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PLATO'S HYPOTHETICAL DIALECTIC

by

CATALIN D. PARTENIE

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To my parents Constanta 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 εἴδη 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 εἶδος 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 εἴδη, as well as the μέθοδοι which aim at determining the εἴδη themselves, are (i) *dialectical,* in the sense that they are supposed to be undertaken through διαλέγειν, *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 εἴδη', and, to some extent, its sensible copy) is a ἁρμονία (for the εἴδη form not a chaos, but a κόσμος) (although the very notion of ἁρμονία 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 ἁρμονία 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 εἴδη, as well as the μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἴδη, *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' (ἁρμονία τῶν εἴδων) and 'the human mind that seeks to know it' (ἁρμονία 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 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 εἴδη' and the 'meta-εἴδη 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 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, χαλεπὰ 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 Abbreviation

Introduction: Socratism and Platonism
- 0.1. The Socratic matter
  - 0.1.1.The Socratic παράδειγμα: the escape from pseudo-certain knowledge
  - 0.1.2. συνουσία as the Socratic *locus* of certainty. The dialogue as the condition for achieving certain knowledge
  - 0.1.3. How can certain knowledge be achieved. ὁμολογία and ἔλεγχος
  - 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?')
- 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 συμφωνοῦσιν
  - 2.3.2. Including the theory into a wider one

Chapter Three: The μέθοδος toward theories and the theory of εἴδη (I)
- 3.1. The theory of εἴδη
- 3.2. The puzzle that the theory of εἴδη explains best
- 3.3. Hypothesizing as true what συμφωνεῖ with the theory of εἴδη
  - 3.3.1. The theory of recollection
  - 3.3.2. The theory of soul's immortality
- 3.4. Testing the theory of εἴδη by seeing whether its implications συμφωνοῦσιν
- 3.5. Testing the theory of εἴδη 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 εἴδη (II): τὸ ἀγαθόν as the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of εἴδη

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 εἶδος to φάρμακον, has been discussed with ultimate ἀκρίβεια (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 ὁδός, 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 asked, claims Robinson, "what it is in the nature of things and the nature of men that makes [...it] 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 εἴδη is established (which is his answer to the question of the metaphysical nature of the objects that can be known), that of the εἴδη 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 εἴδη, as well as the μέθοδοι which aim at determining the εἴδη themselves, are (i) *dialectical,* in the sense that they are supposed to be undertaken through δια–λεγειν, *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.
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> (2) In Chapters Four and Five I argue that Plato made an attempt to prove that *reality* (i.e. the 'world of εἴδη' and, to some extent, its sensible copy) is a ἁρμονία (for the εἴδη 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 ἁρμονία only insofar it is itself *harmonic* (although the very notion of ἁρμονία 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 εἴδη, as well as the μέθοδοι that introduce and develop the theory of εἴδη, *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' (ἁρμονία τῶν εἴδων) and 'the human mind that seeks to know it' (ἁρμονία 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 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 εἴδη' and the 'meta-εἴδη 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 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 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, χαλεπὰ 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.

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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 *intentio auctoris,* on *intentio operis* or on *intentio lectoris.* Now, those commentators on philosophical texts who make *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 γεγραμμένος, says Plato *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 praphrase one of Flaubert's famous *mots — 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 *Monsieur Platon c'est moi.)*

These are, one may say, extreme positions; but, to some extent, I believe, *any* interpretation of Plato's 'orphaned' work will be a 'mixture' of *his* thoughts and *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 *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 *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 ἐποχή 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 *εὖ οἶδα καὶ οὐκ εἰκάζω* (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 ἀλλ–ηγορεῖν. 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) — ἴδια Πλάτωνος.

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 εἰλικρινής.

(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', 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.

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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:
Alc. 1 = *Alcibiades* 1
Ap. = *Apologia*
Chrm. = *Charmides*
Cra. = *Cratylos*
Cri. = *Crito*
Criti. = *Critias*
Euthd. = *Euthydemus*
Euthphr. = *Euthyphro*
Grg. = *Gorgias*
Hp. Ma., Mi. = *Hippias Major, Minor*
Ion
La. = *Laches*
Lg. = *Leges*
Ly. = *Lysis*
Men. = *Meno*
Mx. = *Menexenus*
Phd. = *Phaedo*
Phdr = *Phaedrus*
Phlb. = *Philebus*
Plt. = *Politicus*
Prm. = *Parmenides*
Prt. = *Protagoras*
R. = *Respublica*
Smp. = *Symposium*
Sph. = *Sophista*
Tht. = *Theaetetus*
Ti. = *Timaeus*
VII = The Seventh Letter

(2) ARISTOTLE:
APo. = *Analytica Posteriora*
APr. = *Analytica Priora*
Ath. = *Ἀθηναίων Πολιτεία*
Cael. = *de Caelo*
Cat. = *Categoriae*
de An. = *de Anima*
EE = *Ethica Eudemia*
EN = *Ethica Nicomachea*
GC = *de Generatione 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*

EPICTETUS:
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

OED = *Oxford English Dictionary,* Oxford, 1971.

LSJ = H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, H.J. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon,* Oxford, 1961

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 εἴδη 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 εἶδος 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

their second week of study of the *Republic:* '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 (Diogene 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. Riginos, 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 ὄντι —23 a 5) σοφία, which 'is the property of θεός' (a 5-6);
(ii) the real, or authentic (cf. τῷ ὄντι — 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 παράδειγμα" — 23 a 8-b 4); and

(iii) the inauthentic human σοφία, which Socrates does not know how to name (20 e 1-2), and which belongs to all those who believe to know something without actually knowing it (i.e. to politicians, poets and skilled craftsmen — 21 b-22 e).

To sum up so far: for Socrates *man* is, essentially, the real ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία, i.e. the *Socratic παράδειγμα*. What then is at the core of this *παράδειγμα?*

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 ἀρετή par excellence,* that which is at the core of the *Socratic παράδειγμα,* 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 *ἀρετή.)*

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 ἐριστικός (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 παράδειγμα (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 *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 ὁδός* 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 ὁδός?

0.1.2. συνουσία 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 κοινωνικὸς ἄνθρωπος, 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* παράδειγμα.

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 κοινῶς, *in communion* (κοινῇ σκεπτέον —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 κοινὴ 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 δια-λόγος, the *dialogue,* is so important for Socrates; for the διάλογος 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 κοινῶς.)

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. ὁμολογία and ἔλεγχος

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

The word ἔλεγχος 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 ἔλεγχος. (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 ἔλεγχος, 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 ἔλεγχος? 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:

> (i) An 'answerer' (ὁ ἀποκρινόμενος) (usually an interlocutor of Socrates) asserts a 'thesis', say p, which is his own belief. (This 'thesis' is a λεγόμενον, 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' (αἰδώς) *(Chrm.* 160 e 5); 'modesty' (αἰδώς) and 'good' (καλόν) *(Chrm.* 161 a 6); 'beautiful' (τὸ καλόν) and 'useful' (τὸ χρήσιμον) *(Hi. Ma.* 294 c ff.); 'good' (τὸ ἀγαθόν) and 'beautiful' (τὸ καλόν) *(Hi. Ma.* 297 c); 'beneficial' (τὸ ὠφέλιμον) and 'beautiful' (τὸ καλόν) *(Hi. Ma.* 296 e), etc. The 'object' of knowledge is then, to put it very roughly, the κοινωνίαι of 'things'.

One may object to this claim by saying that Socrates is concerned not only with elenchus (i.e. with the 'κοινωνίαι 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 quaerat 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 κοινωνία 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 τέχναι; 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 *Euthd.* 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 *συνουσία,* in its quest for certain knowledge, practice the ἔλεγχος? 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', ὁμολογία (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 κοινωνίαι between several things; and then, a κοινωνία that is not evidently true is assessed against this set of evidently true κοινωνίαι; in short: if an alleged κοινωνία between two 'things' 'fits' within a particular 'network' of κοινωνίαι whose truth is commonly accepted, then this indicates that that the alleged κοινωνία 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 can 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 εἶδος of holiness which makes all holy actions holy. I believe you held that there is a μία ἰδέα 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 ἔλεγχος) 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 ἔλεγχος) 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 ὁδός* 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 μεταξὺ σοφοῦ 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 *κοινωνίαι* 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 σῶμα ἔμψυχον (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 σῶμα (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' (μανθάνομεν —*R.* 436 a 9), i.e. τὸ λογιστικόν (441 e 4, 550 b 1, 571 c 4), not the parts with which we 'feel anger' (θυμούμεθα) or 'desire [ἐπιθυμοῦμεν] 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 λογιστικόν) 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 μανθάνει, 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 [ἵστησιν] at things, rather than going round with them. [...] βέβαιον [which is a common attribute for ἐπιστήμη in Plato] is clearly the expression of station [στάσις] and position [βάσις], not of motion [φορά]. Again, the word ἱστορία bears upon the face of it the stopping [ἱστάναι] of the stream, and the word πιστόν certainly indicates cessation of motion [ἱστάν]; then, again, μνήμη, as anyone may see, expresses rest [μονή] 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 ἐπίσταμαι, which is made out of the preposition ἐπί, 'on', 'upon', and the verb ἵσταμαι, a passive form of ἵστημι, 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 [ἑπομένης] the motion of things"; "σύνησις is derived from συνιέναι ['to understand' — the infinitive of συνίημι] and, like ἐπίστασθαι, implies the progression [συνιέναι —which is also the infinitive of σύνειμι, 'to come together'] of the soul in company with the nature of things"; "σοφία means 'touching [ἐφάπτεσθαι] the motion [φορά] or stream of things"). Now, how are we to take all this?

In the *Sophist* Plato claims that knowledge (γίγνώσκειν) 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 somewhow 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 [γνῶσις] 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, acording to this view, there will be no one to know [οὔτε τὸ γνωσόμενον] and nothing to be known [οὔτε τὸ γνωσθησόμενον]" (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. βέβαιον, ἱστορία, 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 (acording 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 ἐπιστήμη, cf. 437 a and 412 a — are *ambiguous,* ἀμφίβολοι, 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, τὸ γνωσθησόμενον, remains, today and tomorrow, the same. This idea, that knowledge is always knowledge of something that μένει κατὰ ταὐτὰ, 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 [γνῶσις] at all, if everything is in a state of transition and there is nothing abiding [μηδὲν μένει]"; cf. also *R.* 585 c f., *Sph.* 249 b, *Phlb.* 58 a, 61 e (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 ὄντα that are the ἀΐδια, cf. 1139 b 23 f., i.e. only about that which cannot be otherwise — cf. 1139 b 20 ff.: ὃ ἐπιστάμεθα, μὴ ἐνδέχεσθαι ἄλλως 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 ψυχή. 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 [αἰσθήσεις] 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 [αἰσθήσεται] 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 — τὸ λογιστικόν] and ends in the region of the liver [i.e. it affects also the other two parts of the soul — ὁ θυμός and τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν]". 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 *(Tht.* 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 ὀερομένη 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 φρονεῖν) is, he says in the *Theaetetus* 189 e-190 a, λέγειν.

> διανοεῖσθαι is a λόγος that the soul carries out with herself about any subject she is considering [...; and] when the soul is thinking [διανοουμένη] she is simply talking to herself [διαλέγεσθαι] 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 διὰ τῆς γλώττης 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 αἰσθήσεις 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's] 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 ἀρχή, φύσις or αἰτία. 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 αὖ τὸ γιγνόμενον ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς ἐξ ἀνάγκης γίγνεσθαι; or *Phlb.* 26 e 3-4: ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πάντα τὰ γιγνόμενα διά τινα 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 ἀγαθόν 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 σῶμα;
> (iii) 'to know through the αἰσθήσεις 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.*

(Thus, by putting the question of knowledge in these terms, Plato turned the Socratic matter into a Platonic matter.)

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, μάθησις *in general* works appears like a πάνυ θαυμαστὸν 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 κυριωτάτη 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 ἑκάστοτε, '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-λεγ́ειν, *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 preposition μετά and the noun ὁδός, 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 μετ-οίχομαι ("to be gone after"); and the idea of *community* or *participation,* as in μετα-δίδωμι ("to give a share") (cf. LSJ). 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 μεταξὺ σοφοῦ καὶ ἀμαθοῦς (cf. *Smp.* 204 b 5), has to find *a path towards* sure knowledge, and that this path should be covered with other men.

Secondly, Plato's διαλεκτικὴ 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 διαλεκτικὴ 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 [ἐρρωμενέστατος]' (see 100 a) (7). Now, what do λόγος, ὑποθέμενος and ἐρρωμενέστατος 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 ἐρρωμενέστατος λόγος' as 'to lay down the ἐρρωμενέστατον *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 ὑπόθεσις does always mean 'statement' (9). Yet this is hardly the case. In Plato the word ὑπόθεσις 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, *Tht.* 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' *(Prm.* 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 ἐρρωμενέστατος theory' mean? But first, what is a ὑπόθεσις *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 ὑπόθεσις *(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, *Tht.* 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* (ἐρρωμενέστατος) be hypothesized, i.e. laid down *tentatively?* But, what does actually ἐρρωμενέστατος mean here?

ἐρρωμενέστατος is the superlative degree of the adjective ἐρρωμένος ('vigorous', 'stout', 'sound'), which comes from the verb ῥώννυμι ('to strengthen', 'make strong'). Now, what does determine

the *strongness* of a theory? First, one may claim, a theory is ἐρρωμένον if its ὁρμηθέντα ἀλλήλοις συμφωνεῖ 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 ἐρρωμένον when it resists refutations (as it is suggested at 85 c-d (12). I agree that it is very tempting to connect this μέθοδος 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 ἐρρωμενέστατος as δυσεξελεγκτότατος (to use this expression from 85 c 9), then 'to find and hypothesize the ἐρρωμενέστατος 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 μέθοδος 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 *strongness* 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 μέθοδος brought forward by Plato in the *Phaedo* (namely: 'to hypothesize the λόγος 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 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' (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 συμφωνεῖ 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 [ὡς ἀληθῆ ὄντα] whatever things seems to me to accord [συμφωνεῖν] with it [...,] and whatever seems not to, I put down as not true [ὡς οὐκ ἀληθῆ]" (100 a). This passage raises difficult problems of interpretation, mainly because of the ambiguity of the verb συμφωνεῖν. What then does Plato mean here by συμφωνεῖν, 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 ἐρρωμενέστατος 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 συμφωνεῖ with a theory that we judged to be the most plausible? συμφωνεῖν 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 συμφωνία

Literally, συμφωνία means a 'togetherness (συμ–) of φωναί'; 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 συμφωνία 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 ἁρμονία συμφωνία ἐστίν, συμφωνία δὲ ὁμολογία τις (my italics), he points out, in a way, precisely these two 'fields' to which συμφωνία (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 συμφωνία. 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 συμφωνίαι, and the octave was called ἁρμονία (cf. Philolaos B 6). To the best of my knowledge, these are the first technical usages of the terms συμφωνία and ἁρμονία. In time, however, in the field of music, these technical meanings faded away; and, by the time of Plato, the terms συμφωνία and ἁρμονία were mostly used as synonyms (cf. *inter alia Cra.* 405 d 1: 'in singing [ἐν τῇ ᾠδῇ] ἁρμονία is called συμφωνία'), denoting a τάξις that exists between sounds *qua* pitches (17) (cf. *Lg.* 665 a 1 f.: τῇ δὲ [τάξει] αὖ τῆς φωνῆς, τοῦ τε ὀξέος ἅμα καὶ βαρέος συγκερανυμένων, ἁρμονία ὄνομα προσαγορεύοιτο) —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, ἁρμονία/συμφωνία tend to refer to a σύνθετον πρᾶγμα (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 ἡδονή or εὐφροσύνη in a hearer (cf. *Ti.* 80 b; although the mere ἡδονή 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 φωνή, namely that of *speaking*. When one's λεγόμενα were 'well said', Socrates seemed to suggest in the *Protagoras,* they were said μουσικῶς, for they συνάδουσιν (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 ἁρμονία belongs to the field of music. In other words: if so, then Plato —when he speaks about the ἁρμονία and συμφωνία of those 'elements' proper to the field of *speaking* (i.e. *letters, words, statements* and *accounts)* — speaks *metaphorically.*

(α) In the case of *letters* that συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις (cf. *Sph.* 253 a 1-2), the ἁρμονία/συμφωνία that results refers to a σύνθετον πρᾶγμα (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 ἁρμονία/συμφωνία of letters cannot suggest any other one).

(β) In the case of *words* that συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις (cf. *Sph.* 261 d), the ἁρμονία/συμφωνία that results refers to a σύνθετον πρᾶγμα (i.e. to a statement —cf. 262 e 1: τὰ [λεγόμενα] ἁρμόττοντα λόγον

ἀπηργάσατο), which is determined as a succession (τάξις) of words (τὰ ἑφεξῆς λεγόμενα —261 d 8) that has (*qua* statement) a meaning (τὰ λεγόμενα δηλοῦντα/σημαίνοντα —e 1-2). (The orginal reads: τὰ μὲν ἑφεξῆς λεγόμενα καὶ δηλοῦντά τι συναρμόττει, τὰ δὲ τῇ συνεχείᾳ μηδὲν σημαίνοντα ἀναρμοστεῖ; the majority of its translations —see those made by Fowler 1928, Cornford 1951 or Diès 1925 —render the expressions τὰ λεγόμενα δηλοῦντα/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".)

(γ) In the case of *statements* and *accounts* (or *theories)* that συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις, however, things are not that simple, and here the metaphor of ἁρμονία/συμφωνία becomes obscure.

When two or more statements συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις (cf. *Prt.* 333 a 7-8), to what does the ἁρμονία 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 ἁρμονία/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 ὁμολογεῖν ἀλλήλοις, not συμφωνεῖν; but we know, from the *Smp.* 187 b 4 that ἡ συμφωνία ὁμολογία 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 συμφωνεῖν 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 συμφωνεῖν 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 συμφωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις are not only consistent, but they form, one way or another, not a mere σύνθετον, but a κόσμιον πρᾶγμα (21). Now, in the case of *statements* and *accounts* (or *theories)* the metaphor of ἁρμονία/συμφωνία becomes, as

I said, obscure; and that is so precisely because here it ceases to determine the κόσμιον πρᾶγμα to which it refers. In other words, here the metaphor of ἁρμονία/συμφωνία says only that the statements (or the theories) that συμφωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις form a κόσμιον πρᾶγμα (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 ὄντα) 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* [σχεδία]' (85 d 1-2), i.e. with the εἰκὼς ἀλήθεια 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 (τιθήμενος) 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 ἀρχή and see whether it is or not rightly [ὀρθῶς] 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 ὁρμηθέντα συμφωνεῖ ἀλλήλοις or διαφωνεῖ" (101 d).

The key-word of this passage is ὁρμηθέντα. ὁρμηθέντα 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, *Tht.* 184 a) do not support such a reading.

