

Unity and *Logos*: A Reading of *Theaetetus* 201c-210a

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This paper, an interpretive analysis of the closing aporiai in the *Theaetetus*, is part of a much larger project. Though it will be impossible to pursue that project in this space, I want to sketch its outlines, both here and again in the course of the final section of this essay, in order to indicate the broader context and implications of the analysis.¹

On what has become a familiar view of the 'development' of Plato's thought, he reaches a turning-point with the composition of the *Parmenides*: he now begins to think of the forms less on the model of visual objects, hence less as partless and separate *ones*, and more in terms of their suitability for logical analysis, that is, as composites and the terms of manifold relations. I want to rethink a core element of this view.² It is true that Plato challenges the conception of the forms on the model of visual objects; the first part of the *Parmenides*, in particular, reveals and articulates some of the disastrous consequences of this misthinking. In various ways—principally, by introducing in the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist* the sense of not-being necessary for *logos* and by presenting in the

¹ Earlier versions of this essay were presented in a colloquium to my colleagues in the Philosophy Department at Vassar College in September, 1989, and at the joint meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy and the American Philological Association in Boston in December, 1989. I owe special thanks to Jennifer Church, Drew Hyland, Edward Lee, Peter Lupu, Michael McCarthy, Ronald Polansky, and Neil Thomason for criticisms and suggestions.

² There are two other points on which I want to keep a distance from this view. (1) On perfectly general grounds, it would be absurd to deny that Plato's thinking develops. But how much of the conflict between passages should be credited to his having changed his thinking and how much to the fact that he is addressing what he projects as changed or different readers, in particular, readers at different stages in the psychagogical process of becoming philosophical? Striking the appropriate balance between these possibilities must be a constant task for the interpreter. (2) The developmental view tends to be accompanied by the assumption that passages in the dialogues are (to quote Charles Kahn 1988, 36) 'transparent' to Plato's thinking, directly conveying, as it were, his current thinking. But this misses what Kahn calls the literary 'opacity' of the dialogues, an opacity connected with the way they are intended more to elicit and provoke insight in the reader than to state doctrine systematically. To come to what Plato held true, we must first work our way through (what we can reconstruct of) the insights he intended to elicit in his reader, and to do this we must attune ourselves to the dramatic character of the dialogues and its specific modes and powers of communication. (For a general account of these, see the Introduction to Miller 1986.)

Sophist and *Statesman* and again in the *Philebus* the method of collection and division³—he makes explicit the composite character and relational status the forms must have as the objects of *logos*. But it does not follow from any of this that Plato gives up the notion of forms as partless ones. Instead, there are striking indications that he holds that *logos* can bring forms to light as composite and as *relata* only insofar as they also have a presence prior to this, a presence in which, quite the contrary, they show themselves as prescinding from composite structure and not reducible to the sum of their relations. My larger project is a study of the various ways Plato challenges his readers to think through this apparent contradiction, transforming it into a positive insight. This paper, an examination of the closing aporiai in the *Theaetetus*, is a first step. Pointed dramatic cross-references, however, link the *Theaetetus* with the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, on the one hand,⁴ and the *Parmenides*, on the other.⁵ The *Parmenides* and the *Statesman*, in turn, are each linked in various ways with the *Philebus*.⁶ These connections point the way, I think, through a subtle and complex set of reflections on the simplicity and complexity of the forms. In other work, I have picked up the trail of these reflections at various key points. It remains, however, to bring these studies together in order to try to articulate the integrity of the Platonic reflections they trace. This is the goal of the larger project of which this essay is the first step.

Judged on its face, the *Theaetetus* is an unlikely locus for insights into forms. Nowhere in the dialogue are the forms explicitly invoked or discussed. From the beginning Socrates resists defining knowledge in terms of any pre-established notion of what it takes as its object (see 146e); he proceeds, instead, in the contrary direction, focussing on the requirements of knowing and letting the object first take shape as a function of these. Moreover, Plato has Socrates restrict himself to Theaetetus' proposed definitions of knowledge, and it has not yet occurred to Theaetetus, though he is an accomplished mathematician, that the proper objects of knowledge might be something other than sense-perceptible entities. Nonetheless, on two counts the *Theaetetus* is a fitting starting-point for my larger project. First and in general, the *Theaetetus* is 'proleptic' to the other dialogues just noted, in which, as I have argued elsewhere,⁷ the forms *are* explicitly invoked and discussed; it raises problems and initiates responses to them that

³ I have discussed the non-bifurcatory version of collection and division that is practiced at the end of the *Statesman* and given a general methodological description in the *Philebus* in Miller 1992.

⁴ See *Theaetetus* 210d, *Sophist* 216a, *Statesman* 257a, 311c.

⁵ See *Theaetetus* 183e-184a. I have discussed this in Miller 1988, 159-160.

⁶ At 15b-c, the *Philebus* rearticulates the question and dilemma posed regarding participation at *Parmenides* 131a-c; in this way Plato makes the introduction of the god-given method at 16c ff. a response not only to the one-many problem raised in the *Philebus* but also to the problem of participation raised in the *Parmenides*. The extensive connections between these texts comes to focus especially on their different developments of the notion of *πέρας*.—As for the *Statesman*, the Stranger's final distinctions at 287b-290e and 303d-305e illustrate the god-given method presented in the *Philebus* in striking ways, discussed in Miller 1992.

⁷ Miller 1986, 147-154, 176-183. See also, 1980, chapters 2, 3b, 4a.

recur and are developed and deepened in those other texts.⁸ Second and more particularly, the final part of the *Theaetetus*, 201c-210a, raises problems regarding just the features of the object of knowledge that those other dialogues pursue with regard to forms. Socrates attacks Theaetetus' final definition of knowledge by putting forth, then refuting, the notorious 'dream' theory. The theory centers around the idea of 'elements' that, taken just as they are in themselves, are each partless and, so, unanalyzable; the refutation then brings out ways in which the possibility of knowledge appears both to contradict and to call for such a conception of its object. The structural congruence of the 'elements' in the theory and the forms makes the final part of the *Theaetetus* especially important for my project.⁹

That said, let us follow the *Theaetetus*' own lead and set the notion of forms into abeyance, turning instead to the dialogue's question of what knowledge is and what character and structure it requires of its object, as this is taken up at 201c-210a. The passage has plenty of obscurity, quite apart from any question of forms, to preoccupy us. It centers on Theaetetus' final definition of knowledge, as 'true judgment with a *logos*' (τὴν...μετὰ λόγου ἀληθῆ δόξαν, 201c9-d1). Socrates first wins Theaetetus' approval for his interpretive restatement of the definition in his 'dream', then refutes it with a dilemma—only then, surprisingly, to pass directly and without explanation to the proposal of three senses of *logos* and a refutation of the proposed definition under each of the three interpretations. Retracing his steps, we should be puzzled at a number of points. If the dilemma is decisive, why does he pass on to the introduction of the three senses of *logos*? How are these two phases of his refutation—his rejection of the 'dream' and his rejections of each sense of *logos*—related? Again, how, if at all, are the three senses of *logos* related? Are they to be thought as competitors, each excluding the other two, or as complements? Does the refutation of each remove it from consideration, clearing the stage for the next, or are we invited to consider all three together? Each of these questions bears on the more general question that all interpreters of the *Theaetetus* have to confront: is the dialogue essentially negative, restricted to showing the failure of a set of approaches to the question of

⁸ The concept of 'proleptic' relations between dialogues is proposed by Kahn 1988, 541-549, and critically qualified by Griswold, first in his stimulating commentary on Kahn's paper, 1988, and later in the expanded version of this commentary in 1990, 243-262. One of Griswold's key challenges is that the 'partiality [of proleptic passages] is not completed by other dialogues so much as by the reader's reflection on the whole nature of the matter discussed' (1988, 551). I think this insight should be taken less as an objection than as an appropriate complement and complication of Kahn's notion of 'prolepsis'; if Plato's invention of the dialogue genre indicates the seriousness with which he is at work eliciting the reader's reflections, so the manifold ways he lets various dialogues allude to one another indicate the way he provides ordered series of occasions for the development of these reflections.

⁹ Ryle was evidently the first to point out that Socrates' refutation of the 'dream' theory bears critically on the forms. His famous unpublished paper on the matter, first given at a 1952 meeting of the Oxford Philological Society, is now finally in print in Ryle 1990. Against Ryle's view that the refutation bears only *per accidens* on the theory of forms, see Lesher 1969.

what knowledge is, or does it 'end well',¹⁰ suggesting, by the light that it casts on the failed approaches, ways of rethinking them and the issues they raise that might lead to a viable alternative account?

