν in this way (which, he seems to suggest, applies also, mutatis mutandis, to Plato) (I shall summarize this argument in a direct style):

The 'essential what' of an ὄν is thought as the 'gathering-together' (συνκείμενον — ständige Beisammenheit) of all the features without which that ὄν could not be, i.e. as a co-presence of all these features. In other words: any essential feature of an ὄν is a συν-κείμενον with the ὑποκείμενον of that ὄν and they are ἀδύνατον διαπρεπέναι (cf. Metaph. 1051 b 9 ff.: τὸ μὲν ὅτι σύγκειται καὶ ἀδύνατα διαπρεπέναι) (1994, 95-6). (The essential what, however, is both a co-presence of some features and an absence of others, which are ἀδύνατα συμπεριλήφθηναι — cf. Metaph. 1051 b 9 ff.: τὸ δὲ ὅτι διχοριηται καὶ ἀδύνατα συμπεριλήφθηναι; that is: the essential what is also determined by a particular absence, i.e. by non-being — 1994, 95-6, 99.) In its turn, the 'accidental what' of an ὄν is thought as consisting of those features whose co-presence with or absence from the 'essential what' of an ὄν cannot determine the very existence of that ὄν (1994, 95-6). (That is: the accidental what is a possible absence, and that is why Aristotle says about it that it is ἐγγὺς 'τοῦ μὴ ὄντος', Metaph. 1026 b 21 — 1994, 96).

2 If so, then Plato was, to use the modern philosophical jargon, a holist about knowledge. I believe there is enough textual evidence which may allow one to support such a claim (see, inter alios, Fine 1990, 98); for the idea that we cannot know anything in isolation occurs throughout his writings. Besides the passages which claim explicitly that to know an εἶδος means to know the κοινωνία in which that εἶδος is 'caught', there are also several places where Plato expresses this idea in general terms, such as Ὕπ. Μι. 369 d ('having a desire to understand [ἐπιθυμοῦν μαθεῖν], I raise questions, and I examine [ἐξαναγνώσσω], analyze [ἐπιτακτὶκῶς] and put together [συμβάλλω] the answers [τὰ λεγόμενα], in order that I may understand [ἐνιαύτω] — my paraphrase), or Φδρ. 270 c ('you cannot understand something without following the μέθοδος of taking it as a whole [ὅλων]). (The idea of a holist view of knowledge may be said to be implied by the very use of the verb συνίημι, which means both 'to bring together' and 'to understand'.) (Plato's claim, however, that to know something means to know its 'possible ways of combining with other things', is to be found, in one form or another, in many philosophers; see for instance Wittgenstein's Tractatus, 2. 0123: "If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in state of affairs. Every one of these possibilities must be part of the nature of the object.")
3 This point is somehow suggested at 71 b, where Socrates asks rhetorically: “Do you suppose that somebody who does not know Meno at all [μη γινώσκει το παράτατον] could say whether he is handsome and rich and well-born or the reverse.” That is: if I do not know anything at all (το παράτατον) about something (i.e. if I do not have any preliminary knowledge about it), I cannot start finding out other things about that something.

4 In my view the geometrical problem is about ‘whether this figure could be inscribed as a triangle in this circle’ (τὸν ὁ δὲ τὸν κύκλον, 86 e 6) (my italics), not about whether ‘the figure of square or parallelogram could be inscribed as the figure of triangle in the figure of circle’. In these terms the problem does not have too much sense; it is possible of course, in principle, to inscribe a square/parallelogram as a triangle in a circle, but it depends on its size and the size of the circle. In other words, the problem is about the sizes of the given figures, not about the figures of square or parallelogram and circle in general.

5 The main difference between these two interpretations regards the meaning of τόιοτον ὁλον (87 a 4). Butcher takes it as ‘similar to’, Benecke as ‘identical to’. Each of these two readings entails a specific meaning for χαριτων. Benecke is claiming that the figure in question (i.e. το χαριτων) is the one already drawn at 82 b ff. (see Annex I, Fig. 3. This view has been accepted by many scholars, such as Gow (1884, 175), Timpanaro-Cardini (1951, 402-9), and Brumbaugh (1954, 33-5).

6 This way of solving indirectly a given problem makes one think to the geometrical method of ἀπαγωγή. The method of ἀπαγωγή is connected with the geometry of the 5th century and it seems that it was first practised systematically by Hippocrates of Chios. (This method of ἀπαγωγή is analogous to the later method of geometrical analysis and synthesis.)

7 Here Plato uses the word ἐρωτησει, not ἴσμοι τιμ, as he has done in earlier passages. But, since there are at least two passages (87 c-89 a and 98 d-e) which imply that the two expressions are used as synonyms, I translated them both by ‘knowledge’.

8 In the Republic 528 b-c it is said that although solid geometry is teachable, there are no teachers of it. But here, in the Republic, the absence of the teachers and learners of solid geometry is justified, for, argues Socrates, there is no motivation for such an inquiry (which is difficult and no city holds it in honour). In the Meno, however, it is implied, there is nothing whatsoever to stop the activity of learners and teachers of virtue (for the ‘question’ about a particular ‘branch of knowledge’ and its teachers see also Alc. 1, 109 d ff.)

9 What are the boundaries of Socrates’ application? According to the geometrical analogy, it should contain only (a) and (b) (and Robinson 1953, 117 believes that (c) does not actually belong to it, for, he claims, "after page 89 neither the word 'hypothesis' nor any methodological remark occurs in the dialogue"). Yet, I think, we simply cannot cut off (c) from the previous two parts of the argument, i.e. (a) and (b).
10 Cf. Robinson 1953, 122: "[...] the Meno's discussion of hypothetical method seems to have value as the symbol of a valuable change in Plato's writings. With the introduction of this method he is passing from destructive to constructive thinking, from elenchus and the refutation of other men's views to the elaboration of positive views of his own."

11 Here in the Meno ὑπόθεσις refers to a λέγομενον, a statement, which is 'put down' (ὑποτίθεται, or simply τίθεται) by somebody in order to support the continuation of a dialectical inquiry confronted with a difficulty (cf. for instance, Men. 86 d ff. and Prm. 135 c) (cf. also Robinson 1953, 95: "[Ὑποτίθεμαι] conveys the notion of laying down a proposition as the beginning of a process of thinking, in order to work on the basis thereof").