If one, however, takes ὁρμηθέντα as 'logical consequences', then he will be inclined to take συμφωνία 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' ἐκείνης ὁρμηθέντα (101 d 4) as 'the *consequences* of the hypothesis', is, I think, to read too much in it. The verb ὁρμᾶν means 'to begin from something and/or set something in motion'; and τὰ ὁρμηθέντα (which is a passive aorist participle of ὁρμᾶν) means, literally, 'the things which were set in motion by something'. In our context, I believe, the expression τὰ ὁρμηθέντα 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

τὰ συμβαίνοντα) (24). 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 ὁρμηθέντα συμφωνεῖ ἀλλήλοις or διαφωνεῖ? 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 πρᾶγμα* —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 ἐξ ἐκείνης ὡρμημένων —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 [ὡσαύτως —d 6], hypothesizing [ὑποθέμενος] another ὑπόθεσις which seems best of those above [τῶν ἄνωθεν βελτίστη], until we reach one which is satisfactory [τι ἱκανόν]".

Now, Plato does not tell us here to *substitute* the theory that we judged to be ἐρρωμενέστατον 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 ἱκανόν' 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 ὁρμηθέντα (i.e. implications) of the theory (cf. 101 e 2-3) (from the point of view of their being capable to συμφωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις, viz. to form a 'structured whole'); whereas the procedure of the fourth step regards its ἀρχή (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* ἀρχή' suggests an ἀρχὴ τῶν ἀποδείξεων, 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* ἀρχή' cannot be more than ἱκανόν, 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 ὡσαύτως 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 ὡσαύτως: what does 'to proceed in *the same way*' mean? What did we *first* do? *First,* we had to find a theory that is ἐρρωμενέστατον, i.e. a theory' that fits best into a given puzzle; and *then,* we have to see if its implications συμφωνοῦσιν, 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 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 ἔξωθεν, 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 ὅλον *qua* περιέχον) 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 ἀπορίαι 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 —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 the εἰκὼς ἀλήθεια provided by a plausible theory and 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 ἀλλήλοις, 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 ἀλλήλοις; 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 e 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 μίμησις is the noun μῖμος, 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 μῖμος-group led to the conclusion that μίμησις meant mainly 'enactment', i.e. 'dramatic impersonation' —cf. Koller 1954 and Keuls 1978, 11-14). A μίμησις 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 μίμησις. 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, εἴδωλα εἰκότα, e.g. the Queen's dummy from Madame Tussaud's; and 'unbelievable' copies, εἴδωλα φανταστικά, e.g. a cartoon of the Queen from the *Punch.)* Yet every copy, μιμούμενον, is a sort of a pretender, exactly like an actor (μῖμος) 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 ὄν in which something that this ὄν 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 ἄτοπον fact *(Sph.* 240 c 2 and 3), namely at a συμπλοκή between an ὄν (the wax dummy) and a μὴ ὄν (taken as that something which this ὄν is not, i.e. the 'real' Queen). In this case, however, only the model is the *real* Queen; that is: only she is an ὄντως ὄν, whereas one of her dummies is only a ὃν πως. 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 εἴδωλον is a ἕτερον (a 9), i.e. something which is other than a 'real thing' (ἀληθινόν — a 9, b 2, 3, 5), but still similar (τοιοῦτον —a 9; ἐοικός — b 2) to it. If so, argues the Stranger, then the εἴδωλον is the ἐναντίον of the ἀληθινόν (b 5); and if we understand by ἀληθινόν 'that which really is' (ὄντως ὄν — b 3), then we have to admit that it is the εἴδωλον which does not have a 'real existence' (οὐκ ὄντως [οὐκ] ὄν ἄρα λέγεις το ἐοικός, εἴπερ αὐτό γε μὴ ἀληθινὸν ἐρεῖς —b 7-8). In other words, when Plato claims that the εἴδωλον does not have a 'real existence', he claims that an image, although it is an ὄν (cf. b 9,11 and 12), something which exists, is not that *other* ὄν which is 'represented' in the image — this 'represented' ὄν being, from the two of them, the only ὄν ἀληθινόν, the only 'real thing': the 'model', the παράδειγμα (1). An εἴδωλον is therefore an ὄν πως (b 9); and this ὄν πως is actually that in which there is a κοινωνία (or συμπλοκή) between ὄν (that very εἴδωλον) and μὴ ὄν (that which the εἴδωλον 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 εἶδος of holiness which makes all holy actions holy. I believe you held that there is a μία ἰδέα 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 αὐτὰ καθ' αὑτὰ (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 ἰδέαι (*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 εἶδος instead of αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό?' and 'Why did he then use γένος instead of εἶδος?') 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, *Ti.* 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 γένος 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 εἶδος for everything we see? 'Are you

doubtful, says Parmenides to Socrates, 'whether or not to assert that there is a separate εἶδος 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 εἶδος', 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 εἶδος 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 εἴδη 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 εἴδη 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 καινόν. Now, what is this puzzle?

As I argued in Chapter One, the *given* way in which, for Plato, μάθησις *in general* works appears like a πάνυ θαυμαστὸν 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 μάθησις is the one at which the theory of εἴδη was primarily aimed.

As I said, the theory of εἴδη claims an ontological distinction between the εἴδη and the individual things *qua* εἰκόνες of the εἴδη,

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 εἴδη, and, on the other, their embodiments. Now, since soul can know either through the αἰσθήσεις 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 εἶδος (VII 342 b 2; cf. also τὸ ζωγραφούμενον, VII 342 c 1); (ii) the ὄνομα of that εἶδος (*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 εἶδος (*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 εἶδος 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 αἰσθήσεις τοῦ σώματος are the embodiments of εἴδη, whereas that which the soul can know through itself, i.e. through διανοεῖσθαι *qua* λέγειν, are the εἴδη 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 θαυμαστὸν 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 εἴδη 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 εἴδη — i.e. the παραδείγματα that sensible objects embody; (ii) knowing through the αἰσθήσεις 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 εἴδη, whereas speaking deals with the εἴδη themselves (which, as models, are different than their embodiments); and (iii) that which remains the same, viz. the εἴδη, are the causes of the sensible things.

In the *Phaedo* Plato says explicitly that 'ὁ περὶ τῆς ἀναμνήσεως καὶ μαθήσεως λόγος' is explained by 'a ὑπόθεσις worthy of acceptance [δι' ὑποθέσεως ἀξίας ἀποδέξασθαι]', i.e. by the theory of εἴδη (92 d 6-7) (6). Here, however, things are not very clearly stated as to how the theory of εἴδη 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 εἴδη

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 εἶδος (and its cognate ἰδέα) to name the unchanging παραδείγματα of things. εἶδος and ἰδέα —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). εἶδος 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 ἰδέαν διὰ πολλῶν', i.e. — according to the majority of the commentators — 'seeing [with soul through eyes] the same εἶδος 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 συμφωνεῖ with it. With the theory of forms there are many things that συμφωνοῦσιν; 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 εἴδη (cf. *Phd.* 74 d 9 ff., or 75 b 4 ff.);
> (iii) 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);
> (iv) 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 ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀδιάφθορον (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 συνῳδός 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 εἴδη); (whereas the theory that soul is a kind of ἁρμονία is not συνῳδός 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 *qua* ἁρμονία (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 συμφωνεῖ ἀλλήλοις, and by attempting to include it into a wider one. Plato's theory of εἴδη —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 εἶδος 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 εἴδη the tests he mentioned in this dialogue? Yes, but only tentatively.

3.4. Testing the theory of εἴδη by seeing whether its implications συμφωνοῦσιν

> This is how the story goes. When any man dies, his own guardian spirit [δαίμων], 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 forkings 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 λογιστικὸν μανθάνει is explained, I hold, by Plato through the theory of forms, which claims an ontological distinction between the εἴδη 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 *qua* εἰκόνες of the εἴδη and the realm of the εἴδη *qua* παραδείγματα (cf. *Phd.* 79 a; cf. also *R.* 507 b-509 d; *Sph.* 247 c-248 a; *Plt.* 269 d; *Phlb.* 15 a-b); and that (ii) soul (at least of its learning part, τὸ λογιστικὸν) is immortal. Now, do these implications, these ὁρμηθέντα of the theory of εἴδη, συμφωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις or διαφωνεῖν?

In my view, what Plato does in the myth from the end of the *Phaedo* is precisely this: he attempts to see if the ὁρμηθέντα of the theory of forms συμφωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις, i.e. if they 'hang together' within a *κόσμιον πρᾶγμα;* 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 *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 *metaphysical* topography (grounded on the existence of the two realms) and an account of what happens to souls when they are not *embodied.* (The myth, if I may use an expression from Ryle 1966, 237, *would serve as topical sugar for the very untopical pill* produced by the implications of the theory of εἴδη.)

> 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 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 κόσμιον πρᾶγμα? Yes —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. Testing the theory of εἴδη by including it into a wider one

As I argued in 2.3.2., the second test is aimed at what comes (logically) *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 [ἔστι] 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 ὕλη (Aristotle, Diogene Laertius, Theophrastus, Alexander, Alcinous, Simplicius), θεός (Diogenes Laertius, Theophrastus), παράδειγμα (Alexander, Simplicius), and ἰδέα (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 γιγνόμενα], some are generated naturally [τὰ φύσει γίγνεται], and others artificially [τὰ τέχνῃ]" (11). And he seems to imply that for *all* generated things (πάντα τὰ γιγνόμενα) —be they τὰ φύσει ὄντα or τὰ ποιούμενα — 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) (ὕλη, 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 εἴδη as αἰτίαι (cf. 99 a ff.). Let us look at each of these stages.

(i) First, Socrates says, he thought that the αἰτία 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 αἰτία; 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 αἰτία 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 αἰτία [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 πλοῦς) in the quest of αἰτία" (99 c 9-d 1) (14), introduces the εἴδη as αἰτίαι (cf. 99 a ff).

I do not intend to read Aristotle back into Plato: Plato does not *explicitly* distinguish, as Aristotle, *four* kinds of αἰτίαι; 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 αἰτία "is too absurd" (99 a);
> (ii) he then 'muses' about the possibility of an *efficient* αἰτία (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* αἰτία (εἶδος).

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 a γιγνόμενον comes into being as such and such because of a 'maker' (νοῦς) that has an 'aim' and a 'model' (εἶδος). What he says is that a γιγνόμενον comes into being as such and such because of its εἶδος.

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 ἱκανόν 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, μίμησις is held as the ultimate determination of μέθεξις (i.e. the individual things are thought of as *copies* of εἴδη). Yet Plato does further determine the concept of μίμησις. In the *Sophist* he says explicitly: μίμησις ποίησις τίς ἐστιν, '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 ποίησις 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 e 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 ποιούμενον (cf. also *Phlb.* 27 a 1-2: καὶ μὴν τό γε ποιούμενον αὖ καὶ τὸ γιγνόμενον οὐδὲν πλὴν ὀνόματι, καθάπερ τὸ νυνδή, διαφέρον εὑρήσομεν) —he often refers to ποίησις or to its 'performer' as 'that which is responsible for' (i.e., in a broad sense, 'the αἰτία of') τὸ γιγνόμενον in general. (For reference to ποίησις *qua* αἰτία see for instance *Smp.* 197 a 1-3: πάντα τὰ ζῷα γίγνεται τε καὶ φύεται through the σοφὴ ποίησις of Eros — my paraphrase; *Smp.* 205 b 8-9: ἡ γὰρ τοι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὂν ἰόντι ὁτῳοῦν αἰτία πᾶσα ἐστι ποίησις (15); *Sph.* 219 b 4-6: πᾶν ὅπερ ἂν μὴ πρότερόν τις ὂν ὕστερον εἰς οὐσίαν ἄγῃ, τὸν μὲν ἄγοντα ποιεῖν, τὸ δὲ ἀγόμενον ποιεῖσθαι πού φαμεν; *Phlb.* 26 e 6-8: οὐκοῦν ἡ τοῦ ποιοῦντος φύσις οὐδὲν πλὴν ονόματι τῆς αἰτίας διαφέρει, τὸ δὲ ποιοῦν καὶ το αἴτιον ὀρθῶς ἄν εἴη λεγόμενον ἕν; *Ti.* 29 a; cf. also *Hi. Ma.* 296 e 8-9: τὸ ποιοῦν δὲ γ' ἐστιν οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ τὶ αἴτιον, and 297 a 4: τὸ αἴτιον ποιοῦν ἐφάνη.)

Now, since ποίησις 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 ποίησις?

For Plato ποίησις 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 e ff, 28 d, etc.). Now, does this have any *metaphysical* relevance? Or it is only a banal and 'handy' way of putting things? (Usually the topic of ποίησις 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 ποίησις 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 ποίησις is not only one of the major *philosophical* topics of Platonism (for ποίησις 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-e, 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 ζῷον —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 [οὐδενὸς φθόνος]', 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 ποίησις, and since (ii) for him in the 'act' of ποίησις 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 ποίησις, and for him there are three 'elements' that 'take part' in the 'act' of ποίησις (the maker, the matter and the model); but he, unlike Aristotle, does not take these three 'elements' which 'constitute' the 'act' of ποίησις as *three different kinds of cause.* Nevertheless, Plato does use in his explanation of a γιγνόμενον *qua* ποιούμενον all these three 'elements' of the 'act' of ποίησις (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 εἴδη are παραδείγματα, and that other things 'participate' [μετέχειν] in them, is to use [...] poetical metaphors [μεταφορὰς λέγειν ποιητικάς]" *(Metaph.* 1079 b 25 ff.; my paraphrase; cf. also 991 a 19-22) (see also *Prm.* 132 c, where the εἴδη are said to *like* models, ὥσπερ παραδείγματα). 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 [θεός] the inferior of human workmen" —my italics; and *Smp.* 197 a: "in every τέχνη, the [human] δημιουργός who achieves the brightest fame is the one whose διδασκαλός 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', εἶδος, 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 εἴδη); and that it, in spite of being only a likely, εἰκώς, 'account' (cf. *Ti.* 29 b 5-c 2, etc.) is, nevertheless, *ἱκανόν*. (This ἱκανόν 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 [ὑποτεθεισῶν] 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 πόλις, the sophist — are (22).

Now, the μέθοδος described in the *Phaedo* at 100 a-101 e is a μέθοδος that is aimed precisely at finding, using and checking

ὑποθέσεις that can explain (and so 'save') the way things around us are. The theory of εἴδη is, in my view, such a ὑπόθεσις, for it was aimed at solving (primarily) the πάνυ θαυμαστόν 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 ἱκανόν, 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 [οἱ λόγοι] 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 εἴδη? "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 θαυμαστόν 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 εἴδη; it continues, and its next stages are explicitly stated in the *Republic* and the *Sophist*.

CHAPTER FOUR

The theory of εἴδη (II): τὸ ἀγαθόν as the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of εἴδη

What I shall claim in what follows relies on three passages from the *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 de 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 εἴδη:

> (a) on the one hand, the visible realm (τὸ ὁρατόν —509 d 4; cf. also: τὰ ὁρώμενα — 507 b 9, 508 a 6, 509 b 2; and τὰ ὅρατα —507 d 8) (or the realm of γένεσις —534 a 3), which is the realm of the opinable (τὸ δοξαστόν —510 a 9, 534 a 6) and which is divided into:
> (i) that which can be the model of a copy (τὸ ᾧ ὡμοιώθη —510 a 10), i.e. animals (τὰ ζῷα — 510 a 6), plants (τὸ φυτευτόν — 510 a 6), man-made things (τὸ σκευαστόν — 510 a 6); and which is apprehended by πίστις (511 e 1, 534 a 1); and

(ii) that which is a copy of a model (τὸ ὁμοιωθέν —510 a 10), i.e. images (εἰκόνες —509 e 1), like shadows (σκίαι —510 a 1) or reflections (φαντάσματα — 510 a 2) (be they in water or on some other surfaces); and which is apprehended by εἰκασία (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 c 1 and τὰ νοητά — 508 e 1) (or the realm of οὐσία — 534 a 3), which is the realm of the knowable (τὸ γνωστόν — 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 αἴσθησις to that of ὄψις — cf. for instance *Tht.* 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 εἴδη (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 εἴδη, 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 διάνοια (511 a 1, c 7, d 2, 5, 533 d 6, e 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 ὑποθέσεων — 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 ὑπόθησις 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 ἀρχαί, c 3, of their reasonings without any questioning, and that they cannot turn their knowledge into ἐπιστήμη, c 5, precisely because they leave their hypotheses

unexplained; cf. also *Cratylus* 436 c-e, which I quoted at the and 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 (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως — 5) to an ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή (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 ἀρχή, 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 διαίρεσις; 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 εἴδη; and so all this can be actually understood only by placing it within the context of this theory.

4.1. The ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή as τὸ ἀγαθόν

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

Plato does not *explicitly* say too much about the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή. But he suggests (i) that τὸ ἀγαθόν is the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή, and (ii) that the sun is an analogy for it. (i) First, Plato says in the Sun that τὸ ἀγαθόν 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 ἀρχή (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 ἀρχή is reached at the end of an upward path (which implies that, since the *sun* is an analogy for both τἀγαθόν and the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή, these two are one and the same thing). On the whole, however, this indirect evidence —for claiming that τὸ ἀγαθόν *is* the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή and that the sun is an analogy for both — 'seems sufficient' (as Robinson 1953, 160 says).

Now, what is τὸ ἀγαθόν?

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 Aristoxenus *(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 ἀγαθόν 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 ἰδέα is what makes 'just things and all the rest χρήσιμα and ὠφέλιμα —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 ἰδέα (504 d, 505 a 2). But we cannot make too much out of this either.

Now, Plato himself admits that the good is something μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι (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 τἀγαθόν, 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 [ἔκγονος] of ἀγαθόν and most nearly made in its likeness [ὁμοιότατος] I am willing to speak [...].

4.2. τὸ ἀγαθόν as that which is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας

The 'seen things' (τὰ ὁρῶμενα —507 b 1, 508 a 6, 509 b 2), claims Plato, correspond to 'the known things' (τὰ νοοῦμενα —508 c 1; or τὰ γιγνωσκόμενα — 508 e 1, 509 b 6); the eye (ὄμμα — 507 d 11, 508 b 1) to the soul (ψυχή — 508 d 4) (although he does not say *explicitly* so); the sight (ὄψις— 507 d 8, 11, e 1; or ἡ τοῦ ὁραν δύναμις —507 c 7) to knowledge (ἐπιστήμη —508 e 3509 a 6; or γνῶσις —508 e 4); the light (φῶς — 507 e 4) to truth (ἀλήθεια — 508 d 5, e 1, 4); and the sun (ἥλιος —508 a 7, 11, d 1, 509 b 2) to the 'idea of the good' (ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα — 508 e 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 ὁρατός and the τόπος νοητός. Now, within each τόπος, Plato confers the same vital position to sun and ἀγαθόν, respectively:

(a)
(i) 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 ὁρῶμενα) not only light, but γένεσις, αὔξη, and τροφή too, without being itself γένεσις (509 b).

(b)
(i) τὸ ἀγαθόν is the cause of ἀλήθεια (508 e), and ἀλήθεια is that which makes possible knowledge (508 d); and
(ii) it provides (προσεῖναι) the οὐσία of *all* εἴδη, being *above* (ὑπερέχοντος) and *beyond* (ἐπέκεινα) οὐσία in 'dignity' (πρέσβειᾳ) and 'power' (δυνάμει) (509 b 8) (and so it is called ἡ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή — 511 b 7, and πάντων αὔτη ὀρθῶν τε καὶ καλῶν αἰτία — 517 c 2).