I shall divide my exegesis into three parts, corresponding roughly to the order of these questions. We will begin by considering the 'dream' theory and the general conception of the object of knowledge that Socrates' refutation of the theory seems to call for; then we will think through the three senses of *logos* and his challenges to them; finally, we will try to work out the 'proleptic' force of the passage as a whole.

I. Socrates' Refutation of the 'Dream' Theory: Simplicity and Complexity in the Object of Knowledge?

Theaetetus first proposes the final definition of knowledge, 'true judgment with a *logos*' (201d), as something he has heard from someone else and 'just now' recalls; when Socrates presses him for explication, his recollection proves dim and hazy, and he asks for help. It is at this point that Socrates characterizes the proposal as a 'dream' and offers to tell Theaetetus 'a dream in exchange for a dream'.¹¹ But he does not intend to replace Theaetetus' thought with his own; rather, once he completes his statement at 202c, he asks Theaetetus whether it does justice to 'the dream' (τὸ ἐνύπνιον, 202c5) as he, Theaetetus, has heard it and whether it 'satisfies' him and represents the final definition 'in just the way' (ταύτη, 202c7) he understands it. Thus Socrates makes clear that he intends the theory he presents in the 'dream' to spell out the final definition as Theaetetus understands it. At the same time, when he goes on to ask rhetorically, 'how can there ever be knowledge without *logos* and right judgment?' (202d), Socrates also indicates that whatever difficulties Theaetetus' understanding may turn out to have, he regards true judgment and *logos* as at least necessary for knowledge.

In outline, the theory in the 'dream' runs as follows. On the one hand, there are 'elements' (στοιχεῖα, 201e1) of which 'we and all other things' are composed; on the other hand, there are all these things, composites 'woven together' (πέπλεκται, 202b2) out of the elements. Each of the elements, while 'sense-perceptible' (αἰσθητά, 202b6),¹² is properly subject only to its own name and not to any

¹⁰ This is borrowed from the title of Haring's fine study, 1982.

¹¹ Ἄκουε δὴ ὄναρ ἀντὶ ὀνειράτος, 201d8. Though I have developed the point in quite a different way, I have been influenced by Edward Lee's view that Socrates' offer to exchange dreams is his way of offering a clarifying interpretation of Theaetetus' understanding of the third definition. But see, as well, n31 below. Lee argues for that view in his exciting and far-reaching essay, as yet unpublished. For illuminating remarks on the range of connotations of the dream metaphor, see Burnyeat 1970.

¹² Frede 1987 argues that it is Plato who, in the *Theaetetus*, is first responsible for narrowing down the Greek notion of αἰσθησις from its general sense, 'becoming aware of something' (4), to perception by the senses. Frede argues that this is part of Plato's strategy in arguing against Protagoreanism. Be that as it may, in the dramatic context of the dialogue, Socrates, when he characterizes the simple elements in his 'dream' as αἰσθητά, mirrors back to Theaetetus a presumption that has governed the latter throughout the dialogue; from Theaetetus' first definition of knowledge as perception, he has treated sensibles as the objects of knowledge.

other term or character that might be said of or attributed to it. Since a *logos* is (at the least¹³) an ‘interweaving’ of names and since knowledge, by the new definition, requires a *logos*, the elements are ‘not subject to *logos* and unknowable’ (ἄλογα καὶ ἄγνωστα, 202b6). The composites, by contrast, are subject not only to ‘true judgment’ but also—since it is possible to give a *logos* of them by ‘interweaving’ the names of the elements that make them up—‘knowable and expressible’ (γνωστάς τε καὶ ῥητὰς, 202b7).

Once he has won Theaetetus’ approval (202c) of this theory, Socrates attacks it with a dilemma. As we will see, the dilemma does manifold work—it (i) forces a retraction of what is most problematic in the theory, the thesis that the ‘elements’ are unknowable, (ii) confronts us with a paradoxical ‘directive’¹⁴ for rethinking the object of knowledge, and (iii) provides us resources for a first response to it.

(a) *Retracting the unknowability of the elements in the ‘dream’ theory.* Socrates takes the relation between letters and syllables as the paradigm for the ‘dream’s’ account of the relation between elements and complexes. On the one hand, he argues, a syllable may be nothing more than ‘all’ the letters (τὰ πάντα, 203c5), that is, the mere aggregate of them. But if so, then the ‘dream’ theory implies that for any syllable, one can know *all* the letters, the mere aggregate of them that the syllable just *is*, without knowing *each* of them. This, Theaetetus declares, is ‘strange and absurd’ (203d). Since an aggregate just *is* each and each and each, and so on, of the items that comprise it, it seems evident that, as Socrates goes on to say, one must ‘first know’ (προγιγνώσκειν, 203d8) the letters before one knows the syllable (203d). But this will defeat the ‘dream’ theory. To avoid this, Socrates swings to the far extreme: perhaps, he suggests, a syllable is ‘a certain unitary form that arises out of [the letters] and has its own unitary character’ (203e); as such, it will both ‘differ from the letters’ (203e) and not have parts (204a, also 205bff.). But if this is so, then, since to give a *logos* of something requires distinguishing its parts, the syllable will be just as incapable of being made the object of a *logos*—and, so, just as incapable of being known—as the individual letters out of which it arises. In sum, either the elements are knowable along with the complexes, or the complexes are unknowable along with the

¹³ There is a long-standing debate whether by λόγος Plato means (i) ‘statement’ or (ii) something stronger, to wit, ‘account’ or ‘analysis’, or (iii) both, since the ambiguity is meant to provoke thought of both in the reader. For interesting discussions with surveys of the literature, see Fine1979 and Burnyeat 1990, esp. 136-149. Burnyeat’s elaboration of (iii) is philosophically interesting, but I find (ii), which is defended by Fine, a more persuasive reading of the text. Burnyeat reads the three senses of *logos*, first presented at 206cff., back into the ‘dream’ theory, and he takes each as a point of departure for a distinctive interpretation of the theory; and in the fact that Socrates offers, as the first two senses, the equivalents to (i) and (ii), respectively, he finds evidence that Plato intends the notion of *logos* in the ‘dream’ theory to be ambiguous. But I take Socrates in his quick dismissal of the first sense to indicate that *logos* is not meant to be taken *merely* as ‘statement’. Rather, it must be a sort of statement that does some definite analytical work. To the question this raises, what analytical work?, Socrates then replies by introducing the second and third senses of *logos*.

¹⁴ By this awkward term I mean to refer to the way in which refutations in the Platonic dialogues characteristically reorient inquiry and elicit determinate alternatives to the thought that is refuted.

elements (205d-e). In either case, the 'dream' theory fails.

Argued thus, the dilemma is not merely destructive. Of its two horns, the second is utterly unacceptable; it would deny the possibility of knowledge altogether. This throws us back toward the first horn: we must affirm that the elements are knowable. That he wants the dilemma to lead Theaetetus in this direction, Socrates makes clear by the way he follows it up at 206a-c. If Theaetetus thinks back to his own childhood experience of learning to spell, Socrates points out, he will remember that the basic task was to distinguish each element, 'itself by itself,' in order that their 'placement' together in speech and writing not 'confuse' him. Analogously, in studying music the highest achievement was to be able to 'follow each note, [recognizing] what string it belongs to'. In both cases, Socrates claims, 'for the complete grasp of any area of learning, elements admit of a knowledge that is much clearer and more authoritative [than the knowledge] of syllables' (206b).

(b) *The directive.* In having Socrates leave Theaetetus with this conclusion, Plato leaves us with a paradoxical directive for rethinking the structure of the object of knowledge. As we have noted, Socrates indicates at the outset (202d) the necessity of *logos* for knowledge. And in presenting his 'dream,' Socrates says that 'the essence of *logos* is the interweaving of [the] names [of the elements]' (202b). Thus *logos* would seem to presuppose, in its object, whole-part structure; for *logos* to explicate something by interweaving the names of its elements, that 'something' must have these elements as, in some sense, its parts. How, then, can Socrates respond to the dilemma by insisting on the knowability of simple elements? Evidently, we are asked to return to the simples of the dream and rethink what at first seemed obvious, that their simplicity precludes them from having the composite structure that being subject to *logos* requires. Can we conceive, without contradiction, simple elements that are also, as subject to *logos*, in some sense composite?¹⁵ What sort of being, and what sort of compositibility of aspects, needs be thought here?¹⁶

¹⁵ Cf. the provocative interpretation offered in Desjardins 1981 and again, but now within the context of her highly original reading of the *Theaetetus* as a whole, in Desjardins 1990. Though we differ in our analyses of the dilemma, I share her view that Plato intends to provoke the reader to accept both simplicity and complexity in the object of knowledge.