12 Although, as Sextus says, the Dogmatists, when they are attacked by the Sceptical hypothetical mode, reply that:

\[\text{a warrant that the hypothesis is strong (ἐπιρρήσεως) is to be found in the fact that what is inferred from the hypothetical assumptions is found to be true — for if what follows from them is sound, then the assumptions from which the conclusions follow are also true and indisputable [translation from Barnes 1990, 109].}\]

\[\text{(M VIII 375; cf. M III 14)}\]

In Plato this type of argument occurs fairly often, cf. for instance Ti. 29 a: "If the world be indeed fair and the Demiurge is good, it is manifest that he must have looked to that which is eternal, but if what cannot be said without blasphemy is true, then to the created model. Everyone will see that he must have looked to the eternal, for the world is the fairest of creations and he is the best of causes".

13 In the first part of the Parmenides there are discussed two hypothetical statements (cf. 128 d 6 and 127 d 6, respectively): 'all is one' (ἐν [...] εἶναι τὸ πᾶν, 128 a 8-b 1), which is claimed by Parmenides; and 'beings are many' (τὰ δεντα ἐστι πολλά, 127 e 1-2), which is claimed by some philosophers who attempted to refute Parmenides. After discussing these two hypotheses, Zeno concludes: we should prefer Parmenides' hypothesis because its consequences are 'less ridiculous' (cf. 128 d 5).

14 In Plato an εἴδος is, fairly often, discussed in relation with its ἀντιπαθέμενον — see for instance 'courage' (ἀνορεία) and 'cowardice' (θελία) (Afc. 1, 115 d); 'beautiful' (τὸ καλὸν) and 'ugly' (τὸ αἰχρὸν) (Hp. Ma. 289 a-d); 'honorable' (καλὸν) and 'dishonorable' (παραχρόνιον) (Th. 186 a 8); 'good' (ἀγαθόν) and 'bad' (κακὸν) (Th. 186 a 8); δὲν and μὴ δὲν (Sph. 254 b-259 d).

15 When we διακρίνειν the γένη of εἴδη, these εἴδη are spoken (λέγεται) καὶ not πρὸς ἄλλα (Sph. 255 c 12-3); that is, they are 'revealed' as what they are in themselves.
As regarding this characteristic I agree with Cornford 1950, 203, who says: "I have not been able to understand how Plato's businesslike account of the instant (τὸ ἐξαίφνης) [from the Parmenides 156 c-157 b] at which the various species of change occur can be connected with the 'sudden' vision of the Beautiful (Wahl, p. 171; cf. also Beierwaltes 1966, 275]) and the doctrine of Anamnesis (Speiser, p. 47). The only link appears to the use of the word ἐξαίφνης in its normal sense of 'suddenly' at Smp. 210 e, and Ep. vii, 341 d."

The one who discloses something through the act of νοεῖν, however, is very well aware of what he has disclosed. This is perhaps not a totally unimportant characteristic, for Plato speaks many times about human 'acts' that happen ἐξαίφνης (cf. Smp. 212 c 6, 223 b 2, Lg. 866 d 7, 867 a 3, b 6, 944 b 2), i.e. 'acts' from which it is absent any 'premeditation' (ἐπιθυμητή, προθυμητή — cf. Lg. 867 b). But also he speaks about human 'acts' which, although they do happen suddenly, do not lack any 'premeditation' — like, for instance, the acts of prophesying (Cra. 396 d 3; cf. also Ap. 22 c 1-2) or of reciting poetry (Ion 535 b; cf. also Ap. 22 b 8 ff.). Yet those who perform these 'prepared' yet sudden 'acts', he claims, are ἐπιθυμητοί (cf. Cra. 396 c 7), i.e. men who — because they are 'out of their senses' (Ion 533 b 7) and, as it were, 'suspended' from the Muse (Ion 536 a; cf. also Phdr. 241 e) — do not know in the least what their words mean (Ap. 22 c 3; cf. also Tht. 180 c). But the one who discloses something through the act of νοεῖν is, it seems, very well aware of that which has been disclosed by him.

A similar 'experience' seems to be soul's first knowing the ἐπίσης (cf. Phdr. 249 e ff.; cf. also Men. 81 c and Phd. 83 b), that is: before it is (first) embodied. (Cf., inter alios, Ackrill 1994, 27: 'It is obvious that this 'theory' of noesis is in an important respect like the doctrine of anamnesis [...] For it is a way of making a certain claim — the claim that we can grasp realities directly and not just through our own language and concepts'.) So, one may argue, what the κατοίησις of νοεῖν provides is the full ἀνάμνησις of an ἐδοκ. (As I said, in seeing something, that which is being seen is actually kept in sight; that is: seeing is a keeping an image present, and this keeping is performed by μνήμη, memory — cf. Phlb. 39 a 1-2: 'perceiving through senses' is accompanied by μνήμη). Heidegger 1992 a, 124 f. seems to suggest that in disclosing an ἐδοκ. through νοεῖν, the disclosed ἐδοκ. must be actually kept in the 'sight' of νοεῖν; and this incessant process of keeping a disclosed ἐδοκ. in the 'sight' of νοεῖν is ἀνάμνησις; cf. p. 124: 'ἀνάμνησις is the incessant thinking of something, the pure saving into unconcealedness of what is thought.')

This 'noetic experience' is not, however, an exclusive Platonic license. In various religions the idea of an 'apprehension of the divine' which is beyond speaking and which resembles a 'vision' is almost a common place (see for instance Eliade 1965, 19-77). The Eskimo shamans, the yogies of different schools, the Indian, Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists, the orthodox monks influenced by the teaching of Gregory Palamas, the Moslem mystics — they all describe their apprehending the divine as a 'seeing of pure light', which occurs suddenly, like a 'lightning-flash', but only after a long preparation (for details see cf. Eliade 1965, 23, 41-7, 61-5, 65-6). And that what this 'seeing of pure light' provides is a direct revealing of the presence of god (cf. Eliade,
1965, 77) (Festugière 1950, 157-249 argues that this is how we should actually interpret the Platonic act of νοεῖν). (The 'efficiency' of such a noetic apprehension has been consecrated by various other European thinkers — such as some of the Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church, or in our time, by Heidegger; it is true, nevertheless, that, beginning with Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, theologia naturalis replaces almost completely theologia negativa, and that this issue of a noetic apprehension has started to be regarded with extreme suspicion.)

19 In the Sophist (cf. 233 d and 234 c) Plato determines a kind of λέγειν, namely sophistry, through the case of 'image-making' (i.e. through the case of ποιεῖν) (and in the Republic 595 a ff. he determines another form of λέγειν, i.e. the 'poetry', through the case of ποιεῖν). Why then does he explain the act of λέγειν through that of ποιεῖν? Or, in other words, what is the similarity which allows him to use the case of ποιεῖν as a clearer paradigm of λέγειν?