Things, as anyone can see, are getting very complicated. The key-word, 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 εἴδη *(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 παραδείγματα, 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 μῖμος (cf. 240 a 9, b 2) of a μὴ ὄν, i.e. of something which it itself *is not* (cf. a 9): of its εἶδος *qua* παράδειγμα (240 c 1-2). That is: an εἴδωλον is an ὄν (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 ὄν ἀληθινόν (a 9, b 2, 3, 5), the only 'real thing' (ὄντως ὄν —b 3), is the *model*, the *copy* being only an ὄν πως (b 9), a pretender, a μῖμος of it.

To conclude: for Plato 'being' has *grades;* that is: some ὄντα *are* more than others (cf. μᾶλλον ὄντα —*R.* 515 d 3). And those that are *more* are those that are ὄντως, i.e. the εἴδη *qua* παραδείγματα. ὄντως means then ἀληθῶς (cf. *Sph.* 240 b 10; cf. also *R.* 515 d: μᾶλλον ὄντα are ἀληθέστερα ὄντα): 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:

> ἔστιν οὖν δὴ κατ' ἐμὴν δόξαν πρῶτον διαιρετέον τάδε· τί τὸ ὂν ἀεὶ, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον, καὶ τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί, ὂν δὲ οὐδέποτε; τὸ μὲν δὴ νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτόν, ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὄν, τὸ δ' αὖ δόξῃ μετ' αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου δοξαστόν, γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, ὄντως δὲ οὐδέποτε ὄν (27 d 7-28 a 4) (6).

How should we take this distinction between τί τὸ ὂν ἀεί, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον and τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί, ὂν 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 δημιουργός (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 Demiurge (δημιουργός), as the αἰτία of the universe *qua* γιγνόμενον, and the Demiurge's choosing as the model (παράδειγμα) of the universe 'that which is always the same' (τὸ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον ἀεί), not 'something generated' (γεννητόν).

So, if the above quoted distinction (27 d 7-28 a 4) 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 παράδειγμα that is κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον ἀεί and the γεννητὸν παράδειγμα. *But this does not make any sense:* for how could the Demiurge take as *model* for the universe *he is about to frame* τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί, ὂν δὲ οὐδέποτε? How could he make a γιγνόμενον (i.e. the universe)

by looking at a γιγνόμενον ἀεί that is not an ὄν? Plato does not say it is *impossible*, he only says that if that was the case, the universe would have been οὐ καλόν (28 b 3). Now, *what* is that γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί, ὂν δὲ οὐδέποτε *qua* γεννητὸν παράδειγμα? The primordial given matter, one may argue, for that is a γιγνόμενον ἀεί which is not an ὄν, for it is in a state of ἀταξία (30 a 5), 'shaken' by chaotic δύναμεις (52 d-e, 53 a), not at rest (οὐχ ἡσυχίαν), 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 'τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί, ὂν δὲ οὐδέποτε', 'the universe *qua* γιγνόμενον' and 'the γεννητὸν παράδειγμα'.

Plato introduces the distinction from 27 d 7-28 a 4 by saying: ἔστιν οὖν δὴ κατ' ἐμὴν δόξαν *πρῶτον* διαιρετέον 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 τί τὸ ὂν ἀεὶ, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον ὄντως, is νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτόν, being ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὄν; and that τί τὸ γιγνόμενον μὲν ἀεί, ὂν δὲ οὐδέποτε is δόξῃ μετ' αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου δοξαστόν, being a γιγνόμενον καὶ ἀπολλύμενον, and so not an ὄντως ὄν. If this phrase does not refer to *what follows,* i.e. to the issue of *model-copy,* ὄντως ὄν cannot mean *to be as a model, real* (ἀληθινὸν), 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 ἀληθῶς (as Plato does in *Sph.* 240 b 10). What then does ὄντως mean here? The answer depends, in my view, upon 'νοήσει μετὰ λόγου περιληπτόν' and 'ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὄν'.

In the *Sophist,* at 248 a, Plato puts things in almost the same terms: man is, he claims there, through αἴσθησις, in κοινωνία with γένεσις; and, through λογισμός, in κοινωνία with ὄντως οὐσία; and he defines the ὄντως οὐσία as being ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως, and γένεσις as being ἄλλοτε ἄλλως. Now, this way of putting things (from *Sph.* 248 a and *Ti.* 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 ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως (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 ἀεὶ μένει κατὰ ταὐτά, 'that which always remains the same'.

(ii) He also claims *explicitly* that 'to be' means either 'to be ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως' or 'to be ἄλλοτε ἄλλως'; and that only 'to be ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως' is *actually (ὄντως)* 'to be'. This claim, however, states, *implicitly,* the meaning of *to be ὄντως.* 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 *Ti.* 27 d 7-28 a 4 says is this: as long as something *is* only τί τὸ γιγνόμενον ἀεί, 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 ὄντως δὲ οὐδέποτε ὄν, a *no-thing;* whereas as long as something *is* τί τὸ ὂν ἀεὶ, γένεσιν δὲ οὐκ ἔχον, 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 ὄντως ὄν (10). *(After* this distinction Plato introduces, *abruptly,* two other issues: the Demiurge as the αἰτία 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 εἶδος 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 εἶδος of couch, not a couch made by other carpenter. This reading, however, would imply that Plato claims here, at *Ti.* 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 (ὄντως ὄν); 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 ἀταξία (30 a 5), since it was 'shaken' by chaotic δύναμεις (52 d-e, 53 a), not at rest (οὐχ ἡσυχίαν) and moved in an irregular and disorderly way (ἀλλὰ κινούμενον πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως) (30 a). Being so, in a ceaseless ἀταξία, the primordial matter *exists,* but not *as something,* as a *determined* τι, as a *what;* it exists, but, being not *some-thing,* it exists as *no-thing,* as an ὄντως δὲ οὐδέποτε ὄν (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 εἴδη 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* εἴδωλα in general).
(ii) That whose *what* does *always* remains the same (e.g. the νοητὸν ζῷον, or the εἴδη in general) *is more* than that whose *what* remains the same only a *limited* period of time (e.g. the sensible things *qua* εἴδωλα 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 ἀγαθόν, as I said, is determined at 509 b as being *beyond* (ἐπέκεινα) οὐσία in 'dignity' (πρέσβειᾳ) and 'power' (δυνάμει). Now, if οὐσία is understood by Plato as *whatness,* then what does he mean by the phrase: τὸ ἀγαθόν is *beyond* (ἐπέκεινα) οὐσία in 'dignity' (πρέσβειᾳ) and 'power' (δυνάμει)?

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', πρεσβυγένεια, 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 ἀγαθόν is called ἡ

τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή and πάντων αὕτη ὀρθῶν τε καὶ <καλῶν αἰτία, respectively; cf. also 509 b 8, where it is said that τὸ ἀγαθόν provides, προσεῖναι, οὐσία of *all* εἴδη).

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 εἴδη — namely τὸ 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 τὸ ἀγαθόν is something μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι) (12). So, all that we can say about it is this.

> (i) For Plato the εἴδη 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 εἴδη; so, we may say, the *Republic* contains *in nuce* a view that will be thoroughly unfolded only later, in the *Sophist.)*
> (ii) τὸ ἀγαθόν (as 509 b implies) is that which determines *all* the εἴδη, i.e. the *totality* of εἴδη;
> (iii) τὸ ἀγαθόν (as 509 b states explicitly) is then that which determines the community of εἴδη.

4.2.2. The two μέθοδοι and their aims: 'determining the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of εἴδη' and 'determining τί ποτ' ἔστιν ἕκαστον εἶδος'

In the *Republic* Plato claims that dialectic has two aims: one is to apprehend τὸ 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'ἔστιν ἕκαστον (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 πάνυ θαυμαστόν puzzle brought forward by the given way in which τὸ λογιστικόν μανθάνει, 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 εἴδη, then we have to do two things: one is to attempt

to determine *what each* εἶδος *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* μέθοδοι (cf. 532 e 1: τίνες ὁδοί; cf. also 531 d 1 and 533 b 3, respectively). So:

> (i) if τὸ ἀγαθόν is the ἀρχή of *whatness;*
> (ii) then, the μέθοδος that aims at apprehending τὸ ἀγαθόν aims actually at apprehending the ἀρχή 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 ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή' (cf. 510 b 7, 511 b 3-c 2, 533 c 8) (because, as I claimed, the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή *is* τὸ ἀγαθόν) (13);
> (iv) the theory of εἴδη, however, is a ὑπόθεσις (cf. *Phd.* 100 a) in which *being* is understood as *whatness;* so, I construe
> (vi) the μέθοδος that aims at apprehending τὸ ἀγαθόν as a μέθοδος aimed at reaching the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the hypothetical theory of εἴδη, i.e. the ἀρχή 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 ὄν, which may be taken, I think, as *about what is the ἀρχή 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 εἴδη, 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 ἀρχή, in order to become firm [ἵνα βεβαιώσηται]' (533 c 7-d 1). (And then, after reaching the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή, 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 "dialectician is he who can view things together [συνοπτικός —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,* κοινωνία (15). This is what I shall attempt to prove in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

The theory of εἴδη (III): οὐσία as δύναμις κοινωνίας

In the *Phaedo* Plato claims that the εἴδη must be ἀσύνθετα, for, he argues, 'it is very likely [μάλιστα εἰκός] that what is ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ὡσαύτως [i.e. the εἴδη] is ἀσύνθετον' (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 ἀσύνθετα εἴδη. So, *malgré lui* (in a way), he had to accept that the εἴδη are, on the contrary, σύνθετα, i.e. in a κοινωνία. (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 κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων implies that the εἴδη are 'σύνθετα', *in the Phaedo's sense.)*

This idea, however, occurs in many dialogues. In the *Republic*, for instance, Plato speaks about the κόσμος τῶν εἴδων (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 (παράδειγμα —28 a 7, 37 c 8, 39 e 7, etc.) that contains in itself *all* 'intelligible creatures' (τὰ γὰρ τὰ νοητὰ ζῷα πάντα ἐκεῖνο ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιλαβόν ἔχει —30 c 7-8); in other words, all these intelligible creatures are — both individually and in their tribes (καθ' ἓν καὶ κατὰ γένη) — 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 παντελὲς ζῷον, 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 εἶδος) does not exist *separated* from the other 'intelligible creatures' (or εἴδη), 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 εἶδος is *connected* with *all* the others. Each εἶδος is connected only with some of the other εἴδη, with which it forms a γένος, a 'tribe' (cf. κατὰ γένη — 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 εἴδη are in a κοινωνία 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 μαθεῖν 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 τάξιν τῆς ἀταξίας; cf. also *R.* 500 c, where he says that the εἴδη 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 ἁρμονία, 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 δύναμις κοινωνίας.

5.2. The μέγιστα γένη

"Since some εἴδη blend with one another, and some not", Plato claims, "they might be said to be like [σχεδὸν οἷον] the letters of the alphabet [τὰ γράμματα], for some of these ἀναρμοστεῖ που πρὸς ἄλληλα, τὰ δὲ συναρμόττει" (252 e 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 εἴδη 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 εἴδη) combine with one another (τὰ μὲν τῶν γενῶν κοινωνεῖν ἐθέλειν ἀλλήλοις —254 b 7) and some will not (τὰ δὲ μή — 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' ὀλίγον —b 8) and some to a great extent (τὰ δ' ἐπὶ πολλὰ —b 9), whereas some combine with all (since there is nothing against their being combined with everything — τὰ δὲ διὰ πάντων οὐδὲν κωλύειν τοῖς πᾶσι 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: ὄν, ταὐτόν,

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 ὄν, ταὐτόν, θάτερον, κίνησις and στάσις, and their conclusions are:

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

5.2.1. τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον as the εἴδη that are in κοινωνία with all εἴδη

Plato claims that τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον διὰ πάντων κεκοινωνηκέναι (cf., *inter alia,* 255 e, 256 a and 259 a), for

> (i) τὸ ὄν is not the same thing as ταὐτὸν (255 c 3: ἀδύνατον ἄρα ταὐτὸν καὶ τὸ ὄν ἓν εἶναι), although τὸ ὄν is always in κοινωνία with ταὐτὸν (cf. 256 a 7-8: πάντα [ὄντα] partake, μετέχειν, of ταὐτόν); and
> (ii) τὸ ὄν is not the same thing as θάτερον (255 d 3-4: τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ θάτερον [...] πάμπολυ διεφερέτην), although τὸ ὄν is always in κοινωνία with θάτερον (cf. 259 a 5-6: τὸ τε ὄν καὶ θάτερον δία πάντων καὶ δι᾽ἀλλήλων διεληλυθότα...; he, however, puts this claim also in terms of 'partaking of the ἰδέα τῆς θατέρου' — 255 e; 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 ἕν (cf. *Sph.* 237 d), is something that is

ταὐτόν, 'the same as itself' (cf. 254 d 15: αὐτὸ δ' ἑαυτῷ ταὐτόν; cf. also 256 b 1: ταὐτοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτήν), 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. *Tht.* 185 a 11-2: "each [thing, e.g. sound or colour] is different [ἕτερον] from the other and the same [ταὐτόν] as itself").

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

(a) The level of the εἴδη of τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον.

First, Plato says that the very εἴδη of τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν 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 εἶδος that *is,* Plato seems to imply, *is* only because it is in κοινωνία with the εἶδος of τὸ ὄν; and so, it must be also in κοινωνία with the εἴδη of ταὐτόν and θάτερον. That is: the εἴδη of τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν 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 ὄντα in general.

For Plato the realm of existence is divided into two 'subrealms': that of εἴδη *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). That is: the sensible things are *copies* of εἴδη, and if all the εἴδη are in κοινωνία with the εἴδη of τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον, then all sensible things participate in these three εἴδη.

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

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

(i) One is that *being* in general means *whatness;* for that which the κοινωνίαι with ταὐτόν and θάτερον brings forth is precisely an *identity,* a *what;* so, to say that the very εἶδος of τὸ ὄν 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 ὄν with ταὐτόν and θάτερον.

In less abstract words: the *what* of every εἶδος (and so of every sensible thing) is due to the 'net of κοινωνίαι' in which it is 'caught'. This claim is *explicitly* formulated by Plato in the *Parmenides* 134 a: "[the εἴδη] are what they are with reference to one another and toward one another [αὐτὰ αὑτῶν καὶ πρὸς αὑτὰ ἐκεῖά τέ ἐστι], and so likewise are the things in our world [καὶ τὰ παρ' ἡμῖν ὡσαύτως πρὸς αὑτὰ]" (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 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 ὄν is first determined as τὸ κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἴτ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν εἴτ ' εἰς τὸ παθεῖν (247 d 8-e 1; cf. also 248 c 4-5: ἡ τοῦ πάσχειν ἢ δρᾶν δύναμις).
> (ii) κοινωνία, however, is determined in the same way as τὸ ὄν, 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 ὄν is therefore actually determined as a δύναμις κοινωνίας, that is, as the 'capacity of communion' (*Miteinander-sein-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 εἴτ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν εἴτ' 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 ὄν as τὸ κεκτημένον δύναμιν εἴτ ' εἰς τὸ ποιεῖν εἴτ' εἰς τὸ παθεῖν (247 d 8-e 1) as implying that 'to be' (τὸ ὄν) 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 ὄν as δύναμις κοινωνίας).

If so, however, what does this mean —that τὸ ὄν is determined as δύναμις 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 εἶδος (and so each sensible thing) is 'caught' in a *particular net of κοινωνίαι;* and this *net of κοινωνίαι* is what determines its *what* (6). Now, every κοινωνία in which an εἶδος is 'caught; has a 'direction', a *πρὸς τι*; and this πρός can be either πρὸς ἑαυτόν (cf. 256 b 1 —in which case we say that that εἶδος is in κοινωνία with ταὐτόν), or πρὸς ἕτερον (cf. 255 d 1 —in which case we say that that εἶδος is in κοινωνία with θάτερον). (At 255 d 1 Plato clearly determines the notion of θάτερον as 'that which is always relative to other', τὸ ἕτερον ἀεὶ πρὸς ἕτερον; cf. also d 5-6; that is: the 'state of being ἕτερον', i.e. 'other than' or 'different from', is the 'state of being in a *relation* to other', πρὸς ἕτερον.) The *identity* of an εἶδος, however, is due to the *κοινωνία with other εἴδη;* in other words: *whatness is due to otherness.* How then does Plato determine this notion of *otherness?*

5.2.3. ἕτερον 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 θάτερον ὄν (238 a 5), which in its turn is determined as εἰκών (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 εἴδη *qua* παραδείγματα and their sensible copies). The second part (which begins at 256) starts from the question of how an εἶδος is related to the *other* εἴδη. I cannot enter here into the details of the first part; I shall say, however, a few things about the second one.

Each εἶδος has its own 'identity', and so it is different from all the other εἴδη. All these other εἴδη appear first as *what that εἶδος is not,* i.e. as as a μὴ ὄν which is *indefinite;* this is what Plato says at

256 e 5-6: ἕκαστον [...] τῶν εἰδῶν [...] ἄπειρον δὲ πλήθει τὸ μὴ ὄν ("there is an indefinite number of εἴδη that each εἶδος is not") (7).

Each εἶδος, however, is 'caught' in a particular net of κοινωνίαι with *some* other εἴδη (and that is why it is said to be πολύ —cf. 256 e5: ἕκαστον [...] τῶν εἰδῶν πολὺ μέν ἐστι τὸ ὄν) (cf. also *R.* 476 a: "in itself each εἶδος is one, but by virtue of their κοινωνία with actions and bodies and with one another they present themselves everywhere, each as a multiplicity of aspects"). That is: each εἶδος is in κοινωνία only with a *part* of *what it is not;* and this κοινωνία with a *part* of *what it is not* is what determines its *what* (8).

So, says Plato, τὸ μὴ ὄν, although it is what one may call the ἐναντίον τοῦ ὄντος, is not 'nothing', but ἕτερον μόνον (cf. 257 b 3-4) (9). And as ἕτερον, τὸ μὴ ὄν is present in *all* ὄντα (τὸ μὴ ὄν [...] κατὰ πάντα τὰ ὄντα διεσπαρμένον —260 b 7-8; in other words: ἡ θατέρου φύσις ἄγει εἰς οὐσίαν τὸ μὴ ὄν —256 e 2-3) (therefore we may rightly, ὀρθῶς, say that everything, σύμπαντα, is and is not —cf. 256 e 2-3) (10).

5.2.4. The two kinds of ἕτερον: the ἄλλο τι and the ἀντιτιθέμενον

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

Now, at 257 c 7-8 Plato says that ἡ θατέρου φύσις is cut up (κατακεκερματισμένα) into little bits, like ἐπιστήμη. That is: exactly as the πολλαὶ τέχναι and ἐπιστῆμαι 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 εἶδος is in κοινωνία only with *some* other εἴδη, and these other εἴδη 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 ἕτερον as a mere ἄλλο τι and (b) the ἕτερον as an ἀντιτιθέμενον.

(a) An εἶδος, say x, is 'caught' in a κοινωνία with some εἴδη that are just other than itself (and each one of these εἴδη is a mere 'other' than x; for instance: τὸ καλὸν is in a κοινωνία with τὸ δίκαιον —cf. *inter alia Alc.* 1, 115 a ff —and in this case the latter is, for the former, a mere ἄλλο τι).