¹⁶ An alternative way of understanding and responding to the directive that *appears* to avoid the paradoxicality of mine is to drop the notion of composite structure and reinterpret what it means to give a *logos* so that it does not imply that the object of *logos* has such structure. This is a part of Fine's strategy in 1979; she argues that Plato is charting a turn from *logos* in the mode of an 'enumeration of elements' (this is her title for the second sense of *logos* Socrates proposes) to *logos* in the 'classificatory' mode that Theaetetus starts to practice at 203b, that is, the sort of *logos* that tells how the elements within the relevant field both differ from and interrelate with one another. Fine takes this latter sort of *logos* to belong to what she calls 'the interrelational model' of knowledge. But I think the text blocks this strategy by discouraging us from distinguishing this notion of *logos* from analysis into parts and setting the two up as mutually exclusive alternatives. In support of this, consider these three observations. First, Socrates nowhere suggests that *logos* need not be *at least* an 'enumeration of elements'; the refutation of the second sense of *logos* shows only that having such a *logos* is not sufficient for knowledge, not that it is not necessary to it. Second, when Socrates makes that refuta-

(c) *Resources for a first response to the dilemma.* If we turn back to the details of the text with Plato's directive in mind, we find striking resources for developing this new conception of the object of knowledge. In passing from the first to the second horn of his dilemma, Socrates first elicits from Theaetetus, then suppresses, the discovery of a very similar conception. Consider, to begin with, the elicitation. At 204a Socrates reiterates his proposal that they consider the syllable 'a unitary character (μία ἰδέα) that comes to be out of a set of letters that fit together'. He then adds, 'Accordingly, it must have no parts.' When Theaetetus, surprised, asks why, Socrates simply asserts this pre-emptive principle: 'where something has parts, the whole must *be* all the parts'.¹⁷ That is, a whole must reduce to nothing more than the aggregate of its parts, just the characterization offered in the first horn. But thus declared, this is quite arbitrary, and Socrates immediately acknowledges the alternative notion that it pre-empts: 'or do you think that it is precisely the whole of the parts¹⁸ that has arisen as a certain unitary form different from all the parts?' This is, in outline, strikingly like the new conception of the object of knowledge we are pondering: a being that, by virtue of having parts, is not merely a simple one and yet, by virtue of its unitary form or character, is also not merely the aggregate of its parts.

To preserve his dilemma for Theaetetus, Socrates must suppress this conception; but the particular way that Plato has him do so should make it all the more interesting to us, as we ponder the Platonic directive. In effect, Socrates' suppression of what he has elicited from Theaetetus is Plato's more radical elicitation of it from us. Socrates' key moves are to establish, (1), that the aggregate of the items that a thing includes (τὰ πάντα) is identical with the sum or, literally, 'the all' of them (τὸ πᾶν, 204b10) and, (2), that a whole is identical with the sum of its parts in that each is alike 'that from which nothing is missing' (205a2, 4-5); from these claims he can establish by substitution his pre-emptive principle that a whole is identical with the aggregate of its parts. Step (1), in turn, Socrates establishes by studying 'things that consist of [a] number' (τοῖς ὅσα ἐξ ἀριθμοῦ,

tion, he treats the 'enumeration of elements' as inseparable from knowledge of the structure by which they relate—this is most explicit at 208a9-10, where he says that 'one is then in possession of the account that goes through the elements (τὴν διὰ στοιχείου διέξοδον), together with right judgment, when, writing "Theaetetus", one writes [the letters] *in order* (ἐξῆς)'. It seems not to occur to him that these might be taken apart and regarded as separate 'models'. Third and finally, classificatory knowledge proceeds by giving distinguishing features, and these, as we shall see later in discussing Socrates' treatment of the third sense of *logos*, Plato conceives as 'parts' of the *definiendum*; thus, classificatory knowledge is itself a mode of analysis into parts. (For this third point, note also the language with which Plato has the Eleatic Stranger describe the procedures of collection and division—see, e.g., *Sophist* 219c2-7, 223c6-7, 266e3-267a1, and *Statesman* 261b10-11, 263e8, 265c2, 267a8-c3.)

¹⁷ My stress. The argument requires that this be the 'is' of identity. Cf. Fine 1979, 382 and Burnyeat 1990, 191n70. McDowell 1973, 243-247, notes that in the *Parmenides* at 157c-e Plato contradicts this identification of a whole with the aggregate of its parts. I agree. On my reading of the *Parmenides* passage Plato has Parmenides formulate (part of) the insight that, here in the *Theaetetus*, he is trying to get us to see for ourselves.

¹⁸ The 'precisely' is my effort to render the force of the καί at 204a8.

204d1). He begins by taking the number 6 as an exemplary 'all' (πᾶν, 204c8); the items it includes, the units, can be articulated in a host of ways—Socrates mentions the counting-out, '1,2,3,4,5,6,' the multiplications 'twice 3' and 'thrice 2,' and the additions '4+2' and '3+2+1' (204b-c). No matter how the units are gathered and grouped, Socrates gets Theaetetus to agree, in each case 'the all', the sum or complete collection that 6 is, is expressed. Should *we* agree? In fact, Socrates' argument highlights the way, if we regard something as nothing more than the sum of its parts, we commit ourselves to neglect the various ways the parts may be organized. Socrates' example brings out nicely the two complementary dimensions of such organization: on the one hand, the degree to which something is broken down into parts (contrast, for instance, the counting-out, which takes units as basic parts, and the multiplications, which take 2 and 3 as basic parts) and, on the other hand, the structure of their combination (contrast serial order, multiplication, and addition, and consider, within these, the specific sequences of the numbers). Is neglecting the organization of the parts objectionable? We might go along, as Theaetetus does, if our attention is limited to 'things that consist of [a] number'. If a number is understood as a mere multiplicity of units, it might be thought as indifferent to our various ways of articulating it.¹⁹ But Socrates' next set of examples seems chosen to bring out what Theaetetus apparently misses, that the class of 'things that consist of [a] number' is a highly restricted class. Socrates cites acres (204d4-5), miles (204d7),²⁰ and armies (204d9-10) as cases in which the number of items a thing includes is identical with the thing. But it is surely one thing to say that 5280 feet are identical with a mile and another to say that 10,000 soldiers are identical with an army.²¹ This brings out what is wrong with step (2) as well. To know there are 10,000 soldiers in an army may well be to know the whole in the sense of 'that from which noth-

¹⁹ We need not agree with Theaetetus, however. Citing Euclid and Aristotle, Burnyeat brings out the possibility of regarding the sheer multiplicity of units proper to any number as 'only its matter' (1990, 207). In the variety of organizations Socrates cites and then suppresses we might find a variety of forms at work.

²⁰ That is, of course, he cites the Attic equivalents of these, the *plethron* and the *stadion*.

²¹ In his summative sentence at 204d10-11, Socrates says, ὁ γὰρ ἀριθμὸς πᾶς τὸ ὅν πᾶν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐστίν ('For the complete number is the complete thing [or sum or complete collection] that each of these is'). One way to try to minimize the immediate difficulty of the identity Socrates is asserting is to read this sentence as claiming only that the complete number is the same as the *sum or complete collection* of the numerous items, and not the same as the complete *thing* that has these items. But there are two problems with this. First, it would make the summative sentence introduce a distinction of which there is no trace in the sentences that it summates; in presenting the three examples, Socrates says, 'The number of an acre is the same as the acre' (204d4-5), 'The [number] of a mile, in the same way' (204d7), and 'And also, indeed, the [number] of an army and the army, and likewise for all such things' (204d9-10). Second, this reading would only change the way the passage functions to suggest the contrast between 'things that consist of a number' and other things, not the contrast itself. Hearing the way the summative sentence makes a distinction that the statements of the examples do not, we would be moved to say, 'Yes, 10,000 soldiers are the sum or complete collection of the items in an army, but *this*, the sum or complete collection, is hardly the same as the army itself!'

ing'—that is, no particular item—'is missing'. But this very sense of 'whole' omits what is much more basic, the 'division of labor' (cf. Watanabe 1987, 158) or organization according to differentiated and co-ordinated functions that gives the plurality of soldiers the character of a potentially effective fighting force, an army in the genuine sense. This, the determinately organized plurality, is the true whole, and it is not reducible to the aggregate of its parts.