As I argued, for Plato in the act of ποιεῖν something is 'brought into existence' (i.e. the product, ποιοῦμενον) in which something else (i.e. the 'model' of that product) becomes present. In my view, Plato uses the case of ποιεῖν as a clearer paradigm for the understanding of λέγειν only because he believed that in the act of λέγειν, as in that of ποιεῖν, something is brought into existence (that which has been said, the λεγόμενον), in which something else (the ὡς about which the λεγόμενον is about) becomes present. If so, then language is a sort of medium in which the εἴδη become present. In the act of νοεῖν, however, we have a direct access to εἴδη not through the linguistic 'medium'.

Conclusions

Hypothetical dialectic and metaphysics

1 Cf. also the role of the philosophical συμπόσιον in the Symposium, the Timaeus or the Laws (639 d 2-3). (Although only a few dialogues open as a real συμπόσιον — as the Symposium or the Timaeus — one may be surprised at finding how many passages in Plato allude to symposia or sympotic atmosphere — e.g. Ly. 204 a, Prt. 347 c-e, R. 354 a-b, Ti. 17 a ff., Lg. 639 d-e.)

2 One can hardly exaggerate the role of dialogue in Plato. For him any inquiry should be undertaken within a dialogue (cf. for instance Sph. 218 c).

3 Cf. Proclus (in Tim. ii, 298) commentary of Plato's claims that the soul is a mixture of τὸ ὡς, τὰ ὀντά and θάτερον: "[…] for all knowing is accomplished by means of likeness between the knower and the known" (translation from Cornford 1937, 93).

4 In the Timaeus there is I think, in connection to all this, a problem which Plato did not resolve. Let us first take the musical συμφωνία. As I argued, in the field of music, Plato uses the terms συμφωνία and ὀρμικτία as synonyms (cf. inter alia Cra. 405 d 1), meaning by them 'a τάξις that exists between sounds qua pitches' (cf. Lg. 665 a 1 f.) — viz. an interval, a mode or a melody.
Now, what makes a particular succession of pitches to be a ταξις, i.e. a 'harmonic' (or 'symphonic') succession?

The swift and slow sounds, which appear to be high and low, are sometimes discordant (άφρομοτος φέρομενον) on account of the ἀρμονίας that exists between their motions and the motion they excite in us; and sometimes symphonic (συμφωμικον) on account of the ἀρμονίας that exists between their motions and the motion they excite in us. [...] And when two sounds are symphonic, they produce a pleasure (ἡδονή) which even the unwise feel, and which to the wise becomes a higher sort of delight (εὐφροσύνη), being an imitation (μίμησις) of divine harmony (θεῖα ἀρμονία) in mortal motions (ἐν θετάυς φοράς).

This is what Plato says in the Timaeus 80 a-b. I shall not enter here the complicated details of Plato's 'acoustic theory' (which are excellently presented by Cornford 1937, 320 ff.). The points, however, that are actually at stake in this passage are, I think, these.

(i) At 67 b, Plato claimed that we hear with the soul through the ears, and that "hearing is the vibration of this blow which begins in the head (i.e. in the learning part of the soul — το λογιστικόν) and ends in the region of the liver (i.e. it affects also the other two parts of the soul — δομός and το ἐπιθυμητικόν)". And here, at 80 a-b, he implies that a succession of pitches is symphonic if a man, when it hears it, feels either ηδονή (in case he is an unwise man, and hears it primarily with δομός and το ἐπιθυμητικόν — for it is with them that man feels pleasure, cf. 69 d), or εὐφροσύνη (in case he is a wise man, and hears it primarily with το λογιστικόν). So, συμφωνία appears to be a subjective notion: a succession of pitches is 'symphonic' when it produces 'aesthetic pleasure' (be it of a 'lower' or a 'higher' kind) to a hearer.

(ii) But the last phrase of the passage (which says that a symphonic succession of pitches is a μίμησις ἐν θετάυς φοράς of a θείᾳ ἀρμονίᾳ) complicates things, for it implies, on the contrary, that συμφωνία is an objective notion: a succession of pitches is 'symphonic' when it imitates a θείᾳ ἀρμονίᾳ.

How are to solve this 'contradiction'? The answer seems to be suggested at 47 c ff. Here Plato says that the harmonic motions of the world-soul are 'mirrored' by certain phenomena which are visible (e.g. the revolutions of the visible heaven, περισσοὶ ἐν σύμμετρος τῷ κόσμῳ — 47 a 1; a view which occurs also at 40 a ff., 90 c-d and in Lg. 822, but which seems to contradict an earlier passage from R. 529 b-c) and audible (e.g. the ἀρμονία of the stars — R. 617 b); and that our soul can copy (ἐν μιμουμενοι — 47 c 2) them (its revolutions becoming thus harmonic) (and this is the reason, says Plato, for which the gods gave us the gifts of sight, ὀφθᾶ — 47 a 1, and hearing, ἀκοή — 4 c 4) (cf. also Prt. 326 b and R. 500 c-d). That is: συμφωνία is an objective notion, and something is symphonic when it imitates the θείᾳ ἀρμονίᾳ of the world-soul (cf. also Ti. 90 d).

But this way of putting things brings forward a serious problem. For the ἀρμονία of the universe seems to 'embodies' two different things: the ἀρμονία of its model, the παντελῆς νοητὸν ἔδον (cf. 31 b 1) (or, to use an expression from R. 500 c, the κόσμος τῶν ἔδων); and the ἀρμονία of the soul

190
of the universe (which, in its turn, is a copy of the world-soul of the νοητὸν ἕνν — cf. 30 c ff.). I think that Plato left this problem unsolved.

5 Cf. also (i) the Cratylus, where the problem of language in general seems to be reducible to ontological problems, as its beginning suggests, which opens with a confrontation between two linguistic views (i.e. 'names are simply conventional' and 'names have some natural correctness') and ends with a confrontation between two ontological doctrines (i.e. the Heraclitean flux and the Platonic ἐλεάη); and (ii) the Timaeus 29 b 4-5, where the 'quality' of any 'account', λόγος, is said to derive precisely from the ontological quality of the δύνα that it 'describes' (because, claims Plato, any λόγος is συγγενής with the δύνα to which it refers).

6 As I claimed, for Plato οὐσία was understood as whatness. One may argue that this is due to the fact that οὐσία is primarily taken as οὐσία γίγνεσθαι, i.e. as οὐσία that is being known (cf. Sph. 248 d 2); and that this is so because the stand-point from which this notion of being is reached is human knowledge, which can know only a what that remains the same. In other words: one may claim that whatness, as the sense of being implied by human knowledge, passed to the theory aimed at solving the puzzle brought forward by the given way in which human knowledge works, viz. to the theory of ἐλεάη. Yet Plato would not endorse such a claim; because for him, ultimately, human knowledge has an ontological 'condition of possibility'.