(b) But, claims Plato, an εἶδος may be in a κοινωνία with an εἶδος that is *its own other*. To support this claim Plato choses the example of 'the beautiful' (τὸ καλὸν) And he claims that [τὸ] μὴ καλὸν [...] οὐκ ἄλλου τινὸς ἕτερον ἐστιν ἢ τῆς τοῦ καλοῦ φύσεως (257 d 11). That is: some εἴδη have an ἀντιτιθέμενον, 'something which is put opposite', and this *kind* of ἕτερον, namely the ἀντιτιθέμενον, is, says Plato, a part (μόριον) of θάτερον (257 d 7) (12).

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

If so, however, *what* is an εἶδος? If its *what* is determined by the particular 'net' of κοινωνίαι in which it is 'caught' with *other* εἴδη, it is a συναμφότερον, a 'compound'. But, if it is a συναμφότερον, does it have *parts?* Or it is like a knot? And *what* does the *κοινωνία* between two εἴδη actually mean? A co-presence? An adjoining, as the analogy with letters suggests? But if an εἶδος 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 εἴδη?' and 'What is an εἶδος if its *what* is determined by the κοινωνίαι with other εἴδη?' — remain, in my view, unanswered. Plato's discussions of the notions of ὅλον, ἕν and μέρος (cf. for instance *Prm.* 158 c, or *Sph.* 245 b), of letters and syllables (cf. *Tht.* 201 ff., *Plt.* 277 a-278 e, *Phlb.* 18 a ff., etc.), and of the κοινωνία τῶν εἰδῶν itself do not, I believe, offer any firm answer to the above mentioned questions.

5.2.5. The εἴδη 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 ὄν (254 d 10), ταὐτόν and θάτερον (255 b) —cannot be 'combined' with each other (they are, says Plato, ἀμείκτω πρὸς ἀλλήλω — 254 d 7-8; cf. also 250 a); and

(b) κίνησις is somehow in communion with both ὄν, ταὐτόν, θάτερον and στάσις; that is:
(i) κίνησις is not ταὐτόν and also ταὐτόν (256 a 10-11);
(ii) κίνησις is not στάσις and also στάσις (256 b 6-c 4);
(iii) κίνησις is not θάτερον and also θάτερον (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 ταὐτόν 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 μέγιστα γένη (τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον), the discussion of κίνησις and στάσις covers more than one level; here —(a) the level of the εἴδη of κίνησις and στάσις; and (b) that of εἴδη and their sensible copies in general.

(a) The εἴδη of κίνησις and στάσις are in κοινωνία with both τὸ ὄν (254 d 10), ταὐτόν 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 e 11; 256 c 6), and they are ἀμείκτω πρὸς ἀλλήλω (254 d 7), and ἐναντία (250 a 8).

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

(i) On the one hand, this claim refers to 'what has been argued earlier' (πρότερον ἀπόδειξιν —256 c 1), i.e. to the fact that within the phenomenon of knowledge (γίγνώσκειν), something which is κίνητον (i.e. ψυχή, ζωή, νοῦς — 249 a 9; or, in short: ψυχὴ γιγνόσκειν — 248 a and d) is in a *sui generis* κοινωνία with something which is ἀκίνητον (i.e. the εἴδη — 249 c 1; or, in short: οὐσία γιγνόσκεσθαι — 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 (πῃ), in κοινωνία with στάσις.

(α) As I argued, for Plato the realm of existence in general is divided into two 'subrealms': that of εἴδη *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 εἶδος that *is, is* only because it is in κοινωνία with the εἶδος of τὸ ὄν; and so, it must be also in κοινωνία with the εἴδη of ταὐτόν and θάτερον. But, every εἶδος is ἀεὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ 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 εἶδος of στάσις. (And, if for the *what* of an εἶδος is responsible precisely the 'net' of κοινωνίαι in which that εἶδος is 'caught', we may say that *that which remains the same* is actually this 'net' of κοινωνίαι.) The sensible things, however, are *copies* of εἴδη; so, if all the εἴδη are in κοινωνία with the εἴδη of τὸ ὄν,

ταὐτόν and θάτερον, then all sensible things participate to these three εἴδη. But, if all εἴδη are in κοινωνία with the εἶδος of στάσις, do sensible things also participate to this εἶδος?

(β) We know that for Plato a sensible thing, a γιγνόμενον ὄν, is something κίνητον; but this γιγνόμενον ὄν *is,* only because it 'embodies' an εἶδος, 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 εἴδωλα is, somehow (πῃ), in κοινωνία with the ἀκίνητον realm of the εἴδη. (Which does not imply that the εἴδη 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 [ὡσαύτος] can never change [μεταβάλλοι] or be moved [κινοῖτο]". But, in a way, the realm of the copies, which is *kinetic,* is 'touched' by στάσις, 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 κοινωνίαι', and this 'net' of κοινωνίαι determines the 'what' of each ὄν; and an ὄν is always in κοινωνία with ταὐτόν (i.e. with itself), with θάτερον (i.e. with other ὄντα), and with either στάσις (in which case it is an εἶδος) or with κίνησις (in which case it is a γιγνόμενον ὄν that is a 'copy' of an εἶδος). Now, an ὄν that is in κοινωνία with στάσις (i.e. an εἶδος) is (somehow) in 'communion' with (i) ὄντα that are in κοινωνία with κίνησις (in the way in which a model is in 'communion' with its copies); and with (ii) other ὄντα that are in κοινωνία with στάσις (i.e. with other εἴδη). (But, if every ὄν is always 'caught' in a κοινωνία with ταὐτόν *and* θάτερον and with *either* κίνησις *or* στάσις, then it seems that only the κοινωνίαι with ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον are, so to speak, 'universal', whereas the κοινωνίαι with κίνησις and στάσις are actually not. That is: only the εἴδη of ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον διὰ πάντων κοινωνοῦσιν, being thus *like the vowels.)*

γένος and εἶδος/ἰδέα seem to be synonymous (θάτερον, for instance, is called both γένος and ἰδέα — cf. 256 b 8 and 255 e, respectively). Yet γένος points out something that it is not present in εἶδος/ἰδέα, 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 εἴδη of ὄν, ταὐτόν, θάτερον, κίνησις and στάσις *μέγιστα γένη;* and so, he suggests that *every* ὄν is in κοινωνίαι with ταὐτόν, θάτερον and κίνησις *or* στάσις, which are therefore its *ultimate origins,* its μέγιστα γένη. (The εἴδη, 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, στάσις and *time?* This, however, is a question I cannot tackle here.

To sum up so far:

(i) In order to solve the πάνυ θαυμαστόν 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 ἀλλήλοις, 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 εἶδος 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 ἀγαθόν) is that which determines the community of εἴδη. This ἀρχή, however, remains something μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι (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 εἶδος (and so each sensible thing) is 'caught' in a *particular net of κοινωνίαι;* and this *net of κοινωνίαι* 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 ἕτερον *qua* μὴ ὄν: the ἄλλο τι 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 εἶδος if its *what* is determined by the κοινωνίαι with other εἴδη?' are two questions that remain, in my

view, unanswered (and their 'object' remains something μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι.) (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 ἕκαστον εἶδος' (Chapter 7). But first (Chapter 6), I would like to take into account the topic of ἀλήθεια — which is linked with both the theory of εἴδη and with 'τί ποτ' ἔστιν ἕκαστον εἶδος'.

CHAPTER SIX

The notion of ἀλήθεια

6.1. The two fields of knowledge: τὸ αἰσθητόν *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 εἴδη, through the bodily senses, or with the εἴδη themselves, through speaking (cf. *inter alia Phd.* 99 d ff. and *Tht.* 185 b-186 a). But, not all the εἴδη 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 εἴδη. (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 αἰσθητόν and that of τὸ λογιστικόν (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 εἴδη, 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 δημιουργός, a ζωγράφος, a painter, who start to paint [γράφει] in them images [εἰκόνες] of the λεγόμενα; and then one sees somehow [ὁρᾷ πως] in himself [ἐν αὑτῷ] images [εἰκόνες] of what he previously opined or asserted [τὰς τῶν δοξασθέντων καὶ λεχθέντων εἰκόνας]", my paraphrase) (2). (In the *Sophist,* at 234 c ff., Plato says that one may 'deceive' other people not only with ὅρατα 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; and at 235 a ff., the τέχνη σοφιστική is called a τέχνη εἰδωλοποιική, although the sophist, we are told, is concerned with φαντάσματα, 236 b 7, not with 'realistic' εἴκονα, a 8, and so his τέχνη εἰδωλοποιική is actually a τέχνη

φανταστική, c 4.) 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 αἴσθησις to that of ὄψις, 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 πάνυ 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. *Tht.* 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 [ἀληθῆ], the result is that true opinion [ἀληθὴς δόξα] and ἀληθεῖς λόγοι spring up in us, while when the internal scribe [γραμματεύς] that I have suggested writes what is false [ψευδῆ] 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 διανοεῖσθαι, which takes place

within the 'medium' of λέγειν (cf. *Tht.* 185 c, 189 e-190 a, *Sph.* 263 e, 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 αἰσθητόν) 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 τῆς γλώττης δύναμις, 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 αἰσθητόν 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 [ἐφάπτηται] with anything that has dispersed existence [σκεδαστὴν οὐσιαν] 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 ταὐτόν or ἕτερον in respect to any given thing, whatever it may be, either in the world of τὰ γιγνόμενα, or in the world of τὰ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντα ἀεί. Now whenever the λόγος takes place concerning the ταὐτόν and θάτερον of an ὄν which belongs to the sphere of τὸ αἰσθητόν, then arise δόξαι and πίστεις, which are βέβαιοι and ἀληθεῖς. But whenever the λόγος takes place concerning the ταὐτόν and θάτερον of an ὄν which belongs to the sphere of τὸ λογιστικόν, then νοῦς and ἐπιστήμη are necessarily achieved [which are, most obviously, also βέβαιοι and ἀληθεῖς].

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. οὐσία, ταὐτόν and θάτερον — 41 d); and it *copies*, in its revolutions (περιφοραί), 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 (περιφοραί) a λόγος with itself, which deals either with the field of τὸ αἰσθητόν 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.

(i) First, it says that seeing is a process of 'writing true or false λόγοι 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. σαφῶς, 38 c 5); in other words, it is this accompanying *speaking* that ἄγειν 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 αἰσθητόν

As I argued, Plato distinguishes between two main fields of knowledge, that of τὸ αἰσθητόν (or the field of embodied —i.e. non-abstract — εἴδη) and that of τὸ ἀναίσθητον (or the field of non-embodied —i.e. abstract —εἴδη); 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' αὑτὸ] or δι' αἰσθήσεως' — my translation). But here in the *Sophist* he speaks about τὸ λέγειν and τὸ ἀληθὲς/ψευδὲς 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 αἰσθητόν* 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 ὀνομάζειν. 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 (ὀνόματα or λόγοι), namely nouns (called also ὀνόματα) and verbs (ῥήματα) (cf. 261 e 5-262 a 1, 262 b-e, 263 d; cf. also *Tht.* 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 (ὀνομάζειν —262 d 3), that 'deserves' the name λόγος

(262 d 5-6) (here by λόγος is meant, obviously, the act of speaking) (5).

Now, a σύνθεσις of words (or a λεγόμενον), 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 λεγόμενον, however, is a λέγειν τι κατὰ τινός, i.e. a σύνθεσις between a 'subject' (the καθ' οὗ λέγεταί 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 (α) that some εἴδη συμφωνεῖ ἀλλήλοις, while others do not (cf. 253 b 11); and that some words too, in their turn, συναρμόττουσιν 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 συμπλοκὴ 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* συμπλοκὴ 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 ὅρατα 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 καὶ τῶν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα— c 4), γένεσις and οὐσία (c 8), the laws or any political matter (νόμοι [καὶ] σύμπαντα τὰ πολιτικὰ —d 1), and each and every τέχνη (d 5) (so that it appears that nothing has been left out — φαίνεται γοῦν δὴ σχεδὸν οὐδὲν ὑπολιπεῖν). 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* συμπλοκὴ τῶν εἴδων.

Now, the τέχνη σοφιστική, says Plato, is a τέχνη εἰδωλοποιική (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 πεφυκέναι 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 εἰδῶν. 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* συμπλοκὴ τῶν εἰδῶν, or a speaking whose σύνθεσις of words 'depicts' a *fantastic* συμπλοκὴ τῶν εἰδῶν) 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 παντὶ ὁμοιοῦν], *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 συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις, the resulting ἁρμονία/συμφωνία refers (as I argued in 2.2.2., b, β) to a σύνθετον πρᾶγμα, i.e. to a statement (cf. *Sph.* 262 e 1: τὰ [λεγόμενα] ἁρμόττοντα λόγον ἀπηργάσατο), which is determined as a succession (τάξις) of words (τὰ ἐφεξῆς λεγόμενα — 261 d 8) that has *meaning* (τὰ λεγόμενα δηλοῦντα/σημαίνοντα — 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 εἶδος appear *as* being determined by any εἶδος; but, only 'within the limits of possible comparison', that is: we can, through a σύνθεσις of words, let

any εἶδος appear *as* being determined by any εἶδος *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 εἴδη 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 ἀληθές and τὸ ψευδὲς λεγόμενον.

The fact that besides the realm of reality ('made' by the actual, given way in which the εἴδη *are* 'combined') there is a realm of φαντάσματα ('made' by all the intelligible ways, however fantastic, in which the εἴδη *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 ἀληθὴς τὰ ὄντα ὡς ἔστιν, i.e. the λόγος in which things are spoken as they are is ἀληθής).

(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 ψεῦδος *qua* lie, it occurs explicitly —cf. e 4-5: [...] καὶ ἄλλου ὁμοιοῦντος καὶ ἀποκουπτομένου εἰς φῶς ἄγειν); in short: if so, then that λεγόμενον is ψευδές (cf. 263 b 7: ὁ δὲ δὴ [λόγος] ψευδὴς ἕτερα τῶν ὄντων, i.e. the λόγος in which things are spoken other than they are is ψευδής). (The issue of ψεῦδος 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 σύνθεσις of a 'subject' and a 'predicate' may be said, *generally speaking,* to be a δηλοῦν, 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 αἰσθητόν the 'appearance as' of the 'subject' is not the same as in speaking about τὸ ἀναίσθητον.

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 αἰσθητόν.

(i) When we speak, there occurs in our souls a δημιουργός, a ζωγράφος, a painter, who start to paint [γράφει] in them images [εἰκόνες] of the λεγόμενα; and then one sees somehow [ὁρᾷ πως] in himself [ἐν αὐτῷ] images [εἰκόνες] of what he previously opined or asserted [τὰς τῶν δοξασθέντων καὶ λεχθέντων εἰκόνας].
(ii) [... So,] the images [εἰκόνες] 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 αἰσθητόν), 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: ἢ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστι γιγνόμενον παρ' ἡμῖν; σφόδρα μὲν οὖν). (This point is also made in the *Sophist:* at 234 c ff., where Plato says that one may deceive other people not only with ὅρατα 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; 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' εἴκονα, 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 αἰσθητόν — 'brings something before eyes', πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποιεῖ, cf. *Rh.* 1410 b 33 and 1411 b 21-25; cf. also *Po.* 1459 a 7-8: τὸ γὰρ εὖ μεταφέρειν τὸ τὸ ὅμοιον θεωρεῖν ἐστιν; and it is also adopted by various modern authors —for details see Ricocur'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 αἰσθητόν, truth appears as a *criterion of truth,* understood as the *correspondence* between an image (either as an εἴδωλον proper or as an εἴδωλον λεγόμενον) and that 'reality' which the 'image' refers to. Now, how did Plato put things in the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον?

6.3. ἀλήθεια 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 αἰσθητόν'. Speaking about τὸ ἀναίσθητον can be done through *abstract* or *non-abstract terms;* I shall deal with the question of 'speaking about 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 αἰσθητόν 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 λεγόμενων, 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 λεγόμενα that συμφωνοῦσιν ἀλλήλοις are those λεγόμενα 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 λεγόμενα

with 'reality' via another means of knowledge; here, the only criterion of truth is the συμφωνία of our λεγόμενα: 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 μέθοδοι that ἀληθεύουσι τί ποτ' ἔστί ἕκαστον εἶδος

As I argued in Chapters Four and Five, Plato claims that, once we accept the theory of εἴδη, we have to determine (i) *what each εἶδος is* (cf. *R.* 531 d, 532 e); (ii) *what τὸ ἀγαθόν is* (which is 'the limit of the intelligible') (cf. *R.* 533 b); and (iii) *what the εἶδος 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 *particular* μέθοδοι (cf. *R.* 532 e 1); but Plato does not tell us much about these μέθοδοι — with the exception of those that may lead us to the determination of *what each εἶδος is.*

7.1. ὁρίζειν τὰ εἴδη: the quest for definitions

For Plato, as I argued, the 'is', the *ens* of a *res,* equals τι, *quidditas, whatness;* but for him not *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 ἀρετή (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 εἶδος 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 φύσις and οὐσία.)

For Plato, however (like for Socrates — see 0.1.3.), the 'object' of knowledge is the *κοινωνίαι* of 'things'; for what we what we actually know are *relations* between εἴδη (cf. *Cra.* 438 e: "What other way can there be of knowing [things], except through one another [δι' ἀλλήλων], when they are akin to each other [συγγενῆ] and through themselves?"; and *Tht.* 186 a, "[the εἴδη] seem [...] to be things whose being [οὐσία] is considered, one in comparison with another [πρὸς ἄλληλα], by the soul [...]"; these two passages *may* be taken as covering the knowing of εἴδη by both seeing and speaking; yet most of the places in which this idea is pointed out, that to know is to

know the κοινωνίαι τῶν εἴδων, 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 εἴδη can or cannot combine [κοινωνεῖν δύναται]") (2). So, to know the 'essential side' of an εἶδος is to know its essential κοινωνίαι with other εἴδη.

In his early and middle periods, Plato believed that the λεγόμενον which reveals the 'essential what of something' (the λόγος τῆς οὐσίας, which should be distinguished from a mere description — cf. *Lg.* 895 d 4) is a ὁρισμός (cf. also *R.* 507 b 2-3: 'we say that many things are and define them through a λόγος [διορίζομεν τῷ λόγῳ]' — my paraphrase). In the *Meno,* for instance, although the so-called theory of εἴδη is not *fully* developed, Plato claims very clearly that an εἶδος can be expressed by a λεγόμενον *qua* ὁρισμός (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 ὁρισμός 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 ἱκανὸς ὁρισμός. 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 ὁρισμός). Their results, nevertheless, are not entirely negative, for they state a few aspects of the ὁρισμός question.

(i) One is that a ὁρισμός 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 ὁρισμός is a λεγόμενον which attempts at showing the essential κοινωνίαι of an εἶδος with other εἴδη.

(ii) Another one is that the search for these essential κοινωνίαι starts from something already known, from a προγιγνωσκόμενον, 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 ἱκανὸς ὁρισμός 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 ἱκανὸς ὁρισμός 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 γελοῖον, ἄτοπον, ἀδύνατον or ἄλογον).

What should we do then, if we do not want to give up our attempt to find a ἱκανὸς ὁρισμός? 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 ἀπορίαι we reached. In the *Meno,* however, he introduces a quite promising μέθοδος; but this μέθοδος is not, as it might appear to be at first sight, aimed at reaching a definition. This μέθοδος has a less ambitious task.