Still, this notion of an irreducible whole does not quite satisfy the conditions required to meet the Platonic directive. When, at 206a-c, Socrates reminds Theaetetus of his childhood experiences learning to spell and studying music, he stresses the priority of the knowledge of 'elements'—that is, of letters and notes—to the knowledge of 'syllables'; in this contrast, the 'elements' are the simples that are fit, by their capacities for 'placement' together, to make up composite things, and the 'syllables' are the things composed of these simples. Seen in this context, the army is a composite thing. Its 'unitary character' (μία ιδέα), preventing it from reducing to the mere aggregate of its parts, makes of this aggregate, instead, a *whole*. Thus, to put into the sharpest possible focus the difference between what the example exhibits and what Plato calls for: the army is a composite which has a simple and unifying character, not a simple that has, in some sense, composite structure.

Recognizing this, however, is itself a step in the right direction. It should invite us, reflecting on the example, to focus on the 'unitary character.' Granted, we encounter it only *in* the whole, as the immanent organization according to which the parts are determined and arrayed.²² Still, is it itself, in *its* unity, a trace of the simple for which Plato calls? Can we refocus somehow, moving from the composite with a simple character to the character itself as what is basic to the composite, in order to meet the Platonic directive?

II. The Senses of *Logos*—Composite Structure and the Activity of Knowing

At 206c Socrates begins the second phase of his attack on Theaetetus' definition of knowledge, turning to the notion of *logos* and examining three possible senses it might have. On the surface, Socrates rejects each sense and, with them, Theaetetus' definition, and the dialogue ends in *aporia*. If, however, we recognize in the refutation of the 'dream' the Platonic directive for rethinking the object of knowledge, these three senses of *logos* and the refutations of them contain much that is helpful. Specifically, the discussions of the second and third senses of *logos* bring out, under two distinct aspects, the composite structure that *logos* and, more generally, knowledge requires in the object. Further, the discussion of the third sense, taken together with that of the first, suggests the way simplicity and complexity go together as mutually necessary aspects under which the

²² Thus, the several appearances of *ιδέα* (203e4, 204a1, 205c2, 205d7) and *εἶδος* (203e4, 205d6) refer not to separate forms but to immanent characters of concrete things. But to say this is not to beg the question against the possibility that Plato intends to call to the reader's mind the notion of separate forms—nor, it is important to add, is it to take for granted the two-world interpretation of 'separateness' (see Miller 1986, 63-64, 117-121).

object comes to light in the activity of knowing.

For this positive content to emerge, it is important to keep in mind that Socrates never withdraws his earlier affirmation that *logos* and right judgment are necessary for knowledge (202d). On the contrary, Socrates' refutations, far from showing any of the three senses of *logos* to be wrong-headed or incompatible with one another, show only that each by itself is not enough to raise true judgment to knowledge. We are thus invited to ask, first, what more is needed for knowledge and, second, whether this might be provided, at least in part, by combining the several senses.

a. The first sense of *logos*: the expression of thought in speech

Socrates both raises and dismisses the first sense of *logos* very quickly. *Logos*, he says, is 'making one's thought (τὴν αὐτοῦ διάνοιαν) manifest by means of vocal sound in the form of nouns and predicates, working up for oneself an image of one's judgment in the stream flowing through the mouth, as in a mirror or water' (206d1-4). But, he objects immediately, anyone capable of speech can produce a *logos* in this sense; if this is all that *logos* amounts to, there will be little difference between right judgment and knowledge.

Why does Socrates even bother with so dismissable an interpretation of *logos*? In context, both the interpretation and the refutation make important points. The interpretation, first of all, distinguishes and ties together 'one's thought' and its linguistic expression. On the one hand, 'one's thought' does not reduce to its linguistic expression, for the latter is only an 'image' of it. On the other hand, this 'image' plays the crucial role of 'mak[ing] one's thought manifest'. It is tempting to hear in this an acknowledgment of what the dialogue itself puts on constant display. When, at the end of the conversation, Theaetetus tells Socrates that 'thanks to you, I have given utterance to more than I had in me' (210b6-7), he attests to the maieutic power of speaking—in this case, responding to Socrates' questions and challenges. The 'image' of one's thought in the 'mirror' of speech enables one to come to 'see'—that is, to recognize and assess—what one thinks, and this, in turn, is itself the beginning of fresh thinking and speaking. At the same time, the refutation makes clear that not just any linguistic expression will do. To preserve the distinction of knowledge from right judgment, *logos* must do some distinctive work. The function of the refutation is, then, hardly to deny the necessity of speech; rather, Socrates raises the question of what kind of speech knowledge requires. With the second and third senses of *logos*, in turn, Socrates offers the beginnings of an answer.

b. The second sense of *logos*: distinguishing the elements that comprise a thing

The second sense is, 'in face of the question of what a given thing is, a reply that goes through the [thing's] elements' (206e6-207a1). As Socrates indicates by his back-reference at 207b6, this is the interpretation of *logos* intended before in the 'dream'. Now he offers two worries about whether *logos* in this sense is sufficient for knowledge. Strikingly, however, the illustrative cases by which he

explains his worries to Theaetetus raise problems not so much about this sense itself of *logos* as about ways in which what it really involves might be missed. Thus Socrates, even as he seems to set this second sense of *logos* aside, in fact opens up what it presupposes and requires.

(i) *How far to go in breaking something down into its parts?* Socrates' first worry is that analysis may be insufficiently radical. Suppose, he asks Theaetetus, we identified the parts of a wagon as 'wheels, axle, chassis, rails, yoke' (207a)? This would be like breaking a name down into its syllables; it is true so far as it goes, but genuine grammatical knowledge requires continuing on to the letters (207b).

Socrates' spelling analogy both raises and veils a deeper question. At what level are we entitled to claim that we have come to the elements of a thing? How far does the goal of knowledge require us to go in distinguishing a thing's parts? The fact that in spelling it is agreed from the beginning that the letters are the elements (indeed, Plato follows standard Greek practice in using the same word, στοιχείον, for 'letter' and 'element') should not keep us from recognizing the underlying general question: what qualifies one level of units, rather than another, to count as elemental? Socrates signals what is crucial by the way he first introduces *logos* in the second sense as the reply to the question of 'what a thing is' (τί ἕκαστον [ἐστίν], 206e6-7, cf. 207a5-6). He is explicit to the point of redundancy at 207b-c: one 'gives a detailed account' (διελθεῖν) of 'the being' or 'nature' (τὴν οὐσίαν) of a wagon 'by way of' (διὰ) its parts, he says, becoming 'expert and knowledgeable about the nature (οὐσίας) of a wagon insofar as one works through the whole, from beginning to end, by way of its elements (διὰ στοιχείων τὸ ὅλον περὶ ἀναπτα).'²³ These formulations imply that what counts as an elemental part depends on the 'nature' of the thing in question. More fully, Socrates draws a three-fold distinction: there are the 'elements', the 'whole' thing which they comprise, and the 'nature' of this whole. The object of knowledge is the 'nature'; the express form this knowledge takes, however, is a *logos*, an account, that lays out the whole completely ('from beginning to end'), identifying all of its parts. For this to be the form appropriate for knowledge of the 'nature' suggests two key points. First, the 'nature' is what is responsible for the thing's having the parts that it does; this is what makes identifying these parts a way of 'giving a detailed account of the nature'. Second, at least in the context of its causal power, Socrates considers the 'nature' to be incomposite; if it were not, if it itself were a whole of parts, knowledge of it would refer to *these* parts, not to those of the thing whose 'nature' it is.²⁴

In Socrates' language and choice of example, this passage points back to the

²³ 'From beginning to end' is the graceful way Waterfield 1987 captures the connotations of περὶ ἀναπτα.

²⁴ With this introduction of the notion of οὐσία Socrates recalls his much earlier characterization, in the 'digression', of the philosopher's search for the 'nature' (φύσιν, 174a1) of each thing. Both Haring 1982, esp. 520, and Nehamas 1989 stress that knowledge in the Platonic sense must be understood as directed toward essence.

refutation of the 'dream' theory and the new conception of the object of knowledge towards which it directed us. As with the example of the army, so here with that of the wagon, Plato puts before us a whole not reducible to the mere aggregate of its parts. Now, however, in having Socrates name the 'nature' of this whole, he goes farther, leading us back from the character of the whole to what is responsible for its being a whole of this character in the first place. This does seem, as his earlier intimations did not, to meet the paradoxical requirement of a simple that is also, in some sense, composite and subject to *logos*. As what first requires that specific array of determinate parts that characterizes, for example, a wagon, the 'nature' precedes this array and these parts; in its formal-causal power, it prescind from the whole-part structure it calls for and is, by contrast with the thing which has this structure, simple. But at the same time, this is the array and these are the parts that *it* calls for; in effect, the 'nature' expresses itself in the medium of the things that have it, and *logos*, when it discloses the whole-part structure of these things, thereby brings the 'nature' to light. In this indirect way, in the organization it exacts of others, the 'nature' is subject to whole-part analysis.