(As I argued in the Annex II, for those who think that things are 'grounded', 'founded' or 'based' upon principles, the quest for those principles would be like a descent towards the profound depths of the world. But for Plato, who thought that our world is held from the above by an 'intelligible world', the quest for this 'intelligible world' cannot be compared with a 'descent towards the profound depths of the world', but only with an ascent towards its heights'. In Plato's case, however, I think that the idea that knowledge in general was thought — metaphorically — as an ascension is a consequence of the idea that the object of knowledge, the intelligible realm, was thought as being 'above'. In other words: knowledge may be conceived as an ascension precisely because its target was conceived as being 'above'. To take the case of the Cave, from the Republic: one may ascend towards the 'real world', precisely because this world is above the cave in which one lives. To claim the opposite, namely that the intelligible realm is 'localized above' because dialectic is conceived as an 'elevation', would be, I think, a mere far-fetched and 'unnatural' way of putting things. If so, then this idea — that knowledge qua ascension is a consequence of the idea that the 'object' of knowledge in general, the intelligible realm, was thought as being 'above' — suggest, at least at the metaphorical level, that in Plato the problem of knowledge is determined by the way he puts the metaphysical problems, and not the other way around. And this 'metaphorical determination' hints that for Plato knowledge in general was thought as having an ontological 'condition of possibility'.)

7 His so-called attack on the poets is, I think, one of the many misinterpreted topics of the Republic. First, the censorship he has in view regards only those
poets whose λόγοι conceal things and so pervert the listeners (cf. 376 a ff.); and secondly, his attack against poetry (cf. 595 a ff.) is directed against the 'concealing poetry' (if I may say so), not against the poetical thinking, that is, against philosophy as μεγίστη μοναίκη (cf. also, inter alios, Elias 1984, 1 ff.).

8 The idea that myth is a sui generis embodiment of a 'subject matter' is somehow supported by the Timaeus 29 b f., where it is suggested that any λεγόμενον, embodies the features of its 'subject matter', as a copy does with the features of its model. All 'accounts', claims Plato in the Timaeus, are 'akin', (συγγενεῖς) with the ὑπάρχα that they describe; so, he argues, an account about what is only a changing εἰκών (29 b 2-3; 92 c 7) (i.e. the visible universe) of a 'lasting and stable' (μονήμον καὶ βέβαιον, 29 b 6) παράδειγμα (28 b 7; 29 b 4) (i.e. the 'intelligible' universe) — precisely because it is 'akin' to what is not μονήμον καὶ βέβαιον — can only be εἰκός (cf. 29 b 5-6, 30 b, 52 d, 53 d, 56 a, 57 d, 59 c, 68 b, 69 b, 90 e), viz. 'probable'. The word εἰκός has, roughly speaking, two main meanings: 'like' and 'likely'. Literally, εἰκός means 'like', or 'similar'; something which is εἰκός, an εἰκών, is then, in a literal sense, something which resembles, more or less, something else, for instance the copy of a model (cf. Ti. 29 b 2-4, where the visible universe is called an εἰκών of a παράδειγμα). For the Plato, however, not only a thing can be εἰκός, but also an account, a λεγόμενον; that is, if a λεγόμενον about something resembles that something, the λεγόμενον itself is nothing but an εἰκών, i.e. an embodiment of that something and so it can be called εἰκός, i.e. 'similar' or 'alike'. (Yet the word εἰκός, when it is applied not to an object, but to a λόγος usually denotes 'probability' not 'resemblance'. But for Plato a λόγος is 'probable', or 'likely', precisely because it is 'like' the 'reality' it 'describe' — cf. Robinson 1953, 216: "a statement was probable, to the Greeks, because it resembled reality or truth".) (Thus, we may say that the sensible universe is an embodiment of its intelligible model, and that the cosmological account of the Timaeus is a sui generis embodiment of the sensible universe.)

9 Yet, as Plato himself admits in R. 376 e-377, not every myth is an ἀληθῆς μῦθος (some of his remarks on myth, however, are undoubtedly ironic, such as that from Sph. 242 c, where the Stranger says that 'every one [of the former thinkers] seems to tell us a μῦθος, as if we were children' — translation from Fowler 1928; cf. also Phd. 61 b).

10 As to why does Plato resort so often to myths, there seems to be a hint in Plt. 277 d 9-10. There, he says that the use of a παράδειγμα asks for the use of another παράδειγμα, which may be taken as supporting (indirectly) the following conjecture: Plato resorts so often to myths, because he believed that a myth, once used in philosophical discourse, asks for the use of another myth.

11 Cf. for instance (i) the ὑπομονή from the Meno: 'shape is the only thing which accompanies colour' (75 b); 'shape is the limit of a solid' (76 a); or 'colour is an effluence from shapes commensurate with sight and perceptible by it' (76 d); and (ii) the way the γένος of the sophist is 'divided' in the Sophist. (Sometimes, however, he uses various metaphorical devices in
determining a particular εἰδότης, as he does in Phl. 279 a ff., where there is an attempt to determine the εἰδότης of statesman by an analogy with the clearer εἰδότης of waver).

12 So far, I put the distinction between these two main fields of knowledge, that of τὸ αἰσθητὸν and that of τὸ ἀναίσθητον, in terms of 'the field of embodied/non-abstract εἶδη' and 'the field of non-embodied/abstract εἶδη'. In 8.2.1. I introduced the distinction between the 'level of εἴδη' and the 'meta-εἴδη level' (at which the theory of εἴδη functions); and I said that the theory of εἴδη, since it is achieved through speaking, has itself to operate with εἴδη (be they abstract or non-abstract). To rephrase what I said above in these terms, the majority of Plato's myths aim at speaking about abstract εἴδη through non-abstract εἴδη.