7.2. The μέθοδος from the Meno

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

This 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 χωρίον 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 *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] *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, *can* be so inscribed], and if this is impossible

another conclusion follows [Thomas, 1980, 168; for Butcher's diagram see Annex I, 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 I, 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 e-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-e 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-c 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 ὁρισμός, but they all fail. In the *Meno* the topic of ὁρισμός 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 κοινωνίαι of the εἶδος of virtue with other εἴδη, but on establishing a particular feature of virtue on the ground of its κοινωνίαι with other εἴδη). That is: the μέθοδος introduced here does not actually aim at reaching a definition: it aims not at finding the essential κοινωνίαι of an εἶδος, but at establishing a few particular κοινωνίαι of it.

Secondly, it introduces a trick, which is based on the use of ὑποθέσεις 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 ἀπαγωγή). (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 ὑπόθησις μένει 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 defendable 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 ἄλογον *(Hp. Ma.* 303 c 3) or ἀδύνατον *(Hp. Ma.* 303 d 4) (cf. also *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 ἄλογον or ἀδύνατον, but because it is ἄτοπον or γελοῖον.) (An example of such a *reductio ad absurdum* occurs also in the *Parmenides* (13).)

Now, as I said, the μέθοδος introduced here in the *Meno* does not actually aim at reaching a definition, i.e. at finding the essential κοινωνίαι of an εἶδος, but at establishing a few particular κοινωνίαι of it. Why did Plato change his focus? The clearest answer, as far as I know, is to be found in the *Parmenides.*

7.3. The μέθοδος from the Parmenides

The *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 *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 *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', εἰ ἔν ἐστι —137 c-160 b), but also the consequences of its contradictory, non-y ('if one is not', εἰ ἓν μὴ ἔστι — 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 εἴδη; but this theory brings forward other puzzles. Yet (as Plato made Zeno say in the first section of the *Parmenides),* we have to choose the view that has 'less ridiculous consequences'; that is: the consequences of the theory of εἴδη are 'less ridiculous' than the consequence implied by the assumption that the εἴδη do not exist (cf. *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 *Tht.* 183 a-b).

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

> (iii) "You [, Socrates, says Parmenides,] are undertaking to define [ὁρίζεσθαι] 'beautiful', 'just', 'good' and each of the εἴδη [too soon], before you have had a [preliminary] exercise [πρὶν γυμνασθῆναι]" (135 c 8-d 1; cf. also 136 a, c).
> (iv) This preliminary γυμνασία —'without which ἀλήθεια will escape you' (d 6) and which consists of 'speaking about εἴδη' (e 1-4) —should aim at checking the consequences of both (α) the ὑπόθεσις that states the existence of an εἶδος and (β) of its contradictory, i.e. of the ὑπόθεσις that states the non-existence of that εἶδος (e 8-136 a 2). That is: "whenever you hypothesize that an [εἶδος] 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 [εἴδη] 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 [εἶδος] you may select, whether you have hypothesized the [εἶδος] to exist or not to exist" (136 b-c). (One may say that this quotation is tendentious, because the word εἶδος 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 ὁρισμός of an εἶδος? Because, Plato says, we attempt at achieving such a ὁρισμός 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 εἶδος exists or not; if we are not sure whether an εἶδος 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 ὁρισμός of an εἶδος?

What this γυμνασία actually offers in the end is not a mere likely conclusion about the existence or the non-existence of an εἶδος. 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 εἶδος. But it is not focussed on the *essential* κοινωνίαι of an εἶδος, as a ὁρισμός is; it is, on the contrary, a διέξοδος τε καὶ πλάνη διὰ πάντων [τῶν εἰδῶν] (136 e 1-2), 'a circuitous and exhaustive wandering [through the εἴδη]' (as Robinson 1953, 277 translates) —i.e. it is focussed on *all* the κοινωνίαι that a particular εἶδος (and its ἀντιτιθέμενον, its 'opposite') has with other εἴδη (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 εἶδος (i.e. its 'essential' *what,* namely its *essential* κοινωνίαι with other εἴδη), until we have a view of *all* the κοινωνίαι that that εἶδος has with other εἴδη.

Yet why should we consider the κοινωνίαι of both an εἶδος and its ἀντιτιθέμενον — say, of both ἕν and πολλά, or καλόν and κακόν? The answer comes in the *Sophist:* the *what* of an εἶδος is determined by its κοινωνίαι with *other* εἴδη; and one of these *other* εἴδη is precisely its ἀντιτιθέμενον (cf. 257 d) (14). In other words: what the γυμνασία from the *Parmenides* aims at is a determination of *all* the κοινωνίαι that a particular εἶδος has with other εἴδη —including with its very ἀντιτιθέμενον.

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 a ἱκανὸς ὁρισμός, ends with one; but here, the *form* of ἱκανὸς 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. ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον as that which is primarily spoken. The συναγωγή and διαίρεσις of speaking

In the *Sophist* Plato claims that *speaking* is about εἴδη, and that there is a particular κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων (cf. 252 a-e, 259 e-260 a). Now, the dialectician, i.e. the one who has achieved actual knowledge about εἴδη 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 e 1); to discern, that is,

> (i) first, the εἶδος which is 'present' in many (μίαν ἰδέαν διὰ πολλῶν) (διὰ πολλῶν means probably 'in many γιγνόμενα'); and then
> (ii) the many εἴδη which are different from each other, but "embraced from without by one εἶδος" (ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἔξωθεν περιεχομένας); and then
> (iii) the one εἶδος which 'evolved' in a unity through many wholes (καὶ μίαν αὖ δι' ὅλων πολλῶν ἐν ἑνὶ ξυνημμένην) (δι' ὅλων πολλῶν means, I think, 'through many εἴδη'); and, finally,
> (iv) the εἴδη that are entirely apart and separate (καὶ πολλὰς χωρὶς πάντῃ διωρισμένας).
>
> (253 d)

Thus, by doing so, the dialectician will not "take the same [ταὐτόν] εἶδος for a different [ἕτερον] one or a different one for the same" (253 d). And that means, *inter alia,* that *speaking* in general deals, ultimately, with τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον (which is *explicitly* expressed in *Ti.* 37 a-c).

Now, in some dialogues (*Phdr.* 249 b-c, 265 d-266 c, 273 e; *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) A συναγωγή is to 'discern' a μία ἰδέα διὰ πολλῶν εἰδῶν, i.e. to 'see' the εἶδος that 'embraces from without other εἴδη' (as the *Sophist* 253 d 7-9 suggests; cf. also 250 b); that is, 'to ἄγειν τὰ πολλαχῇ διεσπαρμένα [εἴδη] into a single ἰδέα ' (265 d 3) (and this συνορᾶσθαι — cf. συνορῶντα, d 3 — of a single ἰδέα is what provides clarity to speaking, τὸ σαφές, d 6, and what makes possible the reaching of an agreement, ὁμολογούμενον, d 7).

(b) After one sees a μία ἰδέα διὰ πολλῶν εἰδῶν, claims Plato, one has to perform a διαίρησις, i.e. a separation (cf. ὁριζόμενος — *Phdr.* 265 d 4) of the εἴδη 'embraced from without' by that single ἰδέα. (But this 'division κατ' εἴδη', e 1, should be made κατ' ἄρθρα ᾗ πέφυκεν, 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 ἰδέα are like a *body,* i.e. that they are *structured in a particular way;* in other words, that they form a particular net of κοινωνίαι.)

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 εἶδος 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 συναγωγή and διαίρεσις is a business of *speaking* in general ('of λέγειν καὶ φρονεῖν' — *Phdr.* 266 b 4-5; 'of the τέχνη τῶν λόγων' —*Phdr.* 273 d 7, e 3; 'of λέγειν' —*Phdr.* 273 e 5; cf. also *Phlb.* 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 συναγωγαί and διαιρέσεις of various εἴδη, which 'establishes' their κοινωνίαι;
> (ii) and secondly, that *only* the philosophers, in *their speaking*, through *their* συναγωγαί and διαιρέσεις, are able to find out the *actual* κοινωνίαι that exists between εἴδη (cf. the occurrences of πεφυκέναι at *Phdr.* 265 e 2: to divide εἴδη 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 εἴδη, 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 διαίρεσις).

7.4.2. διακρίνειν τὰ γένη τῶν εἴδων

The two 'operations' of speaking, namely συναγωγή and διαίρεσις, cannot be of much help in our attempt to determine the *essential* 'what' of an εἶδος, for they can only provide an 'enumeration' of the 'parts' of an εἶδος (i.e. the εἴδη 'embraced from without by an εἶδος' —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 *Tht.* 207 a ff.). So, what should we do if we want to know the *essential* 'what' of an εἶδος (assuming that we have successfully practiced the γυμνασία from the *Parmenides)?*

At the beginning of the *Sophist* Socrates raises the question of διακρίνειν, in regard to their γένος, the φιλοσοφός and the θεός (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 διαιρεῖσθαι, in regard to their γένος, the φιλοσοφός, 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 φιλοσοφός and θεός, Socrates says then about his second question (that about distinguishing between the φιλοσοφός, the

πολιτικός and the σοφιστής) 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 φῦλον, 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 εἴδη). Now, the γένος of the angler, is, schematically, the following (see 219 a-221 c): τέχνη, κτῆσις, χειρωτική, θηρευτική, ζῳοθηρική, ἔνυδρον, ἁλιευτική. That is: the εἶδος of angler is 'embraced from without' by the εἴδη (cf. 219 a 8 where κτῆσις is called εἶδος) of τέχνη, κτῆσις κτλ. (When two εἴδη descend from a common ancestor —i.e. from the same εἶδος — they are *related,* συγγενῆ. This is the case with the εἴδη 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: κτῆσις, χειρωτική, θηρευτική —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, εὔγνωστον, 'well known' (218 e 2). That is: διακρίνειν the γένος of the εἶδος 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 εἶδος, we will reach precisely the answer to the τί ἔστιν question (at 217 b 2 the expression 'διαιρεῖσθαι the γένος of the the φιλοσοφός, the πολιτικός and the σοφιστής' is changed with 'διορίσασθαι τί ποτ' ἔστιν each one of them', which suggests that the answer to the question 'What is the εἶδος x?' is given by διακρίνειν the γένος of the εἶδος x); in other words, this 'operation' of διακρίνειν the γένος of an εἶδος provides precisely the 'essential' *what* of that εἶδος, i.e. its 'essential' κοινωνίαι with other εἴδη. In short: the essential 'what' of an εἶδος resides in its γένος (in its *seinsmäsigen Abkunft,* '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 εἶδος of the sophist: first, there is a συναγωγή of all the 'individual' sophists into a μία ἰδέα, which is the τέχνη σοφιστική; in other words: the εἶδος 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 εἶδος of the sophist appears in its 'essential' *what:* this εἶδος 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 διαίρεσις 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 συναγωγαί and διαιρέσεις of various εἴδη, which 'establishes' a κοινωνία of them. Now, what Plato says is that *only* the philosophers, in *their speaking* about various εἴδη, through *their* συναγωγαί 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 γένη of εἴδη is the most appropriate one for such a task.)

7.5. νοεῖν τὰ εἴδη

On the one hand Plato claims that one cannot attempt to disclose completely an εἶδος (τελέως ἐπιστήμη — VII 342 e; cf. also VII 342 e and *Lg.* 966 b) if one does not take into account its εἴδωλον, ὄνομα

and λόγοι. On the other hand, he argues that alone by θεωρεῖν (which 'provide' the εἴδωλον) and λέγειν (which 'provide' the ὄνομα and the λόγος) one cannot 'reveal' how that εἶδος ἀληθῶς ἐστιν (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 νενοήμενα —cf. VII 344 c). He says, however, a few things about it.

> (a) First, the act of νοεῖν occurs *suddenly* (ἐξαίφνης —cf. *Smp.* 210 e 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 ὀνόματα, λόγοι, ὄψεις and αἰσθήσεις (VII 344 b; cf. also *Smp.* 210 e 3).
> (c) The very act of νοεῖν is most often described in terms of an αἴσθησις, i.e. of a *full sight* (κατόψις —*Smp.* 210 e 4; cf. also καθορᾶν —211 b 6, e 1) which reveals an εἶδος as it is (cf. *Smp.* 210 e, 211 b, e) (17). An εἶδος, 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 μονοειδὲς ἀεὶ ὄν" (*Smp.* 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 εἶδος 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 εἶδος, 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 μέθοδοι which aim at disclosing the — 'essential' or not — κοινωνίαι τῶν εἰδῶν, e.g. the

μέθοδος of διακρίνειν the γένη of εἴδη, are also *ways,* μέθοδοι, toward the act of νοεῖν τὰ εἴδη. But this would be to go too far; for the act of νοεῖν τὰ εἴδη 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 κατόψις of νοεῖν grasp the κοινωνίαι in which a particular εἶδος is 'caught' with other εἴδη? Or does it grasp an *isolated* εἶδος?

The expression κατόψις *(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 occurence 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 κατόψις supports the idea that in the act of νοεῖν there are grasped the κοινωνίαι in which a particular εἶδος is 'caught'. On the other hand, the expression αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτὸ μεθ' αὑτοῦ μονοειδὲς ἀεὶ ὄν (*Smp.* 211 a), which refers to an εἶδος revealed by νοεῖν, *suggests* a 'seeing of *one* εἶδος'.

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 μέθοδοι

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 εἴδη (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 εἶδος 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 εἴδη, which states that the εἴδη are the only objects of knowledge and that they are a sort of παραδείγματα; 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 εἴδη being is understood as *whatness* and that *whatness* is determined

by the κοινωνία of εἴδη; and it states that we should go beyond the assumptions of the theory and reach its ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή, (called τὸ ἀγαθόν), which is the cause of *whatness* in general. This δύναμις, however, remains something μόγις ὁρᾶσθαι, 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 εἴδη being is understood as *whatness,* and that *whatness* is determined by the κοινωνία of εἴδη). 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 εἴδων?' 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 εἴδη are in a κοινωνία echoes the first step of the μέθοδος described in the *Phaedo,* for he argues like that: 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.)

(b) Now, if we accept the theory of εἴδη, in spite of all the difficulties it raises, *knowledge* in general becomes a *question of knowing the εἴδη.* The question becomes thus: how are we to know each εἶδος. Each εἶδος, 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 ὁρισμός, i.e. a 'definition'. But, most of his attempts to achieve such a ὁρισμός failed (see 7.1.).

(iv) So, in the *Meno,* Plato introduced a μέθοδος that aims not at finding the essential κοινωνίαι of an εἶδος, but at establishing some particular κοινωνίαι of it. This μέθοδος is based on ὑποθέσεις and it should be used when we cannot prove or disprove directly a κοινωνία between two εἴδη (see 7.2.). Yet, why did Plato changed his focus —from the essential κοινωνίαι of an εἶδος to just some particular κοινωνίαι 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 ὁρισμός of an εἶδος (i.e. its 'essential' *what,* namely its *essential* κοινωνίαι with other εἴδη), until we have a view of *all* the κοινωνίαι that that εἶδος has with other εἴδη (including with its ἀντιτιθέμενον); and he introduces a μέθοδος which states that we should first aim at determining *all* the κοινωνίαι that an εἶδος has with other εἴδη (see 7.3.).
(vi) Finally, in the *Sophist* Plato claims that the *essential* 'what' of an εἶδος resides in its γένος, i.e. in its *descent* from other

εἴδη; and he introduces a μέθοδος aimed at διακρίνειν the γένος of an εἶδος (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 ἱκανὸς ὁρισμός. (Although the *form* of ὁρισμός 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 ὀνόματα, λόγοι, ὄψεις, and αἰσθήσεις should eventually aim at reaching the 'act' of νοεῖν τὰ εἴδη, which is the ultimate mode of ἀληθεύειν (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 — κοινωνίαι τῶν εἴδων, e.g. the μέθοδος of διακρίνειν the γένη of εἴδη, are also *ways,* μέθοδοι, toward the act of νοεῖν τὰ εἴδη. But this, as I said at the end of 7.5., would be to go too far; for the act of νοεῖν τὰ εἴδη 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 εἴδη (cf. *Phd.* 101 c ; cf. also 99 d ff. and 67 a-b), and (ii) the μέθοδος which is supposed o reveal the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of εἴδη (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 εἶδος is (cf. *R.* 534 b 3, 531 e 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 εἶδος —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 κοινῶς. Plato, on the contrary, wrote a lot; but, because he, as Socrates, believed that the quest for knowledge should be done κοινῶς, 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 σιγᾷ). 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 *Tht.* 181 c: "I [Socrates] must not be alone in my opinion; you must take your share [συμμέτεχε] in the risk, so that we may meet together whatever fate shall befall us [ἵνα κοινῇ πάσχωμεν ἄν τι καὶ δέῃ]" (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 *bizarrerie* 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 (συνουσία) is to reach an *agreement,* a συνωμολογῆσθαι, 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 (συνωμολογῆσθαι, 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 e 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 διά-λογος; and so, the μέθοδος, toward certain knowledge is not a mere τῶν λόγων μέθοδος, it is a δια-λεκτικὴ μέθοδος *(R.* 533 b 3, c 7). (As I argued at the begining of Chapter Two, given this ambiguity that μετά has in compounds, the word μέθοδος implies both 'a path that *goes towards* something' and 'a path that is covered *together',* i.e. *with,* μετά, *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-λεγέιν, *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, εἴδωλα, 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 [ψυχή] 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 [διανοουμένη] it is simply talking to herself [διαλέγεσθαι] 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 εἴδη themselves; and both these areas are investigated by μέθοδοι 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 εἴδη 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 ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή) aims at 'destroying' ὑποθέσεις *(R.* 533 c 7-d 1); and
(iii) the μέθοδος which introduces the view that in the theory of εἴδη being is understood as *whatness* and that *whatness* is determined by the *κοινωνία* of εἴδη starts from a hypothetical argument (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 — 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 εἴδη; and this μέθοδος, which aims not at finding the essential κοινωνίαι of an εἶδος, but at establishing a few particular κοινωνίαι of it, is based on ὑποθέσεις.
(v) in the *Parmenides* Plato introduces a μέθοδος which aims at determining *all* the κοινωνίαι that an εἶδος has with other εἴδη

(possibly as a preparation for determining what are its *essential* κοινωνίαι with other εἴδη), and which is also based on ὑποθέσεις; and, finally,

(vi) in the *Sophist* Plato seems to suggest that the *essential* 'what' of an εἶδος resides in its γένος, i.e. in its *descent* from other εἴδη; and he introduces a μέθοδος aimed at διακρίνειν the γένος of that εἶδος, which is not based on ὑποθέσεις.