(ii) *Recognizing the same in the different.* Socrates presents his second worry by raising the possibility of occasional error. Suppose someone lays out the letters of a word correctly, 'writing them down in order' (208a)—without, however, recognizing one of the syllables in this word when it appears in another? Would this not show a lack of knowledge? And would *that* not show that giving a correct *logos* in the second sense is not sufficient for knowledge?

Socrates builds up to this point in three steps. Retracing them helps to bring Plato's underlying concerns into focus. (1) Socrates begins with an almost formulaic characterization of two complementary forms of occasional error. There is, he points out, (a) the situation in which 'one sometimes judges the same to be part of the same, sometimes takes it to be part of something different'; here one fails to recognize the difference between two wholes, taking them to have the same part when they do not. There is also (b) the situation in which 'one sometimes supposes one thing to be part of the same, sometimes supposes something different to be part of it'; here one fails to recognize the sameness between two wholes, taking them to have different parts when they do not (207d-e). (2) He then points Theaetetus back to his childhood experience of learning to spell, and Theaetetus correctly recalls examples of each type of error: the first type, (a), occurred when he put the self-same letter sometimes in a syllable to which it belongs, sometimes in a wrong one, while the second type, (b), occurred when he sometimes put the right letter, sometimes the wrong one, into a self-same syllable.²⁵ Note that had Plato wanted to show only that correctly laying out a thing's

²⁵ It may be helpful to construct English examples for each type of error. For (a), take the letter *p* and the syllables *pa* and *ba*; the mistake would be to say, on one occasion, that *p* is part of *pa* and then to say, on another occasion, that it is part of *ba*. For (b), take the letters *p* and *b* and the syllable *pa*; here the mistake would be to say, on one occasion, that *p* is part of *pa* and then to say, on another occasion, that *b* is part of *pa*.

elements is not enough to assure that one has knowledge, he might have had Socrates stop here. But he does not. (3) Rather, Socrates goes on to construct a single example of his own. What if, as a child, Theaetetus had recognized theta (θ) and epsilon (ϵ) as the letters making up the first syllable of his own name, $\Theta\epsilon\alpha\iota\tau\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$, but mistakenly took tau (τ) and epsilon (ϵ) as the letters making up the self-same syllable in the different name $\Theta\epsilon\text{-}\delta\delta\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$? Theaetetus agrees that even though he could spell $\Theta\epsilon\alpha\iota\tau\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ correctly, putting down all the right letters in the right order, he should not be credited with knowledge.

Socrates' example involves two interesting departures from steps (1) and (2). First, with no warning or explanation he drops one of the two types of error, (a), turning his attention exclusively to (b). This is surprising and should move us, as we think into the example, to ask for an analogous development of (a). Second, he expands Theaetetus' frame of reference in (2): whereas Theaetetus had considered the placement of letters in syllables, Socrates now adds consideration of the placement of self-same syllables in different words. With this, Plato points to a distinct mode of *logos* that must be introduced to complement the work of laying out a thing's elements 'in order'. To achieve genuine knowledge of a word, Socrates implies, we must be able to recognize the occurrences of each of its syllables in other words as well. To bring into focus the new mode of analysis this suggests, consider these points of difference: whereas to this point Socrates' concern has been to get to the level of elemental parts, now he marks out an intermediate level between the whole and its elemental parts, a level of parts composed of these elemental parts, that is, the level of syllables, and fixes his attention on these; whereas with the laying out of a thing's elements he has not looked beyond the whole that these comprise, now he is concerned to recognize, in other wholes, occurrences of the same intermediate level parts; finally, whereas the laying out of a thing's elements is concerned with the way they fit together within the whole they comprise, now he is concerned to be able to identify, in the many different occurrences of each of its intermediate level parts, respects in which different wholes are alike. To gather up these implications of Socrates' example in a provisional way: to know what something is in the fullest sense, he seems to be saying, requires both that we can spell out the the array of elements that its 'nature' exacts of it and that we can recognize its kinship, through shared intermediate level parts, with other things.

With this, Socrates' neglect of the complementary type of error should become striking. Surely the knowledge of what something is requires recognizing not just what it shares with kindred others but, too, what differentiates it from them. Evidently, Plato wants this objection, for he now has Socrates, in introducing the third sense of *logos* at 208c, in effect express and develop it.

c. The third sense of *logos*: telling the features that differentiate
a thing from everything else

The sense of giving a *logos* accepted by 'most people', Socrates says at 208c7-8, is 'to tell some mark by which the thing in question differs from everything

else'. The idea behind this seems straightforward at first: by 'adding' to one's 'right judgment' about something a grasp of what differentiates it from other things, one moves beyond mere opinion to genuine knowledge of the thing; one 'will have become knowledgeable of that of which, beforehand, one had only opinion' (208e).

Socrates attacks this sense of *logos* and the new definition of knowledge it yields with an elegant compound dilemma. (1) In stressing the *addition* (προσλάβω, 209a2) of the *logos* of the difference to one's right judgment of the object, the definition would seem to imply that the 'thought'-content (τῆ διανοία, 209a8, also b3, b7, c1) of the right judgment does not itself include what differentiates the object from others, hence that it refers to the object only by way of what it has in common with others. But if that is so, then the right judgment is no more directed at the object in question than it is directed at other quite different objects, and this undermines its very status as right judgment *of that object*. (2) To avoid this consequence, Socrates gets Theaetetus to agree that the right judgment of an object must include an awareness of what differentiates that object from all others. Taking Theaetetus himself as an exemplary object, he drives the point home by working stage-wise from the common to the distinctive. To identify Theaetetus, he points out, it would not be enough to list all the parts of the human body, e.g. 'nose and eyes and mouth and so on', for everyone has them (209b); nor would it suffice to give a list of more specific features like 'snub-nosedness' and 'bulging eyes', for lots of others, including Socrates himself, have these (209b-c); rather,

Theaetetus will not have been made a content of my judgment before this particular snubnosedness (ἡ σιμότης αὐτῆ) has stamped and registered within me a record distinct from all the other cases of snubnosedness I've ever seen—and so too for the rest of the features of which you're comprised (καὶ τὰλλα οὕτω ἐξ ὧν εἶ σύ)—so that, if I meet you tomorrow, it will stir my memory and give me right judgment about you. (209c4-9)

But this leads directly to a second dilemma. (a) If, on the one hand, the right judgment already includes the very awareness of difference that the *logos* is supposed to 'add', then the *logos* adds nothing, and the definition becomes internally redundant. (b) If, on the other hand, one distinguishes the *logos* from the right judgment—and, so, secures the *logos*' special contribution—by interpreting it as a 'knowing' of the difference, then the definition becomes question-begging; knowledge will then be defined as right judgment together with knowledge.

(i) *A second sort of simplicity and complexity.* As we work through Socrates' argument, we should be struck by the way it brings us back—with, however, several significant differences—to the issue of the simplicity and complexity of the object of knowledge. As we have begun to consider, *logos* in the third sense complements what Socrates called for in his immediately preceding objection to the second sense; where that objection implied that knowledge of something requires the ability to recognize what it shares with others, the third sense of *logos* implies

that knowledge requires recognition of what differentiates it from them. Socrates' stage-wise movement through his example leads from the indeterminate and common to the determinate and distinctive. Thus, Theaetetus is distinguished, first, from other beings with noses by his snub-nosedness and, second, from others who are also snub-nosed by 'the particular snub-nosedness' peculiar to him. The same point holds for his peculiar bulging-eyedness and—since he has each of his features with a peculiar determinateness—'so too for the rest of the features of which [he is] comprised'. With this language we are returned to the conception of the object of knowledge as, in being subject to *logos*, a whole of parts: in the example at hand, Theaetetus is thought as 'comprised of' (ἐξ) his various determinate features, and the task of *logos* is to work through them. But there are two important differences. The first has to do with the intimacy, so to speak, of the whole-part structure to the object. In examining the second sense of *logos*, Socrates distinguished the 'nature' from the thing that has it, and it was only the thing, not the 'nature' itself, that *logos* disclosed as actually having parts; or, to draw this distinction in a different way, whereas whole-part analysis revealed the 'nature' in its formal-causal power to exact a certain organization of parts in others, it treated the 'nature' in itself, in its own intensional content, as partless. Now, by contrast, *logos* treats the object itself as composite, as 'comprised of' its various features. The second difference concerns the aims of the two kinds of analysis. In examining the second sense of *logos*, Socrates spoke of 'work[ing] through the whole, from beginning to end' (207c) and of 'laying out the elements in order' (208a); the task of *logos*, accordingly, was to bring out both what parts the 'nature' requires a thing to have and how these are organized so as to fit together. Now, by contrast, the concern is not the relation of parts to each other within a whole but, rather, the difference of each whole, considered as a single thing, from other things.²⁶ *Logos* in Socrates' third sense picks out those parts or features that differentiate its object from other generally similar objects; comparing its object with others, it selects a set of parts with an eye to the way these bring to light the distinctiveness of the whole they comprise.