13 In the Timaeus Plato calls Socrates' account about an ideal πολιτεία a myth (26 c 9) and Critias' story about the ancient city of Athens and Atlantis an ἀληθινὸς λόγος (26 e 5-6). Yet, it is rather clear, from the whole context, that Socrates' account is about an abstract matter and that Critias' story is a mythical λεγόμενον in which that matter was 'transferred' (μεταφέρεται — cf. 26 c 9: τὴν πόλιν... νῦν μετενεργήκοντες ἐπὶ τάλαντης). The reason of this 'transfer' is stated by Socrates at 19 b f.: "I might compare myself to a person who, on beholding beautiful animals either created by the painter's art, or, better still, alive but at rest, is seized with a desire of seeing them in motion [κινούμενα] or engaged in some struggle or conflict to which their forms appear suited." Socrates' request for a motion picture of his abstract ideas (i.e. for the ἔργα of the 'embodiment' of its 'ideal πολιτεία' — cf. 20 e 5) makes one think of Aristotle's saying that a tragedy shows its characters in motion (ὅς πράττονται) and in act (ὅς ἐνεγοιηθε) (Po. 1448 a 24). To bring a character to life, to make him ἐνεφυγός and put him in motion, is to make him perceptible by senses (for motion is, primarily, seized by senses). If so, when Socrates asks Critias to 'transfer' his ideal and abstract πολιτεία into the history of a πόλις, he actually asks for an αἰσθητὸν embodiment of his abstract thoughts.

14 See for instance Aristotle Rh. 1412 a 11 ff.: "we have to choose our metaphors [ὅτι δὲ μεταφέρεται] from the things that surround us and are visible [ἀπὸ οἴκεσιν καὶ φανερῶν], as in philosophy [οἷον καὶ ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ]" (my translation); which suggests that in philosophy (the field of most abstract matters), the metaphors to be used have to be chosen from the field of 'those things that we see surrounding us', i.e. from the field of non-abstract things. (In some manuscripts there is a μὴ before φανερῶν, and some editors, as Dufour and Wartelle, adopted it; to me, however, its emendation makes more sense and fits better with the examples that follows, e.g. 'an arbitrator is like an altar'.) The same idea (that in philosophy the metaphors are names of concrete things 'transferred' to abstract thoughts) was expressed by Hegel in Esthetics, § 3 a: the philosophical concepts are 'sensible meanings' transferred, übertragen, into the spiritual realm, where the concealment of these initial 'proper meanings' makes possible the appearance of an abstract eigentliches meaning.
Ricoeur, however, objects to this view and claims: "il n'est [...] pas besoin d'une métaphysique du propre pour justifier la différence du littéral et du figuré; c'est l'emploi dans le discours [...] qui spécifie la différence du littéral et du métaphorique" (p. 369). (And he also claims that in Aristotle, "si une métaphysique est jointe à la métaphore, ce n'est pas celle de Platon, mais bien celle d'Aristote. [...] Montrer les choses inanimées comme animée [cf. Rh. 1411 b 32] n'est point les relier à l'invisible, mais les montrer elles-même comme en acte" — p. 50; see also pp. 388 ff.)

Epilogue

1 The word 'philosophy', φιλοσοφία, belongs, strictly speaking, to what we may call 'West European thinking'. When I use the word 'philosophy', however, I used it in this 'strict sense' (and so I confine my λεγόμενα, implicitly, to the 'space' of 'West European thinking'.)

2 I know of no other passage more beautiful in its clarity, in which this idea is expressed, than the following lines from Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit

It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the interior of things there is nothing to be seen unless we go behind it ourselves, as much so that we may see as that there be something behind there which can be seen [translation from the English 1977 edition, p. 103].

Annex II

Hypothesis and metaphysical topography

1 Cf., inter alia, Aristotle Metaph. 985 b 15 and 19.

2 Cf. Aristotle Metaph. 1013 a 15 ff.: "[...] 'beginning' means the point from which a thing is first comprehensible, this too is called the 'beginning' of the thing; e.g. the hypotheses of demonstrations [τῶν ἀποδεικτέων αἱ ὑποθέσεις]" (cf. also Ph. 195 a 18 ff.). See also Sextus: "We term the ἀρχή ἀποδεικτέων a ὑποθέσις" (M III 4; cf. also III 5).

3 Aristotle for instance calls sometimes ὑποθέσις his notion of σθένα (cf. Metaph. 1029 a 14).

4 ὑποθέσις — which the Greeks thought as a 'given' ontological ground that is 'not laid down' by a an agent, be it human or divine — was first translated into Latin as substantia, which was a more or less appropriate equivalent. But, starting with the modern period, substantia was used as a synonym for subiectum, and this hints somehow that that which lies sub, ὑπό-, 'under' a thing, i.e. its ultimate ontological ground, was thought as being the subject himself. This, however, is at the core of an endless debate.
5 For Aristotle the ontological ἀρχαί are, apparently (for there is little textual evidence on this topic), situated above 'our world' (cf. for instance Metaph. 1072 b 14 — ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ φύσις are 'hung', ἱπτάμεθα, upon the ἄκτιστος ἀρχή); whereas the epistemological ἀρχαί appear as supporting our reasonings from below, not from above. But this is another problem.

6 For the Greek thinkers a ὑπόθεσις is, usually, a λεγόμενον, i.e. a posited statement (cf., inter alia, Plato Men. 87 c 4; Aristotle APo. 50 a 16, 18; and Ammonius in Int 2.31-2, who claim that the Stoics understand by hypothesis a kind of utterance — cf. also Barnes 1990, 91). (Yet hypotheses, as Barnes 1990, 91 put it, 'are not in any normal sense a class of propositions; for we cannot intelligibly ask, in the abstract, whether or not a given proposition is an hypothesis.' That is: a proposition p becomes a hypothesis only when someone 'lays it down'. And according to the Stoics, it is this third person imperative — 'Let it be supposed', ὑποκεῖσθω — which is the distinctive mark a 'hypothetical' utterance — cf. Barnes 1990, 91.) Now, there is a fierce debate about what is usually 'laid down' by the Greek thinkers in their hypotheses — the existence or the feature of an ὅν? I shall not enter here the complicated details of this problem (there is a short review of the status questionis in Robinson's 1953, 103-5). In my view, however, the Greek thinkers 'lay down' in their hypotheses both the existence and a feature of an ὅν.

The geometers, according to Plato (R. 510 c), used to hypothesize "the odd and the even [numbers] and the various figures and three kinds of angles". Hare 1965, 23 believes that here, in R. 510 c "the hypotheses [...] must be things, not propositions". But this position is, I think, untenable; for what Plato claims here is that the geometers hypothesize the existence of their mathematical and geometrical 'entities', such as the odd numbers, etc. And Plato himself states explicitly in the Parmenides 136 b 7-8 that one may hypothesize either "that anything whatsoever exists or does not exist or has any other character [ἄλλο πάθος πάσχοντος]."