As I argued in 2.1 the word ὑπόθεσις has in Plato various meanings ('theory', 'statement', 'starting point for discussion', etc.); and the main determination of a ὑπόθεσις *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 ὑποθετικός. Had he use it, I believe he would have meant by it not only *something connected with the use of ὑποθέσεις,* but also what we mean by *hypothetical,* i.e. *something not yet surely proved as true or false.*

All these μέθοδοι I mentioned above can be called *hypothetical* in *this sense,* because — when they deal with the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον (and, apart from the situations in which at stake is determining a non-abstract εἶδος, this is always the case) their results, even if they are not explicitly said to be obtained ἐξ ὑποθέσεων, remain, to a greater or smaller extent, *uncertain.* At the end of Chapter Two, I argued that the μέθοδος which introduces the theory of εἴδη (theory which belongs to the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον) is grounded on the συμφωνία of our λεγόμενα; and at the end of Chapter Six I argued that the μέθοδος in general which aim at determining the abstract εἴδη themselves is also grounded on the συμφωνία of our λεγόμενα. As I argued in the above mentioned chapters, the συμφωνία of our λεγόμενα is a criterion that does not *guarantee* truth; a result, that is, grounded only on the συμφωνία of our λεγόμενα, is not fully justified (although its truth could be very likely). That is why the μέθοδος which introduces the theory of εἴδη and the μέθοδοι which aim at determining the abstract εἴδη 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 ἔλεγχος; because both methodologies are (i) *dialectic,* in the sense that they are supposed to be undertaken through δια-λεγειν, *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 λόγος, *language;* and (ii)

hypothetical, for the results achieved through these methodologies — grounded as they are mainly on the συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων —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 ὑποθέσεις; 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 ἁρμονία is what makes his μέθοδοι *suitable.*

8.2.1.The correspondence between the συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων and the ἁρμονία τῶν εἴδων

(a) As I argued, in the *Sophist* Plato claims that τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον διὰ πάντων κεκοινωνηκέναι (cf. 255 e, 256 a and 259 a). And that means that *reality* in general is thought as *whatness,* and that *whatness in general* is thought as being caused by the *κοινωνία with others.* In less abstract words: (i) *reality* is reduced to εἴδη; (ii) the εἴδη *exist* as having an *identity* (a *what);* and (iii) the *identity* of every εἶδος (and so of every sensible thing) is thought as being caused by the κοινωνίαι in which that εἶδος is 'caught' with other εἴδη. The 'world of εἴδη', however, is, according to Plato, not a chaos, but a κόσμος τῶν εἴδων; in short: the κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων is, we may say, a ἁρμονία. (When he said that philosophy is the μεγίστη μουσική — *Phd.* 61 a 3-4; cf. also *R.* 548 b 9; *Ti.* 88 c 5 —he might have thought that this way of putting things is appropriate because philosophy, like μουσική in general, is concerned with *ἁρμονίαι.)*

(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
> (α) The soul of the universe is framed by the Demiurge from οὐσία, ταὐτόν and θάτερον (35 a) (I will not enter into the details concerning the 'indivisible' and 'divisible' kinds of οὐσία, ταὐτόν and θάτερον 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 ἔκ τε ταὐτοῦ καὶ θατέρου και τῆς οὐσίας μεμειγμένη (35 b 3; cf. also 37 a 2-4).
> (β) From this μεμειγμένη the Demiurge made two rings (36 b-c) (the rings of sameness and of difference —35 a), 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 (φοραί, περιφοραί or περίοδοι) 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

(α) The learning part of the human soul (τὸ λογιστικόν) is a copy of the world-soul: it is made out of the same (though less pure) ingredients (i.e. οὐσία, ταὐτόν and θάτερον — 41 d).

(β) From this μεμειγμένη the Demiurge made two rings (the rings of sameness and of difference — 43 e f., 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 (ἔξοθεν αἰσθήσεις), "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 ταὐτόν 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 (ἁρμονίαι) and revolutions (περιφοραί) 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, ταὐτόν and θάτερον?

The world-soul is said to 'participate (μετέχουσα) in λογισμός and ἁρμονία (36 e 6-37 a 1), and to have an 'intelligent' (ἔμφρονος) and eternal life (36 e 4). Now, what it actually 'does' in its eternal life is to 'perform a sort of revolutions (περιφοραί) 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 *Ti.* 37 a-b (using some segments from Cornford's translation, 1937):

> [...] whenever the world-soul is in contact (ἐφάπτηται) with anything that has dispersed existence (σκεδαστὴν οὐσιαν) 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 ταὐτόν or ἕτερον in respect to any given thing, whatever it may be, either in the world of τὰ γιγνόμενα, or in the world of τὰ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχοντα ἀεί. Now whenever the λόγος takes place concerning the ταὐτόν and θάτερον of an ὄν which belongs to the sphere of τὸ αἰσθητόν, then arise δόξαι and πίστεις, which are βέβαιοι and ἀληθεῖς. But whenever the λόγος takes place concerning the ταὐτόν and θάτερον of an ὄν which belongs to the sphere of τὸ λογιστικόν, then νοῦς and ἐπιστήμη are necessarily achieved [which are, most obviously, also βέβαιοι and ἀληθεῖς].

As I claimed in 7.4.1., in *speaking*, soul establishes a κοινωνία of various εἴδη, 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 διαίρεσις). That is: in knowing through διανοεῖσθαι (which takes place within the 'medium' of λέγειν —cf. *Sph.* 263 e, *Tht.* 189 e-190 a), soul deals, *ultimately,* with οὐσία, ταὐτόν and θάτερον.

So, when Plato claims that the world-soul and the human souls are a 'mixture' of οὐσία, ταὐτόν 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, ταὐτόν and θάτερον — means that soul in general, in its way towards knowledge, deals with οὐσία, ταὐτόν and θάτερον *because* it was made in such a way as to deal with οὐσία, ταὐτόν 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, ταὐτόν and θάτερον).

But, as I said above in (a), in the *Sophist* Plato claims that the μέγιστα γένη of τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον διὰ πάντων κεκοινωνηκέναι (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 ὄν, ταὐτόν 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 εἴδη') is a ἁρμονία (for the εἴδη 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. *Ti.* 35 b-36 d. But this answer will only hide the fact that ἁρμονία 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 ὄν, ταὐτόν 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 εἴδη, as well as the μέθοδοι that introduce and develop the theory of εἴδη, *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' (ἁρμονία τῶν εἴδων) and to that of 'the human mind that seeks to know it' (ἁρμονία 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 εἴδη. 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 εἴδη themselves function, so to say, in the field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον (i.e. in the field of 'abstract matters'), but *at the level of* εἴδη. And they aim at determining the κοινωνίαι that exist between particular abstract εἴδη —'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 εἴδη) and the transcendental,

viz. the principle of coherence (ἁρμονία). That is why, we may say, they are *suitable*.

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

In Chapter Four I showed that in the *Republic* Plato claims that there is something *beyond* (ἐπέκεινα) οὐσία in 'dignity' (πρέσβειᾳ) 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 ἡ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχή, at 511 b 7), namely τὸ ἀγαθόν (cf. also 509 b 8, where it is said that τὸ ἀγαθόν provides, προσεῖναι, οὐσία of *all* εἴδη). 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 ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ 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 someting 'present' in *all* εἴδη —namely τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν 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 εἴδων). Yet, he call ἰδέαι these three 'elements' that are 'beyond' *all* ἰδέαι (cf. for instance the expression ἰδέα τῆς θατέρου at 255 e). Why?

Because the meta-εἴδη level, like the 'level of εἴδη', is investigated by the same means, i.e. by *speaking;* and for Plato speaking does *always* operate with εἴδη. We can, that is, understand this meta-εἴδη 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 εἴδη. In short: we can understand the very notion of εἶδος (and everything that belongs to this 'meta-εἴδη level') only by using some particular *sui-generis* εἴδη, like ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα or ἡ τοῦ θατέροῦ ἰδέα. (Today, however, this idea of *circulus vitiosus* is seen as a triviality.)

So, the μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἴδη operate also with εἴδη, and, I believe, they also determine the κοινωνίαι that exist between these *sui-generis* εἴδη (for these εἴδη too are σύνθετα, like, for instance, the very εἴδη of τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον).

Now, since these *sui-generis* εἴδη are *abstract,* the μέθοδοι that operate with them (i.e. μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἴδη) cannot but rely on the criterion of coherence (συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων) (cf. for instance the account on the μέθοδος that introduces the theory of εἴδη from the *Phaedo* 100 a ff.). Thus,

we may say (generalizing, I know) that the μέθοδοι which introduce and develop the theory of εἴδη 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 κοινωνίαι that exist between particular εἴδη that concern the 'meta-εἴδη level') and the transcendental — viz. the principle of coherence (ἁρμονία).

8.2.2. From συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων to ἁρμονία τῶν εἴδων and from ἁρμονία τῶν εἴδων 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 λογιστικόν) 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 ἁρμονία 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 σύνθετα 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, συναρμόττουσιν ἀλλήλοις (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 ἁρμονία τῶν εἴδων.
(iv) And, if thinking is the same thing as speaking (cf. 263 e: "διάνοια and 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 ἁρμονία 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 συμπλοκὴ τῶν εἴδων") (5).

(ii) Some εἴδη, however, συμφωνεῖ, while others do not (253 b 11). That is: the κοινωνία τῶν εἰδων is actually a ἁρμονία/συμφωνία.
(iii) So, we may continue his argument, it is this ἁρμονία τῶν εἰδων on which is grounded the συμφωνία τῶν λεγόμενων (6).
(iv) 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, Phlb.* 16 d, *Ti.* 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 *Cra.* 432 c he

claims that "there is such a thing as correctness in imagery (εἰκόνος ὀρθότης)" (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 μέθοδοι 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 μουσικός one is. (When he said that philosophy is the μεγίστη μουσική — *Phd.* 61 a 3-4; cf. also *R.* 548 b 9; *Ti.* 88 c 5 — he might have thought that this way of putting things is appropriate not only because philosophy, like μουσική in general, is concerned with *ἁρμονίαι;* 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 ἀναίσθητον by something αἰσθητόν') is metaphysically justified by the 'participation' of what is αἰσθητόν in what is ἀναίσθητον.

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 αἰσθητόν in what is ἀναίσθητον.

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' (μεταφέρεται) (cf. for instance *Ti.* 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... νῦν μετενεγκόντες ἐπὶ τἀληθές]" —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 e 5-6 the myth of the ancient city of Athens and Atlantis is called an ἀληθινὸς λόγος; but, Plato's *clin d'oeil* is, I think, evident) (8).

For Plato, however, such an 'embodiment' is neither a mere fiction, nor an ἀληθὴς λόγος (as some do believe —cf. *Grg.* 523 a; cf. also *Phdr.* 244 a and 253 c); for him, a myth is, "taken as a whole, false, but there is truth in it also [τοῦτο μῦθος δέ που ὡς τὸ ὅλον ψεῦδος, ἔνι δὲ καὶ ἀληθῆ]" *(R.* 377 a 5-6); it is, in other words, if I may use an expression from *R.* 382 b 10-c 1, an οὐ πάνυ ἄκρατον ψεῦδος (9). To conclude: for Plato a myth, in spite of not being supported by a rigorous 'demonstration' (ἀπόδειξις — cf. *Phd.* 92 d, *Tht.* 162 e), has a certain heuristic 'power' (cf. ἡ τῶν εἰκότων λόγων δύναμις —*Ti.* 48 d 1-2), for it may reveal a part of the truth (cf. *Smp.* 215 a 6: ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἕνεκα; cf. also *Ti.* 53 d-e).

So, the right answer to the question about why Plato does resort 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 εἶδος 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 εἴδη.

To be more precise. As I said at the beginning of 8.1.1., Plato's theory of εἴδη 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 εἴδη (this test is about seeing whether the implications of the theory συμφωνεῖ ἀλλήλοις — for details see Chapter Three); the myth of the Cave from the *Republic,* which is linked with the second part of the theory of εἴδη (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 εἶδος can be known (where at stake is reaching the ὁριμός or determining the γένος of a particular εἶδος), 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 εἴδη belongs to what I called the 'field of τὸ ἀναίσθητον', 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 ἀναίσθητον into something αἰσθητόν* (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 ἀναίσθητον into something αἰσθητόν in such a way that a part of the truth is revealed?* It is, roughly put, *to 'frame' for something ἀναίσθητον, through speaking, an αἰσθητόν embodiment, in such a way that that embodiment unconceales 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 ἀναίσθητον 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 ἀναίσθητον be unconcealed by something αἰσθητόν?

The first question first. How can we know whether a certain myth is an οὐ πάνυ ἄκρατον ψεῦδος or a mere ψεῦδος? 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 λεγόμενα 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 οὐ πάνυ ἄκρατον ψεῦδος).
>
> (ii) So, in order to decide whether a myth has or not some truth in it, we have to *confront* the αἰσθητόν embodiment it provides for an ἀναίσθητον '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 αἰσθητόν) 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 εἴδωλον 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 αἰσθητόν 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 *poietic* act of *framing for something ἀναίσθητον an αἰσθητόν embodiment, in such a way that that embodiment unconceales 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 ποιεῖν, the 'inner ζωγράφος' through λέγειν), something ἀναίσθητον by an αἰσθητόν embodiment (13).

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

If so, however, then we may say that the question of embodying something ἀναίσθητον into an εἴδωλον λεγόμενον depends on the more general, *ontological* question of embodying that which is ἀναίσθητον (the νοητὸν ζῷον or the εἴδη in general) into *sensible things.* We may say, in other words, that a particular kind of metaphorical discourse, i.e. the myth (as an οὐ πάνυ ἄκρατον ψεῦδος, 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 εἴδωλον λεγόμενον, he repeats the archetypal gesture of the Demiurge,

who turned a non-visible model into an εἴδωλον ποιούμενον.) Thus, we may conclude that in Plato the 'true myth' relies on a on heuristic pattern ('to partially unconceal something ἀναίσθητον by something αἰσθητόν') that has a metaphysical justification ('the ontological participation of what is αἰσθητόν in what is ἀναίσθητον').

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

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 ἀναίσθητον 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 ἀναίσθητον 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. εἶδος, γένος or τὸ ἀγαθόν —are, *obviously*, names of non-abstract notions given to abstract ones; so, we may say that they too aim at *framing for something ἀναίσθητον an αἰσθητόν embodiment, in such a way that that embodiment unconceales 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 repondre 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 ἀναίσθητον 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 ἀναίσθητον.

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', reposerait 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', (συγγενεῖς) with the ὄντα that they describe; so, he argues, an account about what is only a changing εἰκών (29 b2-3; 92 c 7) (i.e. the visible universe) of a 'lasting and stable' (μόνιμον 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 μόνιμον 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 εἰκὼς ἑρμηνεία. 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 rigourous 'demonstration' (ἀπόδειξις —cf. *Phd.* 92 d, Tht. 162 e), has a certain δύναμις (cf. ἡ τῶν εἰκότων λόγων δύναμις — *Ti.* 48 d 1-2) that may lead to truth (cf. *Smp.* 215 a 6: ἡ εἰκὼν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἕνεκα; cf. also *Ti.* 53 d-e). I believe, that is, that my εἰκὼς ἑρμηνεία —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.

EPILOGUE

> 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 εἴδη.
> (iii) And he ends up by claiming:
> (α) that the actual 'reality' consist of these *universal aspects* (which are somehow embodied by the sensible objects);
> (β) 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 puting 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 tented 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 'I' 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 εἶδη': 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 transcendental, 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)

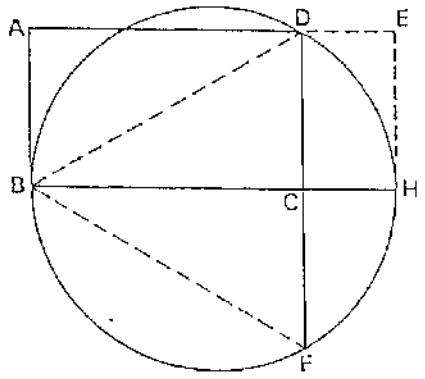


Figure (2)

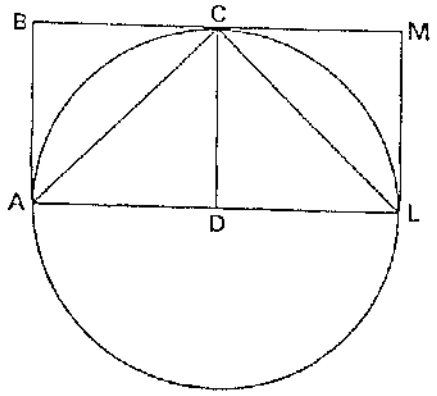
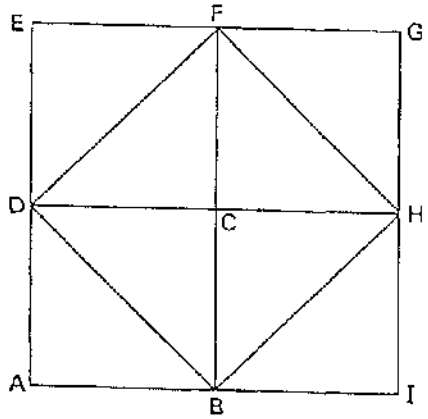


Figure (3)



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 ὑποθέσεις in many different senses" (*M* III, 3; translation from Barnes 1990, 90).

The Greek word ὑπόθεσις had numerous meanings: 'intention', 'purpose', 'advice', 'pretext', '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 ὑποτίθημι derived from the verb τίθημι, 'to place, put, set'. The preposition ὑπό, which means 'under' (Lat. *sub)* or 'by', denotes in compounds mainly what is 'under', e.g. ὕτειμι ('to be under'), ὑποβαίνω ('to go under'), or ὑποτίθημι ('to place under', 'to place under as a foundation', or 'to lay down'). θέσις 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 (λίθος) placed (θέμενον) 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 ὑπὸθεσις, *supports* that which is over, for which it is like a θεμέλιον, 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* 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

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. an 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 *injustified* 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 κάτωθεν, 'from below'. For Thales, for instance, the earth lies *on* water (cf. fr. A 14: γῆν ἐφ' ὕδατος κεῖσθαι; cf. also fr. A 12); if ὕδωρ here means ἀρχή (as in: ἀρχὴν τοῦ παντὸς εἶναι καὶ τέλος τὸ ὕδωο, Hyppolytos, *Haer.* I 1), then Thales' 'principle' (i.e. water) is a sort of θεμέλιον of the world (γῆ). Also, Anaximenes' ἀήρ (fr. A 5,13-14), as well as Hippasos' (fr. 7, 9-10) and Heraclitus' (fr. A 5, 14) πῦρ, are all referred to as a φύσις which 'lies under', ὑποκειμένη.