With this new sort of complexity we are led, as well, to a corresponding new sort of simplicity. Socrates' choice of example is very striking. How is it that one recognizes another individual? It is not, Socrates' example implies, that one spots a single telling mark, Theaetetus' snub-nosedness, for instance; for 'the rest of the features of which [he is] comprised' are also 'stamped and registered within me' as 'record[s]' of Theaetetus. Nor does Socrates suggest that one somehow adds all of these up, as if they were distinct bits and the mental operation of recognition were a reassembling of Theaetetus as an aggregative whole. If one thinks of the two features Socrates cites, Theaetetus' peculiar snub-nosedness and bulging eyes, it is more natural to think that each of these goes with the other,

²⁶ Cf. Burnyeat 1990, 218: 'the issue at stake in the choice between definition by analysis and definition by classification is whether a given whole should be explained from within itself or by relating it to other items within the domain'.

as it were, from the start, belonging to a common facial configuration;²⁷ for either to 'stir the memory' is for it to call to mind what we might call Theaetetus' peculiar 'look'. This would be that peculiar bearing or *Gestalt* by which those who know Theaetetus recognize him 'instantly'.²⁸ On the one hand, this 'look' or *Gestalt* is not reducible to the aggregate that a catalogue of Theaetetus' various features would present; such a catalogue would bring them forth distinctly, one by one, whereas the features themselves, if they perform their function as 'memory traces,' move us to bring them to mind in their prior unity with one another. On the other hand, such a catalogue can have precisely this function, calling to mind, in place of the distinct items it names, the overall *Gestalt* to which they all belong. There is the familiar experience of hearing a sensitive, well-attuned description of someone and finding oneself saying, 'Yes, exactly. That's him to a T!'

Socrates' example, then, should lead us to discover a second fulfillment of the paradoxical requirement of a simple that is also in some sense composite and subject to *logos*: on the one hand, the peculiar 'look' that is the object of such acts of recognition precedes any analysis into determinate features; on the other hand, these belong to *it*, and an account that tries to recapture that 'look' in its uniqueness will select those features that are most intensely indicative of it. In these respects, the object is, once again, simple or partless, preceding the distinctions that analysis makes, and yet, in being suggestible in its uniqueness by way of such distinctions, it is subject to whole-part analysis as well.

(ii) *Escaping the final dilemma: relating the moments of the activity of knowing.* Interpreted in the context of his affirmation of both *logos* and right judgment as necessary for knowledge, Socrates' final dilemma takes on a positive, elicitive function. Each of its horns, (1) and (2a) and (2b), articulates a way of understanding knowledge that would make one or the other, right judgment or *logos*, unnecessary. To escape the dilemma therefore requires us to work out an understanding of knowledge that recognizes the essential contribution each makes. From (1), first of all, we learn that right judgment must refer to the the self-same object that *logos* does; otherwise, it will be irrelevant to knowledge. But this implies the further point that (2) brings out, that right judgment and *logos* must disclose this object in distinctive and complementary ways. If, on the one hand, *logos* only reproduces the awareness already possessed in right judgment, then, as (2a) makes clear, it adds nothing and the definition is internally redundant. On the other hand, what *logos* contributes must fit together with, not replace, what right judgment contributes; to avoid the danger that (2b) poses, that the definition

²⁷ With this in mind, note the τε καί constructions at both 143e8-9 and at 209c1. Plato has both Theodorus, in the earlier passage, and Socrates, in the later, closely associate snub-nosedness and bulging eyes with each other.

²⁸ The aptness of the concept of *Gestalt* was brought home to me in discussions with Neil Thomason. Burnyeat also makes use of it—see 1990, 229ff. On the distinctive epistemic character of the recognition of individual persons, see the evocative comments by Mohr 1986, 121-122. But note, too, the cautionary force of my section 3 for this line of interpretation.

become question-begging, *logos* by itself must be understood to fall short of knowledge. That is, to put the implication positively, knowledge must emerge from the right combination of right judgment and *logos*; by the distinctive ways they disclose the self-same object, right judgment and *logos* must together constitute what neither can be by itself.

Strikingly, the reflections we have been developing in response to the earlier Platonic directive provide the resources we need to work out an understanding of knowledge that will escape the final dilemma. In effect, the elicitive function of the final dilemma, at 209a-210a, dovetails with that of the first dilemma, at 202d-205e. Consider, to begin with, the two sorts of simplicity and complexity that the earlier directive has led us to recognize in our reflections on the second and third senses of *logos*. In each of these senses, *logos* brings the object to light by disclosing a whole of parts—an ordered array of elemental constituents, in the case of *logos* in the second sense, and a set of telling features, in the case of *logos* in the third sense. We have also seen that these disclosures in each case answer to and explicate a logically prior awareness of the object, an awareness in which the object, prescinding from the distinctions drawn by *logos*, is given as simple. Thus the ‘nature’, even while it exacts whole-part structure of the things that have it, does not itself have these parts or structure. Analogously, the unique ‘look’ precedes the picking-out of its various distinctive features and so is not reducible to their aggregate. If we now identify the moment of right judgment with this awareness, we can take the first, basic step required to escape the final dilemma. Right judgment, thus understood, and *logos* do indeed disclose the self-same object in distinctive ways, the one bringing it to mind in its simplicity, the other explicating it by laying out a plurality of parts.

Beyond this, we can also begin to see how, in this combination, right judgment and *logos* each enable the other to play its constitutive role in knowledge. Our language in the preceding reflections already implies ways in which, on the one hand, *logos* depends on right judgment. As ‘enabled’ by and ‘answering to’ and ‘explicating’ right judgment, *logos* depends upon it for the very content that it articulates. On the other hand, it is only by the explication of this content that we are enabled to distinguish judgment (δόξα) that is insightful from judgment that is misguided opinion (cf. δοξαστής, 208e5) and, where it is shown to be the latter, to attempt to raise it to insight. Here the first sense of *logos*, ‘making one’s thought (διάνοιαν) manifest’, makes its fundamental contribution to the overall conception of knowledge. How else, short of expressing our ‘thought’ in speech, can we explicate it, and how else than by such explication can we put it to the test? Explication should therefore be understood as a means for examination and critical reflection.

On this reading, it is not only the case that both right judgment and *logos* are essential to knowledge as a whole; it is also the case that the ways in which each depends on the other express the essential moments of knowledge as an activity. Whereas the explication of an insightful recognition of the ‘nature’ of something consummates the process of coming to know, it is the very effort at such explica-

tion that, by permitting us to examine whether an apparent recognition is truly insightful, enables inquiry to move toward consummation in the first place.