As regarding Aristotle, he uses the word ὑπόθεσις in many ways and contexts. There are, however, three main meanings of this word in his works. (i) 'The assumption of the existence of one of the primary objects of the science one is studying' (cf. APo. 72 a 20). (ii) 'A premiss whose truth value is not yet known' (cf. the usage of the expression ἐξ ὑπόθεσεως; in this context ὑπόθεσις is synonymous with συνθόκη, cf. APo. 50 a 16, 18; EN 1133 a 29, b 21) (a premiss being a 'part of a proposition in which one thing is predicated of one thing'). And (iii) 'a first truth' (ἀρχή), on which a science (ἡ ἑκατοτόκτη) is based (cf. EE 1222 b 23 ff., 1227 b 29 ff) (this last meaning is, I think, as Barnes 1990, 93, the predominant one). These three meanings, however, allow us to claim that for him also one may hypothesize either the existence of something or a feature of something.

7 (i) The first meaning occurs in Men. 86 e, and its synonym, in Euclid and later mathematics, is λέμμα (for the notion of λέμμα see Proclus In Eucl 211). (ii) The second meaning occurs in Archimedes, On conoids and spheroids, ed. Heib, 249.13, 253.1; and in Proclus, In Eucl 178. (iii) The third meaning occurs
in Aristarchus of Samos, in *On the sizes and distances of the Sun and the Moon*.

8 Cf. Proclus, *in Eucl.* 76.24-77.3; Sextus, *M.* IX 2, 419; Galen, *sectingredi* 193 (the edition of C. G. Kühn, Leipzig, 1821-33). For more references see Barnes 1990, 94.

9 Aristotle claims (*Cael.* 308 a 17 ff.) that it is ἀτομον, 'strange', "to refuse to believe that there exist something in the universe which is 'up', and something else which is 'down'" (O'Brien's 1984, 187 paraphrase). Although Plato is not named, he seems to be the target of this criticism (cf. also *Ph.* 208 b 8 ff.)

10 The *Timaeus's* view of a universe which does not have absolute 'up' and 'down', seems to be compatible, I think, with the image of the suspended earth that occurs in the cosmological myth of the *Phaedo* 108 e-109 a (although any comparison between the two cosmologies is hindered by many controversies).

11 That the localization of the intelligible realm above the sensuous realm is a *poetical* license should not be very controversial; given all the subtleties that Plato says about the intelligible realm (see for instance the *Parmenides*), one cannot assume that he believed that our world is actually hung from the intelligible one. To paraphrase the above quotation from the *Republic* 529 b-c, one may say that, Platonically speaking, somebody who lays on his back and studies the stars, is only *physically* looking up, not *metaphysically*. But 'to look up metaphysically' is just a poetical way of putting things.

12 How are we to take his calling 'that which contains the universe' a ὑπο-δοχή (*Ti.* 51 a 5). A ὑποδοχή is properly a reservoir, i.e. something which contains something else (e.g. a pot full of water). A reservoir, however, is, somehow, under that which is contained in it, for its very bottom is always 'situated' under the contained matter. Should we assume then that the universe is, somehow, above its receptacle? *Physically*, however, this would be absurd, since at 62 c Plato claims that the universe, as a whole, is not parted into two regions, one lower and one upper. But then, how are to explain the use of ὑπο-δοχή? If the occurrence of ὑπό- is not accidental, then it could only be taken as suggesting that, *metaphysically*, the 'receptacle' is somehow under the sensuous realm (which, in its turn, is, metaphysically, under the intelligible realm). The ὑποδοχή, however, or χώρα, is such complicated a notion that one cannot construe anything reliable on it.

13 In the final myth of the *Republic* the universe is compared, *poetically*, with the whorl (σφώνακος) of a spindle (στρακτός), which turns on the knees of Necessity; and the shaft (γακότης) of the spindle, we are told, has a hook (ἀκότροπος) (for details see, *inter alios*, Adam's 1965 b, 447 and Bosanquet 1895, *ad locum*). (This mythological ideogram of cosmic ropes, chains or cords, by which the earth is fastened to the sky is also common to many ancient myths, from the pre-Buddhist Tibetan traditions to Homer —
for details see Eliade 1965, 166-88. Homer's 'golden chain', by which Zeus could draw everything to him, cf. Iliad VIII, 17-27, is mentioned by Plato in Thet. 153 c-d; cf. also Lg. 644 d ff., where man is represented as a puppet hung by cords and strings upon the Gods.)

Now, when Plato claims that the universe is 'fastened by chains to the hook of a spindle', does he mean that the 'hook' belongs also to the world of becoming, to the sensuous realm? This, however, would contradict what he says in the Timaeus 62 c, namely that the sensuous universe is not parted in a lower and upper region. The hook, says Plato, is, like the shaft, 'made of adamant [έξ ἀδαμάντων], whereas the whorl was partly of adamant, partly of other substances' (616 c 5-d 1). Adamant is a kind of stone that cannot be cut or broken, and so the use of the word 'adamant' here carries out the idea of something that will always remain as it is, i.e. of something that cannot be changed. Accordingly, to say that the hook (like the shaft) is made of adamant and the whorl partly of adamant, partly of other substances, suggests that the former is something unchangeable, whereas the latter is, at least partly, changeable. The usage of 'ἀδάμας' is, obviously, metaphorical. But if so, to what does it hint? To what may hint the comparison between something changeable and something unchangeable? The answer, I think, is obvious: one of the most important differences between the sensuous and the intelligible realms is that the former is changeable and the latter unchangeable (cf. also the Timaeus, where the intelligible realm is said to be ἀεί κατὰ ταύτα, 28 a 2, μονώμοις, and βέβαιος, 29 b 6) (ἀδαμάντινος is used many times as a stronger word for βέβαιος — cf. also Campbell 1894 b, ad locum). If so, however, then this myth from the Republic implies that the sensuous realm is not grounded on the intelligible realm (as on a 'firm ground', βέβαιον θεμέλιον, but hung upon it (as upon a 'strong hook', ἀδαμάντινον ἄγκυστρον). (In The Book of Job, at 26:7, God also 'hangs the world', but he, being omnipotent, hangs it 'upon nothing, not upon a 'firm hook'; I am indebted for this reference to Dr. Christopher Martin.)

14 The mythological ideogram of the inverted tree is to be found in many ancient myths. In the Indian tradition for instance — see Rg Veda, Katha-Upanisad or Bhagavad-Gita — the whole universe is represented as an inverted tree whose roots are in the sky and whose branches are spread over the earth, an image which, oddly enough, is to be found also in Dante's Paradiso; and in the Hebraic esoteric teaching and Islamic tradition man himself is represented as an inverted tree; for references to the above mentioned texts see Eliade 1958, 273-76.