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 οἰκοδόμησις, '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,* ἀρχή, 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 ὑπάρχον and ὕπαρξις 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 θή-) are to be found in many expressions which refer to 'that which holds a πόλις': its law (θέμις, θέσμα, θεσμός), its justice (θεσμοσύνη), its legislation (νομοθέσια), its constitution (θέσμιον), its written statute (τεθμός) or its treatises (συνθεσίαι, 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 τιθέμενοι) or, sometimes, of gods (cf. for instance Xenophon *Cyr.* VI, 6: παρὰ τοὺς τῶν θεῶν θεσμούς). (The beginnings of the Athenian democracy, as Ostwald 1969 convincingly argued, are characterized, *inter alia,* by the change from the usage of θεσμός, 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', ἱσταμέναι, 'under' it. Yet, when they speak about that which supports *epistemologically* something else, they seem to prefer the word ὑπόθεσις to others, such as ὑπόληψις, '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 ἀρχή as 'that which is put under as a foundation of reasoning'. Geometers' and Aristotle's ὑποθέσεις

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. *M* III 4 and 5) the epistemological ἀρχαί are the beginnings of demonstrations, ἀρχαί τῶν ἀποδείξεων (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 [ὡροσκόποϛ]" — he says —"is the ἀρχή, and, as it were, the θεμέλιοϛ of astrology"*(M* V 50). That is why Aristotle, together with many other Greek philosophers, compared the ἀρχὴ τῶν ἀποδείξεων with a 'foundation', θεμέλιον, or with 'something put under the ensuing argument as a foundation', i.e. with a ὑπόθεσιϛ (cf. *inter alia, Metaph.* 1013 a 16: τῶν ἀποδείξεων αἱ ὑποθέσειϛ) (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 ὑπόθεσιϛ, that is: an ἀρχὴ τῶν ἀποδείξεων, should, as a foundation proper, be *reliable* too, that is βέβαια, firm, trusty, sure, in a word: true. (Cf. Demosthenes II, 10, 5, although this passage, as a 'διαίρεσιϛ 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 ὑποθέσειϛ 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 [σαθροὶ θεμελίοι' — 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 ὑποθέσιϛ, as any foundation (θεμέλιοϛ), must be firm (βέβαιον), if what follows is to be agreed upon, otherwise, as the geometers will say, the ὑποθέσειϛ are 'out of place' (ἀτόποι).

"Sometimes" — claims Epictetus *(diss* I vii 22-3) — "it is necessary to postulate [αἰτῆσαι] a ὑπόθεσιϛ as a sort of basis [ἐπιβάθρα] for the ensuing argument. Now should one accept every offered ὑπόθεσιϛ? And if not every one, then which?" (translation from Barnes 1990,106). In other words, how can we assess the stability, the certainty (τὸ 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 [αὐτόθεν] [...], 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 αἰτεῖσθαι τὰς τῆς γεωμετρίας ἀρχάς] [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 φάσις] 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* III 5), as long as it is not ***supported*** by an ἀπόδειξις, can only be a 'bare' assertion, a ψιλὴ φάσις (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 ὑποθέσεις

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 ἀρχή 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 ὕδωρ, in Thales' case), occurs also in Plato. Now, Plato, like many other Greek philosophers, *localizes* the ἀρχή 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' ὕδωρ, *on* which the world lies). (And he, like all Greek philosophers, not only left unjustified his belief that our world must have an ἀρχή — see for instance *Ti.* 28 a, which simply postulates it; he also left unjustified his 'localization' of this ἀρχή).

In what follows, I shall argue (a) that in Plato we have to distinguish between the physical and the metaphysical ἄνω 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 ἄνω καὶ κάτω, or in the *Phaedrus* 247 b, where he refers to the summit (ἄκραν) of the 'arch that is over the heaven below [ἐπὶ τὴν ὑπουράνιον ἀψῖδα]' (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 ὑπουράνιος 'region'?

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

> if anyone tries to learn about the things of sense, whether gaping up [ἄνω κεχηνώς] or blinking down [κάτω συμμεμυκώς], 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 e). (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' ὕδωρ) 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 ἀδαμάντινον hook 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 οἰκοδόμησις, '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, θεμελιόθεν, '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 *philosophèmes* 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 ἀκρόπολις, 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', μελαμβαθὴς κευθμών); or, to take another example, καθαιρέω, 'to take down', means also, metaphorically, 'to humble' (cf. also ταπεινός — 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 ἀρχόντων *(R.* 459 b 11); the men who are to institute Magnesia's regulations about the official posts are 'men of the highest parts', μάλιστα ἄκροι *(Lg.* 753 e 5); an accomplished craftsman is an ἄκρος δημιουργός; a consummate

guardian is an ἄκρος φύλαξ (*Lg.* 965 b 6-7); and the best philosophers are the ἄκροι 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. εἶναι 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 ὑποδεής — literally 'something fasten', δεόν, 'under', ὑπό, 'something else') and (ii) *dependence* (the most common Greek word for 'dependant' is ὑπήκοος —'being under command'; cf. also ὑποχείριος— 'dependent', i.e. 'being under one's hand' and ὑποστρατηγέω —'to serve under the command of a στρατηγός'; and the most used verb to express the notion of dependence is ἀρτάω, 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 κεῖμαι 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 ἀρτάω) rather than through the verb κεῖμαι in combination with the preposition ἐν (or simply because he, in his mystical 'adoration' of the εἶδη, 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 εἶδη.

(d) To sum up: for Plato the sensuous realm is 'held' by its ἀρχή, 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 (ἐξήρτηται — 536 a 8). Thus, Plato could not use, in connection with the intelligible realm, any expressions prefixed by ὑπό–, such as ὑπόθεσις, ὑποκείμενον, ὑπομένον or ὑπόστασις (in the case of the term 'ὑπό–θεσις', besides the inadequacy of the ὑπό–, there is also the inadequacy of -θεσις, 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 'ὑπό–θεσις' 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 μέθοδος 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 [εἴ τις... ἐπ' ἄκρα ἔλθοι], 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 [θριγκός] 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 βαθύ, deep, often associated with θεώρημα, a thing contemplated by the mind —cf. for instance Porphyry, *Plot.* 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 [εἰς τὸ βάθος 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' (ἐπ'

ἄκρα ἔρχεσθαι), 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 ἐλήλυθεν ἐπ' ἄκρον) of intelligible reality.' This expression (i.e. ἐλήλυθεν 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 ἁπάσης ἐλήλυθεν]" (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 [κρεμασθείς] at such an unaccustomed height and looking down from mid-air" (cf. also *Sph.* 216 c 6-7: 'the real philosophers [ὄντως φιλόσοφοι] survey from a height [καθορῶντες ὑψόθεν] the life beneath them [τὸν τῶν κάτω βίον]'; and 246 b 7: the 'friends of forms' [οἱ τῶν εἰδῶν φίλοι —248 a 4] defend their position somewhere in the heights of the unseen [ἄνωθεν ἐξ 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 — ἐπτερωμένος, '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 ἀρχαί, unlike the ontological ἀρχαί, 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 *qua* 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 ὑποθέσεις 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 ἀγαθόν, 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 συμφωνία 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 are συμφωνοί, *support* one another.) (Most of the commentators, however, tended not to take Plato's comparing a ὑποθέσεις with a 'rung' seriously (23), mainly because he does not use it elsewhere (24).)

To conclude. As I argued, in its literal sense ὑπόθεσις 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 ὑπόθεσις in epistemological contexts, he seems to ignore its literal meaning (i.e. that of 'physical foundation') (although his comparing a ὑπόθεσις with a 'rung', in *R.* 511 b, may be invoked as an indication that he thought about the fact that ὑπόθεσις 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 he, say, explicated a premiss 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.

4 *Apud* Eco 1992, 24.

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 Alexandru Dragomir for drawing my attention to this point.

2 This 'standard' Socratic request occurs throughout the early dialogues —see for instance *Hi. 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 c 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' (ἐφάνη ἡμῖν) (cf. *Prt.* 353 b 5-6; *Euthphr.* 15 c 1-2; *R.* 335 c 5, etc.) or by observing that the interlocutor now 'sees' (ὁρᾷς —*Euthphr.* 11 a 3) or 'knows' (ἴστε —*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 e - 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 → (q·r)
(ii) (q·r) → non p
(iii) p v non p
(iv) Therefore non p

6 All the Socratic dialogues (including those whose authenticity is not beyond any doubt) are centred around this reaching of a ὁμολογία —see for instance *Hp. Ma.* (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 λογιστικόν —the head; ὁ θυμός —the heart; and τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν —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 *Hp. Mi.* 376 c 2, where knowing something is put in terms of *resting* from a wandering (παυσόμεθα 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 *Phlb.* 17 e: "The unlimited variety [τὸ ἄπειρον] 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 ἄπειρον, 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 θεὸς 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 διαλεκτικὴ 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 *R.* 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 — e 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 εὑρεῖν, or, if this is impossible, to select [λαβόντα] the best and least refutable [δυσεξελεγκτότατος] 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 εἰρημένα — 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 τιάθος 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 τίθημι (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 e, 352 d, *Plt.* 257 b, *Sph.* 246 e), 'to assume' (*Phd.* 79 a, *R.* 340 a, 430 a, *Tht.* 191 c), or 'to judge' (*Plt.* 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 (τίθεσαι) a proposition, then that proposition 'stands' (κεῖται) 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, *Tht.* 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 sheermake-belief. [... And] his word for assuming what you already know or believe to be false is not ὑποτίθεσθαι but συγχωρεῖν.")

12 This passage reads: "It is our duty to do one of two things, either to ascertain the facts, whether by μαθεῖν or by εὑρεῖν, or, if this is impossible, to select [λαβόντα] 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 ἐλέγχειν 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 *guarantee* 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 contradictories (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." In fact,

Robinson 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 μουσική 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 μουσική does not sometimes *hints* primarily to music (as, I believe, it is the case here).

17 Whereas ῥυθμός refers (roughly speaking) to a τάξις 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 τάξις of *simultaneous* pitches (i.e., roughly speaking, to *chords),* whereas the Greek συμφωνία and ἁρμονία refer to a τάξις of *consecutive* pitches (i.e., roughly speaking, to *melodies).*

19 Thus, Robinson's claim —that "there is no passage in which [συμφωνεῖν or διαφωνεῖν (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 λόγοι about the gods and the generation of the universe may not be altogether ὁμόλογοι' (which, as I said, can be taken as a synonym for σύμφωνοι), he speaks about *theories* that may not συμφωνεῖν ἀλλήλοις.

21 In some metaphorical usages, ἁρμονία and συμφωνία are said to imply not a mere τάξις, but a κόσμος (cf. *R.* 430 e; cf. also *Ti.* 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: "[συμφωνεῖν does not imply a chain of successive inferences (p → q → r ...),] where each stage is checked for validity of inference from the preceding one. [...] In the first place the consequences are από ('from') the starting point, not one another: no succession is envisaged, but rather p → (q · r· s). In the second place, the consequences are checked αλλήλοις ('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) συμβαίνειν (*Hp. Mi.* 369 a 4-5, *Men.* 87 a, *Tht.* 165 c 10, 164 b, *Chrm.* 164 b 9, *Grg.* 408 e, *Prm.* 142 c); (ii) τὰ συμβαίνοντα (*Grg.* 495

b, 496 c, 479 c, 508 b, *Men.* 87 b, *R.* 437 a, *Prm.* 136 a 1, b 8, 142 b 3); or (iii) τὰ ἑπόμενα (*Cra.* 436 d).

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

1 Plato's usage of the word παράδειγμα raises a number 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, παραδείκνυμι, is to a certain extent, lost. παραδείκνυμι 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* — ἄγαλμα, 37 c 7, εἰκών, 29 b 3, c 1, 37 d 7, or μίμηκα, 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 *Tht.* 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 a); the attempt to understand the τέχνη σοφιστική is made through the παράδειγμα of τέχνη ποιητική *(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 ὄν and μὴ ὄν are *completely* separated (cf. 237 a: οὐ γάρ μή ποτε τοῦτο δαμῇ, φησίν, εἶναι μὴ ἐόντα· ἀλλὰ σὺ τῆσδ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ διζήμενος εἶργε νόημα); when Plato claims that an εἰκών is not, what he actually means is that that εἰκών does not exist ὄντως, as a παράδειγμα does. (ὄντως means here ἀληθῶς, cf. *Sph.* 240 b 10; cf. also *R.* 515 d, where μᾶλλον ὄντα seems to mean ἀληθέστερα ὄντα; that is: an ὄντως ὄν is an ἀληθινὸν ὄν, a παράδειγμα, viz. an ὄν which is not a μῖμος, that 'pretends' to be another ὄν.)

3 I think it may be worth noting a passage from the *Republic* where the idea that 'to be ὄντως' *qua* 'to be ἀληθῶς' (as a model is) is not separable from 'to be ὄντως' *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* ὄντα, 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. *Tht.* 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.* 248 a and d, there is at least one instance in which changing and unchanging beings are in κοινωνία, and this instance is the phenomenon of knowledge, γίγνώσκειν, which is a κοινωνία between a ψυχὴ γιγνόσκειν, which is something κίνητον — cf. 249 a 10; and an οὐσία γιγνόσκεσθαι, which is something ἀκίνητον —cf. 249 c 1; cf. also *Cra.* 440 a-b.)

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

5 For *speaking,* as far as it uses *common names,* is about εἴδη (cf. *Sph.* 259 e: "any discourse [λόγος] we can have owes its existence to the συμπλοκὴ τῶν εἰδων"; that is: the very possibility of *speaking* derives actually from the *ontological* κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων, a view which implies that *speaking* in general is about εἴδη).

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

7 To actually know an εἶδος, 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. *Phd.* 67 a 6-b 1 and 99 d ff. (something which Plato kept saying it throughout the dialogues — see *R.* 534 b ff.; *Tht.* 186 b-e,187 a, 189 e; *Sph.* 227 a 8, 253 b 10; *Phlb.* 57 c-58 a, 59 a, 61 e; *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; *R.* 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 (αἰτίας ἄλλο εἶδος)"; (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 αἰτίαι: 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 αἰτίαι see also the *Laws* 896 e ff.).

10 Cf. Aristotle *Metaph.* 988 a 9 ff.; Diogenes Laertius 3. 69; Simplicius *in Phys.* 26. 5 ff.; "Aëtius" 1.3.21 (b) = Stobaeus *Ecl.* 1.10.16; Alcinous, *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.)

11 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 γιγνόμενα and τὰ τέχνῃ γιγνόμενα may be generated spontaneously or not spontaneously — cf. 1032 a 30 ff. and 1034 a 10 ff.)

12 In Aristotle the explanation of the generation of τὰ φύσει ὄντα is less clear than that of τὰ ποιούενα. Roughly speaking, it seems that for him τὰ φύσει ὄντα 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.)

13 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.)

14 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: ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησιν). That is: the expression δεύτερος πλοῦς refers to Socrates' introducing 'another, second-best pattern of causal explanation', namely that by εἴδη (see also Gallop's 1975 commentary *ad locum).* But why 'second-best'?

The references to the efficient αἰτία (νοῦς) as 'true' or 'real' (cf. 98 e 1 and 99 b 3), suggest that Socrates considered it as being 'the best pattern of causal explanation' (see his referring to νοῦς as 'true' or 'real' — cf. 98 e 1: τὰς ὡς ἀληθῶς αἰτίας, and 99 b 3: τὸ αἴτιον τῷ ὄντι). 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 εἴδη (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.)

15 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 *aesthetical* one. I list below a few translations:

16 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 τόνδε... οὔτετις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν). (Yet the motif of an 'efficient' cause occurs, in one form or another, in some Presocratics — cf. Parmenides' δαίμων, Empedocles' φιλία and νεῖκος, Heraclitus' πῦρ, 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 e 3-6, *Sph.* 265 c 1-9, *Lg.* 902 e 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 (συναιτίαι) (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 ἀνάγκη 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 ἀνάγκη 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' *(Ti.* 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? Plutarh *(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 ἀνάγκη; in other words, it 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 — εἰς τάξιν αὐτὸ ἤγαμεν ἐκ τῆς ἀταξίας). Is then ἀνάγκη 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 πόλις? 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 πόλις—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 παράδειγμα), 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 πόλις to the 'space' of ποίησις is not alien to the Greek culture. δημιουργός, for instance, comes from δήμιος 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."

Chapter Four
The theory of εἴδη (II): τὸ ἀγαθόν as the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή of the theory of εἴδη

1 Robinson 1953,152 claims that "contemporary mathematicians did not describe themselves as starting always from hypothesis. This passage [509 d - 511 e] is not evidence for that; and the *Meno,* which explicitly borrows from mathematical procedure, surely implies that what they called the 'by hypothesis' method was not their regular procedure but a special method, frequent indeed (πολλάκις *Men.* 86 e) but not preponderating." The word hypothesis is here, in the Divided Line, concludes Robinson, "Plato's interpretation of their procedure, and not the word they themselves would use" (p. 152). I do not think, however, that this discussion is, *philosophically,* very important; what is important is that Plato wants to point out that one 'attitude' toward the 'foundation', the ὑπόθεσις of an ensuing argument is to *leave it unquestioned;* and that *his* 'attitude' toward his theory of εἴδη is completely the opposite.

2 The main definitions of this method are to be found in: Pappus, *Collectio,* VII, Praef. 1-3 (ed. Hultsch, pp. 634.3 - 636.30); Euclid, *Elements* XIII (cf. Heath, 1926, vol.I, 138); and Aristotle *EN* 1112b 15 ff., *SE* 175 a 26-29.

3 Cf. also Barnes 1991, 83 on the close link between the Sun and the Line.

4 Cf.: Aristoxenus, *Elementa harmonica* II 30-31; Simplicius, *In Aristotelis physica,* 6-11 and 25-31 Diels; Themistius, oratio 21, 245 C-D; Proclus, commentary on Plato's *Philebus,* 4-18 Cousin; Alkinous (Albinus?),

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

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, 60 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: ἡ γὰρ τοι ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ ὂν ἰόντι ὁτῳοῦν αἰτία πᾶσα ἐστι ποίησις (205 b 8-9). First, let us ask ourselves what does Plato mean here by τὸ μὴ ὄν? We know from the *Timaeus* that for Plato a creation (ποίησις) *ex nihilo* is not possible. So, τὸ μὴ ὄν, i.e. that from which something has been brought forth 'into being', through ποίησις, is not *nothing:* it must be the very *material* from which that something, the ποιούμενον, was *made.* The material, however, existed *before* it was turned into a ποιούμενον, and it is said to belong to the field of μὴ ὄν; and the ποιούμενον 'comes into being' *later* than its own material, and it is said to belong to the field of ὄν. How are we to solve this μάλα ἄτοπον 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 μὴ ὄν, because, as I said, it did not have a *what*. But, at the moment the Demiurge, through his ποίησις, brought this 'whatless matter' from disorder into order (cf. 30 a 4-5: εἰς τάξιν αὐτὸ ἤγαγεν ἐκ τῆς ἀταξίας), i.e. at the moment he 'changed' the πλημμελὴς καὶ ἄτακτος 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. *Ti.* 38 c and 39 c), he turned that whatless γένησις into a κεκοσμημένον πρᾶγμα, i.e. *into a what;* at that moment, in other words, he brought the universe ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος (i.e. from the realm of whatless) εἰς τὸ ὄν (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 κεκοσμημένον 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 μέτρα' —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 δημιουργοί — be he a ζωγράφος, an οἰκοδόμος, or a ναυπηγός (cf. *Grg.* 503 e ff.) — when they turned their materials into a κεκοσμημένον πρᾶγμα (cf.*Grg.* 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 ποίησις 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 ὄντος as 'from the realm of whatless' and εἰς τὸ ὄν 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 *ousia.* [...] 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. Insofar 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 ἀρχή 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, τελευταῖον, 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 τέλος of knowledge; and in Greek the τέλος 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. λύσιν ... τῶν δεσμῶν, 515 c 4-5) and 'fettered' (cf. δεσμῶται, 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. περιάγειν — 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 κοινωνίαι which exist between τὰ ὄντα. Whereas 'knowledge' can be acquired only by 'seeing' these κοινωνίαι, 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 οὐσία 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 γιγαντομαχία περὶ τῆς Πλάτωνος οὐσίας (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 εἴδη (III): οὐσία 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' ὅπωσπερ ἀρχὴν εἶναι καὶ νῦν πάντα 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: οὐδέ ποτ' ἦν ουδ ' ἔσται, ἐπεὶ νῦν ἔστιν ὁμοῦ πᾶν, ἕν, συνεχές, 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 (τὸ γὰρ φαίνεσθαι τοῦτο καὶ τὸ δοκεῖν, εἶναι δὲ μή —236 e) does not occur only within τὰ ὄρατα ὄντα, 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 ἁρμονία 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 ἁρμονία, 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 ἀνάγκῃ καὶ ἁρμονίᾳ γίγνεσθαι — *apud* Diogene Laertios, VIII, 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 ἁρμονία 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 Indentität.*

5 We are on quicksand here. On the one hand, an εἶδος has an identity because it is in κοινωνία with the εἶδος of ταὐτόν; on the other hand, this κοινωνία with the εἶδος of ταὐτόν is actually 'a κοινωνία with *itself* (cf. *Sph.* 256 a 12-b 1: "when we call κίνησις ταὐτόν, we speak about the μέθεξις, or κοινωνία [cf. b 2] between κίνησις and itself") (cf. also Heidegger 1986, 11). All that Plato says in the *Sophist* about the κοινωνία τῶν εἴδων in general (and about the μέγιστα 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 e5-6: ἕκαστον [...] τῶν εἰδῶν [...] ἄπειρον δὲ πλήθει 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 e 5 ff..