C. Proleptic Questions—Forms, Collection and Division, Insight

If this analysis is well-taken, then there is, at the least, pointed *Platonic* irony when, at 210b, Socrates asks Theaetetus whether their definitions of knowledge have proved to be ‘mere wind eggs and not worth the rearing (ἄξια τροφῆς)’. Theaetetus takes this as a rhetorical question and agrees, but we have found, both in the original ‘dream’ and in the ways Socrates has responded to it, a great deal that is worthwhile. The suggestion that it must still be ‘reared’, moreover, captures precisely the status of this content. The *Theaetetus* has given us specifications, or determinate conditions, that the object of knowledge must meet in order to *be* the object of knowledge; but it has left for another occasion the discovery of what there is that is suited to meet these conditions. Likewise, it has indicated the several kinds of work that *logos* must do in order to help to constitute knowledge; but it has left open just what methodological form *logos* might take in order to do such work. Finally, it has left inexplicit the character of the cognitive act that, filling the role of ‘right judgment’ in the final definition, is capable of orienting the work of *logos*. On these three counts, the *Theaetetus* is ‘proleptic’, pointing beyond itself and requiring other occasions for the full development of the reflections it has initiated.²⁹

(i) *The manifold specification of the object of knowledge—and the forms.* In the last two sections, we concentrated on the way Socrates’ example—Theaetetus’ ‘look’—points a path through the final dilemma: as the object of right judgment, Theaetetus’ ‘look’ both orients and transcends the way it is itself represented in a *logos* of his features; thus right judgment and *logos* function together without redundancy. Concentrating on this aspect of the example, however, we neglected a different, initially puzzling aspect. Theaetetus is a particular person, and recognition of him is recognition of a particular sensible individual. Likewise, the sun, the entity Socrates takes as his example in the passage just preceding at 208d, is a particular celestial body, and to distinguish it as ‘the brightest of the celestial bodies that go around the earth’ is to distinguish a particular sensible individual from others. Can Plato intend us to take entities of this kind as proper objects of

²⁹ See n11 above and n31 below. Would it go too far to bring the idea of proleptic content together with the earlier metaphor of the dream? The Greeks considered dreams vehicles of premonition. But the content of dream-premonitions was not to be taken uncritically at face value—there is always the danger that the dreamer, even as he is transported beyond his ordinary waking understanding, might also be fooled by illusion, remaining asleep, as it were, to what is really at hand (see, for example, *Statesman* 277c); hence dreams are in need of probing interpretation. All this seems to fit the situation in the *Theaetetus*. With its notions of simple elements, of a mode of ‘true judgment’ that reaches them, and of the key role of *logos*, Socrates’ ‘dream’ theory is prescient. But as his subsequent challenges have brought out, each of these notions needs be developed and complicated before it can be accepted; only as clarified by the reflections these challenges occasion, does the premonitory content of the ‘dream’ come to view. If this is well taken, then the dream metaphor seems to invite the discovery and focusing of the proleptic content of the final part of the *Theaetetus*.

knowledge? This would be surprising both in itself and in light of Socrates' earlier discussions of the wagon and spelling examples. In the treatment of the wagon example, the object of knowledge is the οὐσία, the 'nature' that determines the structure of each of the many things that have it as their 'nature'. In the treatment of the spelling example, in turn, the need to be able to recognize the various appearances of the syllable -θε- in other words implies that knowledge is concerned with these words as instances of the self-same. These passages imply that what knowledge takes for its proper object is not particular but universal.

In fact, the problem dissolves if we pay strict attention to the specificity of what is exemplified in each case. As we noted much earlier, throughout the *Theaetetus* Socrates holds back from letting knowledge be defined in terms of what it takes as its objects (see 146e); he proceeds, instead, in the contrary direction, letting the object of knowledge take shape as a function of the requirements of knowing. If this is right, then the entities Socrates chooses for his examples should be considered not for what they are in themselves but rather for the way they exhibit that which the relevant conception of knowledge implies in its object. The wagon example, as we have seen, is particularly well suited to illustrate the notion of giving a *logos* as laying out a thing's elements, for it presents us, as the object of knowledge, a 'nature' that calls for a specific array of determinate parts. The -θε- example, in turn, brings home that knowledge requires recognizing this array and its major structural parts—its syllables, as it were—wherever these appear, with the implication that we must be able to locate them as self-same units among others, capable of various combinations with various others. If we now interpret the examples of the sun and Theaetetus in the same way, looking at the way they make prominent that which the third notion of *logos*—giving the difference—requires of its object, what stands out is not that they are sensible individuals but, rather, that each is in its own way something unique. There is only one sun in the heavens, obviously, and Socrates is explicit that Theaetetus' peculiar features distinguish him 'from all other cases...I've ever seen' (209c, quoted above).³⁰ This is what Socrates' current account of *logos* calls for. To be able to articulate what differentiates an object from everything else requires, of the object, that it in fact stands apart from all others. It is in order to bring out this uniqueness that Socrates chooses the sun and an individual person as his examples.

With this in mind, we can find in Socrates' examples at least three sets of defining characters that knowledge requires of its object. (1) Really to know what something is requires that we be able to lay out its elemental parts 'in order'. But the essential whole-part structure of a thing depends on its 'nature'. As exacting such structure, moreover, this 'nature' itself precedes it. Thus, the object of knowledge is the simple 'nature' that exacts determinate composite structure of the things that have it as their 'nature'. (2) Really to know what something is

³⁰ Peter Lupu has pointed out to me that Socrates actually secures the uniqueness of Theaetetus' 'look' by restricting it to the context of his experience.

requires that one be able to recognize different appearances of it as, *qua* appearances of it, the same. Thus the object of knowledge is not a concrete particular but, rather, the universal of which particulars are appearances. (3) Really to know what something is requires as well that the one who knows it be able to differentiate it from everything else. It is appropriate, therefore, that the object of knowledge be unique.

Bringing Socrates' examples to focus this way makes clear that we must wake up from the presumption of the 'dream' that the objects of knowledge are sense perceptible (αἰσθητά, 202b6).³¹ More generally, it will mean accomplishing what Plato elsewhere describes as the 'turning' of the soul from sensibles to forms.³² This task, however, involves much more than simply introducing a new metaphysical entity, for such a procedure would leave in place, untransformed, the basic habits of thought that go with taking sensibles as basic; the consequence would be that the new entity would be conceived by way of the categories appropriate to sensibles. In the *Theaetetus*, then, Plato leaves the task of the 'turning' of the soul implicit, deferring it for another occasion. That occasion is the *Parmenides*.³³ I have explored the *Parmenides* in its own right elsewhere; to explicate its relation with the *Theaetetus* in detail is, of course, impossible here. I can point to the crux of the matter, however. In the hypotheses of the *Parmenides*, Plato offers a conception of the forms that dovetails with the conception of the object of knowledge that emerges in the final part of the *Theaetetus*. In the *Parmenides* forms are characterized as the simple and unique 'ones' (hypothesis I, in conjunction with II) that determine, in the things that 'participate' in them, their whole-part structure (hypothesis III, in conjunction with IV); moreover, they are taken to be objects of a discourse (λέγειν) that, moving between what they 'are' and 'are not', differentiates each from everything else (hypothesis V, in conjunction with VI). In these ways, forms are shown to be, in their own nature, the sort of entity that has just the defining characters that, in the *Theaetetus*, knowledge is shown, in its own nature, to require of its object.

(ii) *The modes of logos—and the various forms of collection and division.*

³¹ Cf. the use of the metaphor of dreaming and waking at *Republic* 476c-d. There the dream state is used to characterize someone who, in acknowledging only particulars and not the forms in which these participate, confuses likenesses for the original of which they are likenesses. For such a dreamer to awaken would be for him to distinguish particulars from forms and to turn to the latter as the true object of knowledge. Cf. Cornford 1957, 162; Sayre 1969, 136-137; Haring, 1982, 517. For an extended effort to show correlations between the positions taken at each stage of the *Theaetetus* and the levels of knowledge marked off in the divided line passage in *Republic* vi, see Dorter 1990.

³² *Republic* 518c. The power of Burnyeat's deflationary remark that 'accounts of forms are as vulnerable to the epistemological regress as accounts of anything else' (1990, 238) depends, of course, on the notion of form given in the account. On my reading, no less 'ardent' a 'Platonist' (1990, 239) than Plato himself, recognizing the inadequacy of the notion presented in the *Republic*, makes use of the elicitive power of the 'regress' to lead us proleptically, in the *Theaetetus*, and gymnastically, in the *Parmenides*, to a deeper notion that is not vulnerable to it.

³³ For Plato's indication that the *Parmenides* constitutes a further task, related to but presupposing more preparation than is demanded by the *Theaetetus*, see 183e-184a, as discussed in Miller 1988.

From the beginning (recall 202d) Socrates has treated *logos* as necessary for knowledge. For *logos*, in turn, he has disclosed three kinds of work: (1) the laying out, 'in order', of a thing's elemental parts, (2) the recognition of what something shares with kindred others, and (3) the recognition of what differentiates it from them. (2) and (3), we have seen, Socrates takes together as a pair, both in his formulaic statement of the complementary kinds of error at 207d-e and again in the way he follows his illustration of missed sameness at 207e-208a by the interpretation of *logos* as giving the difference at 208c.

By contrast, it remains an open question just how (1), the laying out of elemental parts, and (2)/(3), the discerning of sameness and difference, fit together. It is also left open what specifically methodological forms these several modes of analysis might take. For these questions we have to turn to other texts.