15 In Greek the idea of 'being dependent upon something' may be expressed in several ways (ὑπὸ τιν χαζεσθαι, ὑπὸ τιν εἶναι, etc). Yet Plato, if he wants to express this idea, seems to prefer the verb ἅρταν, 'to hang one thing upon another'. The expression ἦρτηται ἐκ τινος means both 'to be hung upon something (τιν)' and 'to depend upon something (τιν)'. In the majority of English translations this expression is taken as meaning 'to depend upon'; but, nevertheless, if we accept that for Plato the 'inferior things' are, as it were, hung upon the 'superior ones', then we may take the expression ἦρτηται ἐκ τινος, at least in some of its occurrences, as meaning 'to hang
upon'. Accordingly, one may say (as, *inter alios*, Rosenmeyer 1960, 403 does) that for Plato the human good things are hung upon the divine good things (*ηρτηται δ' εκ των θειων — Lg. 631 b), or that a poet is hung (*ἐξιρηται — Ion 533 e and 536 a) upon his Muse. (And upon the poet, says Plato at 536 a 8, are hung, ἐκκρεμιστέοι, the actors, the choric dancers, the masters of the chorus and the undermasters.)

16 It is perhaps worth noting that in English 'to abase' and 'to de-base' (i.e. 'to deprive something of its own base or foundation') have negative connotations (i.e. 'to degrade oneself' and 'to reduce the value or quality of something' respectively).

17 The sacred nature of the sky — that is of what is 'up' and 'above' us — appears in countless myths, and the symbolism of 'height' is to be found almost everywhere in ancient rituals. That is why "everything nearer to the sky [i.e. mountains and high places in general — in other words, what is 'high'] shares, with varying intensity, in its transcendence" (Eliade 1958, 101).

18 As it is the case with what I call the procedure of διακρίνειν the γένος of an ἔλεος (prominent especially in the *Sophist*). Here I agree with Rosenmeyer 1960, who claims that (i) 'The movement experienced in the transition from genus to species [in the case of division] or, in the case of collection, from species to genus is not in a single instance characterized as a descend from or an ascent to the genus' (p. 396). So, (ii) "to the extent that Plato conceives the diaeretic procedure as moving, it moves on one [horizontal] plane or level" (p. 394).

19 For a similar view on dialectic (i.e. on the process of knowledge) see also Plotinus' treatise *On dialectic* (I, 3), 1-20.

20 For 'knowledge', Plato uses mostly the word ἐπιστήμη, and one may speculate that the preference for this word is due, to some extent, to its first compound, the preposition ἐπ', ἐπιστήμη comes from the verb ἐπίστημαι, which is made out of the preposition ἐπί-, 'on', 'upon', and the verb ἰστομαί, a passive form of ἴστημι, which means 'to stand' (in Cra. 437 a Plato proposes the same etymology; cf. Hofman 1950, *ad locum*). ἐπίστημαι means in general 'to know', 'to know how to do something', or 'to understand', although in its literal sense it means 'to stand upon' (cf. ἐφίστημαι, 'to stand on the top', and ἐπιστάτης, 'someone who stands over', for instance ἐπιστάτης ἄρματων, 'the one who is mounted upon a charioter' — see LSJ; cf. also Heidegger 1988, 153: 'ἐπίστημαι means [...] 'to come to stand over something'; 'to stand over something and thus know that something' — my translation). Now, this implicit literal sense of the verb ἐφίστημαι ('to stand over', i.e. 'to be in a higher position') fits very well into Plato's metaphysical topography ('the more one knows, the higher he stands'). But when Plato's ἐπιστήμη is translated into English by 'understanding', the difference between his metaphysical topography and ours becomes manifest, because ἐπιστήμη suggests an 'over-standing', not an 'under-standing'. For us, however, the English 'understanding' seems more natural, since for us,
Unlike for Plato, knowledge tends to be represented as a 'descent towards the profound depths of the world' — hence the majority of the common metaphors of 'essences': 'foundation', 'basis', 'ground'.

21 Unlike Robinson 1953, 68 (cf. also p. 98), Rosenmeyer 1960, 397 believes that the primordial sense of ὑπόθεσις is not 'intellectual', but 'architectural' (or 'physical').

22 Strangely enough, however, this Platonic comparison of ὑπόθεσις with a rung is to be found in Epictetus, diss. I vii 22-3: "Sometimes it is necessary to postulate [κατάθησιν] a ὑπόθεσις as a sort of an ἐπιτάξιον for the ensuing argument". In many myths, however, the ascension into heaven could be performed by means of a rope, a tree or a ladder (cf. Eliade, 1958, 103-4); Jacob, for instance, dreamt of a ladder linking the earth and heaven (cf. Genesis XXVIII, 12), and Mahomet saw a ladder connecting Jerusalem with the sky (and oddly enough, there is ladder rising to heaven in Dante's Paradiso XXI-XII).

23 Cf. for instance Robinson 1953, 98: "[here, in R. 511 b 6, Plato] is calling attention to something the word [ὑπόθεσις] might have been used to mean but has not"; or Rosenmeyer 1960, 406: "the image [of the stepping stones is] probably humorous."

24 The metaphor of rung occurs also in the Symposium 211 c, but in a different context and with no reference to ὑπόθεσις. Here, speaking about the ascension of the soul towards τὸ καλὸν, Plato says that the one who wants to perform this ascension' has, as it were, to step 'from rung to rung' (cf. ἐπαναβασιμοῖς χράμενον — 211 c 3); that is the one who wants to 'know what beauty is', has to go "from one to two, and from two to every lovely body, from bodily beauty to the beauty of institutions [ἐν τοῖς ἐντούθεν ἔμπνευμα], from institutions to learning [μαθήματα], from learning in general to the special lore that pertains to nothing but the beautiful itself." Arguably, one may claim that according to this passage, the 'rungs' that the senses have to step are the 'perceptions' of all the 'individuals of a class' (and that this operation culminates with the 'apprehension of their 'common feature', which has to be further 'handled' through dialectic).