9 If τὸ μὴ ὄν is taken as ἕτερον, then it is to be counted as an εἶδος ἕν, as a form among the many others (cf. 258 c 3: τὸ μὴ ὄν ... ἐνάριθμον 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 [...] ἔστιν (258 d 5) but we also 'revealed' the εἶδος 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. ὁμολογητέον —256 a 10) that κίνησις is in κοινωνία with ὄν (256 a 1; cf. also 254 a 10), and that means that κίνησις *exists;*
> (ii) κίνησις, however, is ἕτερον than ὄν (cf. 256 c 11-12: 'can we say that κίνησις is ἕτερον than ταὐτόν, στάσις and θάτερον but not ἕτερον than ὄν?');
> (iii) but, if κίνησις is ἕτερον 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 εἶναι);
> (iv) and this *existence* of μὴ ὄν, conlcudes Plato, extends to πάντα τὰ γένη, because the ἡ θατέρου φύσις 'operates' (ἀπεργαζομένη) in all of them as to make (ποιεῖ) each one ἕτερον 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 one more time by Plato in regard with the notion of other *qua* ἀντιτιθέμενον. For he claims that every ἀντιτιθέμενον, say, τὸ μὴ καλόν, is also an ὄν, namely an ὄν which is 'determined' (ἀφορισθέν — cf. 257 e 2) as the *other of* an εἶδος and then 'put' opposite it as another ὄν (ὄντος δὴ πρὸς ὄν ἀντίθεσις —257 e 6; cf. also e 3-4). So an εἶδος — say, καλόν — has not more being (μᾶλλον τῶν ὄντων) than its ἀντιτιθέμενον (μὴ καλόν) cf. 257 e 9-11.) They are, says the Stranger, the same (ὁμοίως); that is, we have to say that neither τὸ μὴ μέγα καὶ τὸ μέγα αὐτὸ (cf. 258 a 1-2), nor τὸ μὴ δίκαιον [καὶ] τὸ δίκαιον (cf. 258 a 4-5) εἶναι, has more being (τὸ μεδὴν τι μᾶλλον εἶναι) than the other (cf. 258 a 5). And, claims Plato, this is so for all other εἴδη (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 εἴδη, in their totality, form a *particular* 'net' of κοινωνίαι, i.e. if they are 'disposed' in a particular way, what would be the *form* of this 'disposition', or 'arrangement'? At 221 d ff. he says that two συγγενῆ ὄντα (i.e. two ὄντα 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' (τεχνίτης), go together the same road (i.e. κτῆσις, χειρωτικόν, 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 εἴδη are "embraced from without by another εἶδος"), seems to suggest that there is a 'hierarchy' of the εἴδη, 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 γένη), 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 ἄπειρον — cf. *Phlb.* 16), and ends with the μέγιστα γένη. (In seeing, one may argue, we first see the more general εἴδη, and then the 'more particular' ones.)

14 Now, what this notion of κοινωνίας emerged from? One cannot but speculate. As far as I am concerned, I would say that for Plato the notion of 'being' as δύναμις κοινωνίας 'emerged', so to speak, from the *given* fact that for him man exists in a world of κοινωνίαι. The sphere of ποίησις brings forth all the κοινωνίαι that exist between materials, tools, producer, etc. (in *Hi. Mi.* 374 e 3 man's 'relation' with tools, ὄργανα, is expressed in terms of a κοινωνία between man and tools). The sphere of πόλις brings forth the κοινωνίαι between the πολῖται (cf. *Alc.* 1, 125 d: the way we live in πόλεις consists in being in *communion* with one another —κοινωνούντων [...] πολιτείας καὶ συμβαλλόντων πρὸς ἀλλήλους —125 d 7; cf. also Aristotle *Pol.* 1252 a 1 f.: πᾶσαν πόλιν ὁρῶμεν κοινωνίαν τινα οὖσαν); the sphere of ἔρως, which is a 'longing for other' *(Smp.* 200 a-b), brings forth the κοινωνίαι

between the ἐράσται (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 ἔρως, which is sometimes said to drive everything towards ἁρμονία/συμφωνία, i.e. towards a 'concordant communion' —cf. *Smp.* 187 a-188 d); the sphere of θεῖον brings forth the κοινωνίαι 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 κοινωνίαι between words (cf. *Sph.* 262 b-263 d: speaking consists in the συμπλοκαί and the σύνθεσις between ὀνόματα and ῥήματα; cf. also *Tht.* 202 b 4, 206 d 2). And, since (as I argued) for Plato the *locus* of certainty is the συνουσία of minds, philosophy itself, in its Platonic form, requires the κοινωνία with others.

15 As I said, putting things in terms of παραδείγματα—εἴδωλα 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 ἔμοιγε καταφαίνεται ὧδε ἔχειν] — that these εἴδη are like [ὥσπερ] παραδείγματα ἑστάναι ἐν τῇ φύσει. The other things are made in their image and are ὁμοιώματα, and this μέθεξις they come to have in the εἴδη 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 εἴδη are *like* [cf. ὥσπερ] παραδείγματα. (And this *ὥσπερ* is pointed out by Aristotle when he says in *Metaph.* 1079 b 25 ff.: "to say that the εἴδη are παραδείγματα, and that other things 'participate' [μετέχειν] in them, is to use [...] poetical metaphors [μεταφορὰς λέγειν ποιητικάς]" — my paraphrase.) It is essential, I think, for our understanding of Plato, not to *forget* this *ὥσπερ*.

16 The *Sophist* suggests that there are two main kinds of κοινωνία τῶν γένων. (i) One is the *including* κοινωνία, i.e. the κοινωνία that exists between two εἴδη, of which one is included ("embraced from without" —cf. 253 d 7-8) by the other. This is the case for instance with the εἶδος of angler which is included in the εἴδη (cf. 219 a 8 where κτῆσις is called εἶδος) of τέχνη, κτῆσις, χειρωτική, θηρευτική, ζῳοθηρική, ἔνυδρον, ἁλιευτική. (This 'inclusions' of an εἶδος form its γένος; and διακρίνειν the γένος of an εἶδος brings forward the very answer to the τί ἔστιν question, i.e. to the question '*what* is that εἶδος?'; for details see 7.4.) (ii) The other is the *mere relating* κοινωνία, i.e. the κοινωνία that exists between two εἴδη which do not *include* each other. This is the case with three μέγιστα γένη —τὸ ὄν, ταὐτόν and θάτερον; none of them includes another in the way the εἶδος of τέχνη includes the εἶδος of κτῆσις; 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 αἰσθήσεις 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

feelings, 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 *Tht.* 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 *Phlb.* 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 εἶδος of the angler seems to embody some aspects of the non-abstract εἶδος of the sophist; but does the non-abstract εἶδος of the sophist embody the abstract εἶδος of τὸ μὴ ὄν? 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 ὄντος, *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 ὄν is — does this mean that the non-abstract εἶδος of the sophist embodies, somehow, the abstract εἶδος of τὸ μὴ ὄν? And, if so, could we call the εἶδος of τὸ μὴ ὄν *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 *Tht.* 165 b Plato says that 'if knowing [ἐπίστασθαι] is seeing [ὁρᾶν], 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 [...]" (*apud* Benveniste 1966, 40, who, it seems, endorses this Saussurian view).

6 This appearance of the καθ' οὗ λέγεταί τι is — as Heidegger 1994, 104 (cf. also 1992 b 180, 182) put it — not a mere φάναι, 'appearance', but a καταφάναι, 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 ἕν; 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' (ταὐτόν — 251 a 6; e)n — b 2, 7) and 'its many *names*' (cf. πολλὰ ὀνόματα — 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 εἴδη 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 μέθοδοι that ἀληθεύουσι τί ποτ' ἔστιν ἕκαστον εἶδος

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' (συνκεῖσθαι — *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 διαιρεθῆναι (cf. *Metaph.* 1051 b 9 ff.: τὰ μὲν ἀεὶ σύγκειται καὶ ἀδύνατα διαρεθῆναι) (1994, 95-6). (The essential what, however, is both a co-presence of some features and an absence of others, which are ἀδύνατον συντεθῆναι — cf. *Metaph.* 1051 b 9 ff.: τὸ δ' ἀεὶ διῄρηται καὶ ἀδύνατα συντεθῆναι; 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 ἐγγύς τι 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 κοινωνίαι in which that εἶδος is 'caught', there are also several places where Plato expresses this idea in general terms, such as *Hp. Mi.* 369 d ('having a desire to understand [ἐπιθυμῶν μαθεῖν], I raise questions, and I examine [διαπυνθάνομαι], analyze [ἐπανασκοπῶ] and put together [συμβιβάζω] the answers [τὰ λεγόμενα], in order that I may understand [ἵνα μάθω]' — my paraphrase), or *Phdr.* 270 c ('you cannot understand something without following the μέθοδος of taking it as a whole [ὅλον]'). (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 at 71 b, where Socrates asks rhetorically: "Do you suppose that somebody who does not know Meno at all [μὴ γιγνώσκει τὸ παράπαν] could say whether he is handsome and rich and well-born or the reverse." That is: if I do not know *anything at all* (τὸ παράπαν) 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' (τόνδε 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 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 τοιοῦτον οἷον (87 a 4). Butcher takes it as 'similar to', Benecke as 'identical to'. Each of these two readings entails a specific meaning for χωρίον. Benecke is claiming that the figure in question (i.e. τὸ χωρίον) 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 απαγωγή. The method of απαγωγή 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 απαγωγή is analogous to the later method of geometrical analysis and synthesis.)

7 Here Plato uses the word φρόνησις, not ἐπιστήμη, 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 λεγόμενον, 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:

> a warrant that the hypothesis is strong (ἐρρῶσθαι) 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].
>
> (*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' (ἓν [...] εἶναι τὸ πᾶν, 128 a 8-b 1), which is claimed by Parmenides; and 'beings are many' (τὰ ὄντα 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 εἶδος is, fairly often, discussed in relation with its ἀντιτιθέμενον — see for instance 'courage' (ἀνδρεία) and 'cowardice' (δειλία) (*Alc.* 1, 115 d); 'beautiful' (τὸ καλόν) and 'ugly' (τὸ αἰχρόν) (*Hp. Ma.* 289 a-d); 'honorable' (καλόν) and 'dishonorable' (αἰσχρόν) (*Tht.* 186 a 8); 'good' (ἀγαθόν) and 'bad' (κακόν) (*Tht.* 186 a 8); ὄν and μὴ ὄν (*Sph.* 254 b-259 d).

15 When we διακρίνειν the γένη of εἴδη, these εἴδη are spoken (λέγεσθαι) καθ᾽ αὑτά, not πρὸς ἄλλα (*Sph.* 255 c 12-3); that is, they are 'revealed' as what they are *in* themselves.

16 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' (ἐπιβουλή, προβουλή — 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 ἐνθουσιῶντες (cf. *Cra.* 396 c 7), i.e. men who — because they are 'out of their senses' (*Ion* 535 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.

17 A similar 'experience' seems to be soul's *first* knowing the εἶδη (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 κατόψις of νοεῖν provides is the *full* ἀνάμνησις of an εἶδος. (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 εἶδος through νοεῖν, the disclosed εἶδος must be actually *kept* in the 'sight' of νοῦς; and this incessant process of *keeping* a disclosed εἶδος in the 'sight' of νοῦς is ἀνάμνησις; cf. p. 124: "[ἀνάμνησις] is the incessant thinking of something, the pure saving into unconcealedness of what is thought.")

18 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, ποιούμενον) 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 ὄν 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 συμπόσια in the *Symposium*, the *Timaeus* or the *Laws* (639 d 2-3). (Although only a few dialogues open as a real συμπόσια — 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 ὄν, ταὐτόν 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 ἁρμονία 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 τάξις, i.e. a 'harmonic' (or 'symphonic') succession?

> The swift and slow sounds, which appear to be high and low, are sometimes discordant [ἀνάρμοστοι φερόμενοι] on account of the ἀνομοιότης that exists between their motions and the motion they excite in us; and sometimes symphonic [σύμφωνοι] on account of the ὁμοιότης 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 [θέια ἁρμονία] in mortal motions [ἐν θνηταῖς φοραῖς].

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 — τὸ λογιστικόν] and ends in the region of the liver [i.e. it affects also the other two parts of the soul — ὁ θυμός and τὸ 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 ἡδονή (in case he is an unwise man, and hears it primarily with ὁ θυμός and τὸ 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 τὸ 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 θνηταῖς φοαῖς of a θέια ἁρμονία) complicates things, for it implies, on the contrary, that συμφωνία is an *objective* notion: a succession of pitches is 'symphonic' when it imitates a θέια ἁρμονία.

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, περίοδοι ἐν οὐρανῷ τοῦ νοῦ — 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 ἁρμονία of the stars — *R.* 617 b); and that our soul can copy (cf. μιμούμενοι — 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, ὄψις — 47 a 1, and hearing, ἀκοή — 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 θέιαι ἁρμονίαι of the world-soul (cf. also *Ti.* 90 d).

But this way of putting things brings forward a serious problem. For the ἁρμονία of the universe seems to 'embodies' two different things: the ἁρμονία of its model, the παντελὲς νοητὸν ζῷον (cf. 31 b 1) (or, to use an expression from *R.* 500 c, the κόσμος τῶν εἴδων); and the ἁρμονία of the soul

of the universe (which, in its turn, is a copy of the world-soul of the νοητὸν ζῷον — 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 εἴδη); 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 ὄντα that it 'describes' (because, claims Plato, any λόγος is συγγενῆς with the ὄντα 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 γιγνώσκεται, 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 εἴδη. 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 though 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 μουσική (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 ὄντα 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' (μόνιμον 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 μόνιμον 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'. The word εἰκώς has, roughly speaking, two main meanings: 'like' and 'likely'. Literally, εἰκώς means 'like', or 'similar'; something which is εἰκώς, 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 εἰκώς, 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 *Timaues* 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 ἀληθὴς 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 ὁρισμοί 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 εἶδος, as he does in *Plt.* 279 a ff., where there is an attempt to determine the εἶδος of statesman by an analogy with the clearer εἶδος of waver).

12 So far, I put the distinction between these two main fields of knowledge, that of τὸ αἰσθητόν and that of τὸ ἀναίσθητον, in terms of 'the field of embodied/non-abstract εἴδη' and 'the field of non-embodied/abstract εἴδη'. 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 μετενεγκόντες ἐπὶ τἀληθές). The reason of this 'tranfer' 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* (ὡς πράττοντας) and *in act* (ὡς ἐνεργοῦντας) (*Po.* 1448 a 24). To bring a character to life, to make him ἔμψυχος 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 *αἰσθητόν* embodiment of his abstract thoughts.

14 See for instance Aristotle *Rh.* 1412 a 11 ff.: "we have to choose our metaphors [δεῖ δὲ μεταφέρειν] from the things that surround us and are visible [ἀπὸ οἰκείων 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 μή 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.

15 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 ἀποδείξεων αἱ ὑποθέσεις]" (cf. also *Ph.* 195 a 18 ff.). See also Sextus: "We term the ἀρχή ἀποδείξεων a ὑπόθεσις" (*M* III 4; cf. also III 5).

3 Aristotle for instance calls sometimes ὑπομένη his notion of οὐσία (cf. *Metaph.* 1029 a 14).

4 ὑποκείμενον — 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', ἤρτηται, upon the ἀκίνητος 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', ὑποκείσθω — 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 ὄν? 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 ὄν.

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 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 συνθήκη, 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 θεωρητική) 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, *sect ingred* I 93 (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 ἄτοπον, '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 (σφόνδυλος) of a spindle (ἄτρακτος), which turns on the knees of Necessity; and the shaft (ἠλακάτη) of the spindle, we are told, has a hook (ἄγκιστρον) (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 *Tht.* 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 and upper region. The hook, says Plato, is, like the shaft, 'made of adamant [ἐξ ἀδάμαντος], 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 ἀεὶ κατὰ ταὐτά, 28 a 2, μόνιμος, and βέβαιος, 29 b 6) (ἀδαμαντίνως is used many times as a stronger word for βεβαίως — 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 ἄγκιστρον). (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 τινι γίγνεσθαι, ὑπήκοον εἶναι, etc). Yet Plato, if he wants to express this idea, seems to prefer the verb ἀρτάω, 'to hang one thing upon another'. The expression ἤρτηται ἔκ τινος means both 'to be hung upon something (τι)' and 'to depend upon something (τι)'. 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 ἤρτηται ἔκ 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 (ἥρτηται δ' ἐκ τῶν θειῶν — *Lg.* 631 b), or that a poet is hung (ἐξήρτηται — *Ion* 533 e and 536 a) upon his Muse. (And upon the poet, says Plato at 536 a 8, are hung, ἐκκρεμαμένοι, 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 conotations (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 εἶδος (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 ἐπί. ἐπιστήμη comes from the verb ἐπίσταμαι, which is made out of the preposition ἐπί–, 'on', 'upon', and the verb ἵσταμαι, a passive form of ἵστημι, which means 'to stand' (in *Cra.* 437 a Plato proposes the same etymology; cf. Hofman 1950, *ad locum).* ἐπίσταμαι 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. ἐφίσταμαι, 'to stand on the top', and ἐπιστάτης, 'someone who stands over', for instance ἐπιστάτης ἁρμάτων, 'the one who is mounted upon a charioter' — see LSJ; cf. also Heidegger 1988, 153: "ἐπίσταμαι 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 ἐφίσταμαι ('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 metaphores 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 [αἰτῆσαι] a ὑπόθεσις as a sort of an ἐπιβάθρα 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 ὑποθέσεις. Here, speaking about the ascension of the soul towards τὸ καλόν, Plato says that the one who wants to perform this ascension' has, as it were, to step 'from rung to rung' (cf. ἐπαναβασμοῖς χρώμενον — 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 [ἐπιτηδεύματα], from institutions to learning [μαθήματα], and 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

b. Index Verborum

c. Index Locorum