(a) With regard to (2) and (3), the *Sophist* and *Statesman* (up to 287b), which Plato links with the *Theaetetus* as the second and third members of a trilogy,³⁴ introduce the method of collection and division in the mode of bifurcation. (2), the recognition of sameness, is most visible in the initial collection of a heterogeneous plurality under a comprehensive kind, while (3) is accomplished by a series of halvings, beginning with this comprehensive kind and disclosing narrower and narrower kinds until at last we reach one that includes only, or coincides with, the *definiendum*; in fact, (2) also recurs in each halving, for the same part or feature that analysis picks out to differentiate the *definiendum* from some things also serves to disclose its sameness with some others (see Miller 1980, ch. 2.1).

(b) With regard to (1), the key text is the *Philebus* (especially 16b-18d, 23b-27c); there Plato has Socrates take up again the examples of letters (17a-b, 18b-d) and musical notes (17b-e, also 26a) that, in the *Theaetetus*, he first invoked as background for the 'dream' (202e ff., 206a-b). In the *Philebus*, however, he is not primarily concerned with syllables and words (or, by analogy, melodies); instead he focuses, on the one hand, on the whole fields of elements required by the notions of letter and pitch, respectively, and, on the other hand, on the proportions of opposites that structure the instantiation of each of the elements, determining its place in the field. The main task of analysis, as Socrates now explicates it, is to disclose the definite number of elements that, by virtue of the fitness of each for interplay with each other, function as parts and comprise the field as a whole.³⁵

(c) With regard, finally, to the fit of the two methods and, so, of the two modes of analysis—the fit, that is, of (1) with (2)/(3)—, there is the intriguing set of non-bifurcatory distinctions in the last part of the *Statesman* (287b-290e, 303d-305e). On the one hand, these distinctions complete the *differentiation* of statesmanship from all similar arts. On the other hand, they proceed analogously with the illustrative analyses of letter and musical pitch in the *Philebus*, spelling out

³⁴ See the passages cited in n4 and my discussion of them in 1988.

³⁵ I have made a first attempt to give this the sustained exegesis it requires in Miller 1992.

the notion of 'care for the city' by *distinguishing a field of elemental parts*, namely, fifteen kinds of art, that are fit for interplay; statesmanship is the fifteenth of these. What is the significance of this apparent confluence of the two methods? Plato has the Eleatic Stranger first remark that the reason for giving up bifurcation 'will become evident to us as we proceed' (287c), then remain silent on the new form the method of division is taking. This leaves it up to the reader to reflect on the question, and I have attempted a beginning elsewhere (Miller 1991). For present purposes we can restrict ourselves to the interpretive observation that the Stranger appears to invoke each mode of analysis to complete—or, more modestly, to complement—the other. To judge by his dialectical practice, knowing the 'nature' of statesmanship requires knowing not only what it differs from but also how it belongs, as one part fit for interplay with others, within the differentiated whole of the fifteen kinds of art; conversely, knowing the nature, 'care for the city,' requires knowing not only the fifteen kinds that instantiate it as its parts but also, by way of the earlier distinctions that lead up to the final set, what other comparable natures it differs from.

(iii) 'Right judgment'—and the insight that orients logos. At the core of the conception of knowledge that emerges from the *Theaetetus* is the notion of 'true' or 'right judgment'. If we ask directly and head-on, just what is the act of mind that fulfills the role of 'right judgment' in constituting knowledge?, we find that Plato leaves this unthematized. This is at least³⁶ because of the dialectical pedagogical strategy of the *Theaetetus*. Socrates, as we have seen, works from within *Theaetetus*' presumption that the object of knowledge is sense perceptible; hence his last two examples of 'right judgment' are the perceptual acts of seeing the sun and recognizing *Theaetetus*. If our reflections in (i) are well taken, however, his earlier refutations subvert this presumption, making clear that knowledge requires forms, not sensible particulars, for its objects. With this it should also become clear that 'right judgment' must be an intellectual, not a sense perceptual, recognition and, too, that Socrates' examples must not be taken uncritically. As, in particular, the first part of the *Parmenides* will show, relying on perceptual acquaintance as a model for insight into forms is one of the key ways in which one fails to make the 'turn' from sensibles to forms (see Miller 1986, ch. 2).

Suppose, therefore, that we scale back our question, asking not for the essence of the act of mind that is called 'right judgment' but, rather, for its function in constituting knowledge. Here, as we have seen, the *Theaetetus* is richly suggestive. Moreover, our reflections in (i) and (ii) permit us to bring some of our earlier analysis into new focus. To begin with, recall that in first discussing Socrates' wagon example, we noticed a kind of gap between the object of knowledge and the way *logos* brings it to light: *logos* discloses the 'nature' of wagon by

³⁶ There is, however, the further question of how fully this act of mind *can* be thematized. See, for instance, Rosen's discussion of intellectual intuition in Aristotle (Rosen 1980), and his capping remark on p. 63: 'There is no possibility of a direct demonstration of the act of intuition in the sense of a discursive analysis of that act. This is because intuition is the necessary precondition for discursivity and, as an act, it has no structure.'

disclosing the whole-part structure that it requires of something else, the things that have it as their 'nature'; the 'being' or 'nature' itself, we observed, prescind from this structure. Does an analogous gap show up between the object and the way it is brought to light by a *logos* that spells out its sameness and difference with others? The object, we have seen, is unique. But, as Socrates showed by his stage-wise movement from the indeterminate and common to the determinate and distinctive at 209b-c, to pick out features that distinguish something from other things is also to bring the several things to light in terms of what they share; to single out Theaetetus' 'look', for instance, by naming his 'particular snub-nosedness' is, even while evoking that unique 'look', to speak what Theaetetus shares with lots of others, snub-nosedness. Thus the *logos* discloses what is itself unique in terms that also apply to something else; it represents the object not as it is in itself but as it is in relation to others. Does this gap between object and *logos* suggest the unknowability of the object and, so, the impossibility of knowledge? If our interpretation of the nonredundancy of right judgment and *logos* is well conceived, we need not resign ourselves to this. On the contrary, the gap may be filled by the insight or awareness that, fulfilling the role of 'right judgment', orients *logos*. At its best, *logos* explicates a prior recognition of a simple and unique nature. To reverse our formulation of a few sentences ago: even while *logos* speaks of that nature as it is in relation to others, it can evoke it in its uniqueness, as it is in itself. Indeed, a measure of the excellence of a *logos* is how fully it answers to and brings to mind the very presence that transcends it.

So, at least, the closing aporiai of the *Theaetetus* seem to suggest. Are these suggestions 'reared' elsewhere? Three texts, in particular, warrant special attention. First, in the *Parmenides* there is a striking distinction between the characterizations of 'the one' in the first and the fifth hypotheses: in the first hypothesis, 'the one' is considered just in itself as a one and held not to be subject to sameness and difference; in the fifth hypothesis, by contrast, it is considered as the object of *logos* and held to be subject to sameness and difference.³⁷ If I am right to understand 'the one' in these passages to refer us to each one form,³⁸ then Plato is giving us occasion to distinguish the form as it is in and of itself and the form as it is explicated by *logos*, with its necessary reliance on relations. This distinction appears to be reiterated in the *Sophist*. At 255e the Eleatic Stranger makes the striking remark that 'each [form] is different from the others not by virtue of its own nature (οὐ διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν) but because it partakes of the form of difference'. It is specifically in terms of its difference from others that the favored method of *logos* in the *Sophist*, collection and bifurcatory division, defines each form. Both of these texts thus describe the gap between the object of knowledge and the way *logos* discloses it that the *Theaetetus* suggests. Is there, then, text to show the way right judgment—as, at its best, insight into the 'natures' of things—fills this gap? To decide about this, we need to examine the

³⁷ 139b-e and 160c-163b, respectively. See the discussion in Miller 1986, Epilogue B.

³⁸ See Miller 1986, ch. III, 76-77; ch. IV.B; and ch. V.B, 140-143.

practice of dialectic in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*—and the latter in particular, for there Plato has the Stranger indicate that their particular inquiry is structured in order to serve as an example of inquiry generally.³⁹ Especially in light of the confluence of the two methods of analysis at the close of the *Statesman*, a confluence that appears to be called for—to interpret the Eleatic Stranger's odd allusion to mantic wisdom at 287c⁴⁰—by the 'nature' that is under study, it is tempting to wonder if Plato is there offering us an exemplary display of orienting insight at work.⁴¹

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³⁹ See *Statesman* 285ff. and the discussion in Miller 1980, 69-70.

⁴⁰ See the remarks in Miller 1980, especially 76ff.

⁴¹ One further text is the *Seventh Letter* 341b-344d. For a first indication of its relevance and, too, of its connection with the *Statesman*, see Miller 1980, 80-82.

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