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INDEX

The references are made to sections, not pages. In the "Index Locorum", the entries under 'Aristotle' and 'Plato' include only those passages from their writings which are discussed at some length (and not just mentioned). None of these indexes is exhaustive.

a. Index Nominum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Section(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biemel, W.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, R.S.</td>
<td>2.1.; 7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosanquet, B.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bostock, D.</td>
<td>2.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brès, Y.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher, S.H.</td>
<td>7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook Wilson, J.</td>
<td>7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descrates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diogenes Laertius, 0.1.1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farquharson, H.</td>
<td>7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedländer, P.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurley, D.</td>
<td>0.1.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadamer, H. G.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaisser, K.</td>
<td>7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallop, D.</td>
<td>2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gosling, J.C.B.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gueroult, M.</td>
<td>7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guthrie, W.K.C.</td>
<td>2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackforth, R.</td>
<td>2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegel</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidegger, M.</td>
<td>0.1.1.; 0.2.; 1.4.; 5.2.2.; 7.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irwin, T.H.</td>
<td>0.1.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivanka, E.von</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marias, J.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marignac, A. de</td>
<td>8.3.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafrance, Y.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leibniz, Preface, c</td>
<td>1.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natorp, P.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricoeur, P.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riginos, A.S.</td>
<td>0.1.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritter, C.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson, R.</td>
<td>Preface, a, b; 0.1.3.; 2.1.; 2.2.1.; 2.3.; 8.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross, W.D.</td>
<td>2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryle, C.</td>
<td>Preface, b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayre, K.M.</td>
<td>2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shorey, P.</td>
<td>Preface, c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socrates, Introduction, passim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sternfeld, R.</td>
<td>7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas, J.</td>
<td>7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlastos, C.</td>
<td>0.1.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterfield, R.</td>
<td>0.1.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wittgenstein, L.</td>
<td>Preface, a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodruff, P.</td>
<td>0.1.3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skemp, J.B.</td>
<td>Preface, a, 0.2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zyskind, H.</td>
<td>7.2.1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
b. Index Verborum

γενόμεν, 4.1; 4.3.

δεικτεια, 6.1; 6.3; 6.4.

διαποθετος οριη, 4.1.

δρομον, των ειδουν, Preface, b; 8.2.1.; 8.2.2.

causality, 1.4.
certainty, the locus of, 0.1.2.
coherence, the criterion of, 0.1.2.

Σταθερη, 6.2.1.

Στροφινων, 7.4.

dialectic, Plato's, Preface, b; 8.1.2.

ειδων, Preface, b; Chapter Three, passim; 4.1.1.; Chapter Seven, passim

ελεγχος, 0.1.3.; 0.2.; 1.5.

ἐτερον, 5.2.3.; 5.2.4.

hypothesis: Plato's dialectic and the use of, Preface, a; Plato's method of, Preface, a;

ignorance, the Socratic, 0.1.1.

terpretation, Preface, c

θατερον, 5.2.1.; 6.2.1.; 6.2.2.

κίνησις, 5.2.5.

κοινωνία, των ειδων, 5.1.

μέγιστα γένη, 5.2.

μέθοδοι, Plato's philosophical, Preface b; Chapter Two, passim; 4.2.4.;

Chapter Seven, passim; 8.1.1.

μη δεν, 5.2.3.

metaphysics: Plato's, Preface, a, b; the relation between Plato's methodology and his, Preface, b

νοειν, 7.5.

διαλογία, 0.1.3.

δεν, 5.2.1.; 6.2.1.; 6.2.2.

σκέψις, 4.2.3.; 4.3.; 5.2.2.

παράδειγμα, 3.1.

στάσις, 5.2.5.

συμφωνια, των λεγόμενων, Preface, b; 2.2.; 2.3.; 3.2.; 3.3.; 8.2.1.; 8.2.2.

συναγωγή, 6.2.1.

συνουσία, 0.1.2.

ταυτόν, 5.2.1.; 6.2.1.; 6.2.2.

theory, of ειδη, Chapter Three, passim

ύποθεσις, Annex II, passim

ύποκειμενον, Annex II, 2.1.

ύπόστασις, Annex II, 2.1.

c. Index Locorum

Alexander of Aphrodisias

in APro 13.7-11, Annex II, 2.2.

Anaximenes

A 5, Annex II, 2.1,
Aristotle

EE
1222 b 20, Annex II, 2.2.

EN
1141 b 3 ff., 3.4.2.

Int.
17 a 1 ff., 1.3.

Metaph.
982 b 11 ff., 3.4.2.
983 a 13-4, 3.4.2.
1032 a 15 ff., 3.4.

Heraclitus

A 5, Annex II, 2.1.

Plato: Aec. 1

130 d, 0.1.1.
132 d, 0.1.2.
133 b, 0.1.1.

20 a, e, 0.1.1.1
21 b-22 e, 0.1.1.
23 a, 0.1.1.1

Chrm.
158 d, 0.1.2.

Cra.
437 a-b, 1.1.
440 a-b, 1.1.; 3.1.

Euthphr.
6 d, 0.1.4.

Grg.
472 b-c, 0.1.2.

Hp. Mi.
372 b, c, 0.1.1.

Men.
86 e-87 b, 7.2.1.
87 b-89 e, 7.2.2.

Phd.
67 a, 3.1.1.
73 a, 2.1.
74 d, 3.1.1.
75 b, 3.1.1.
72 e-77 a, 3.1.
92 d, 3.1.
99 d ff., 3.1.1.
100 a, 2.1.
100 c-d, 3.1.3.
101 d, 2.3.
105 d-e, 3.3.
114 d, 3.3.

Phlb.
38 b-d, 6.3.1.
39 b-c, 6.3.2.

Pit.
285 e-286 a, 3.1.2.

Prm.
132 d, 3.1.3.
135 b-c, 7.3.
135 e-136 a, 7.3.
136 b-c, 7.3.

R.
500 c, 4.3.
506 e, 4.1.
508 a, 4.2.1.
509 b, 4.2.1.; 4.3.
517 c, 4.2.1.; 4.3.
529 b-c, Annex II, 3.1.
537 c, 4.3.

Smp.
210 e, 7.5.
211 a, 7.5.
219 a, 7.6.

Sph.
216 a, c, 7.4.
217 a, 7.4.
218 c, 1.3.2.
252 a ff, 5.1.; 8.2.2.
252 e-253 a, 5.2.
253 d, 6.2.2.
254 d-255 d, 5.2.
255 e, 5.2.1.
256 a ff, 5.2.3.
256 e, 5.2.3.
257 c, 5.2.4.
259 e, 5.1.; 8.2.2.
261 d, 8.2.2.
261-3, 1.3.2.
262 e, 6.3.2.
263 a, 6.3.2.
263 e, 1.2.4.

Thi.
183 a-b, 1.3.1.

Tt.
27 d-28 a, 4.2.3.
30 a, 4.2.3.
35 a, 8.2.1.
37 a, 8.2.1.
37 a-c, 6.3.1.; 8.2.2.; 8.2.1.
41 d, 8.2.1.
43 c-d, 8.2.1.
47 b-c, 8.2.1.
47 d, 8.2.1.
51 c-d, 4.2.3.

VII
341 c, 7.5.
342 e, 7.5.
344 b, 7.5.

Sextus Empiricus

M
III, 1, Annex II, 2.2.
III, 3, Annex II, 1
III, 10, Annex II, 2.2.

Thales
A 14, Annex II, 2.1.