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MIMESIS – NOËTICS – RHETORIC. THE
PLATONIC VISION OF THE ORIGINS OF
LANGUAGE AND THE ART OF DISCOURSE

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It is no accident that ancient thinkers referred to ‘the principle’ and ‘the beginning’ using the same term – *arché* (Stróżewski 1977: 21-44). The search for *arché* – in both its meanings – constitutes the very foundations of philosophy.

“It is one of the most polysemantic philosophical terms, yet ambiguity is not always a flaw. A word which encompasses many meanings may sometimes be a more faithful representation of our primary experience than any term with a fixed designation. Precise terms are the result of applying strict rules that may not be oriented towards describing what is really given. What is more, the ambiguity of a term may inspire us to ponder on its origins, discovering hidden, intimate relations between the various meanings. Such links may prove to reflect the innermost connections within reality itself” (Stróżewski 1977: 22).

Understanding primary intentions – thoughts which shape concepts as they emerge – seems to be a condition *sine qua non* for grasping the fundamental, archetypical sense of the ideas that become the living word present throughout the history of human thought. Words often change their meaning with time, and yet they also carry some of its permanent nature rooted in archaic pre-understanding, which enables post-understanding – the continuity of intellectual tradition – regardless of the place, time, cultural

background, the circumstances of the original utterance and the situation in which it is later received.

The Platonic concept of (representation), which governs the development of the world, thought, expression and creation, constitutes one of the typical examples of polysemantic terms in this philosophy of beginnings. It seems a worthy topic for consideration, if only due to the freshness of intuition of the intimate connections and innermost links, yet unspoiled by the verbalistic mannerisms of specialist language, which often develops into a hermetic jargon difficult to acquire or enliven. The communicativeness of Plato's vision has a further advantage. It refers to the deeply human tendency to graphically depict similarities and differences within the pre-discursive and pre-verbal stages of cognition. Plato's images do not serve to illustrate concepts or lines of thought; they are not secondary instruments of discourse, but touch on the roots of heuristic mental processes, also those which have currently acquired the fashionable label of 'semiosis'. This is the reason behind their continual applicability in studies that do not shy away from the so-called essential questions.

1 Cognition as Representation of Reality

Cognition (*gnósis*) and its relation to truth (*alétheia*) are among the issues that merited a special place in Plato's dialogues. This is the main focus of ruminations on the source and subject of knowledge, its credibility, exactness and clarity, as well as on the means and ends of acquiring and conveying information. Hermeneutics – the art of expressing and interpreting cognition through language and mimetic creation – also falls within the scope of these issues.

Plato's views on the nature of cognition underwent significant changes (Halevy 1896, Comford 1935, Robin 1957, Gulley 1962, Runciman 1962, Mathews 1972, Taylor 1976). As a successor of Parmenidean ontic, Plato assumed that being and thought are essentially one and the same (Gilson 1963: 20–40).¹ However, from the very beginning this assumption is juxta-

¹Throughout the present article the terms 'ontic' and 'noëtics' are used to signify 'the study of being', 'the study of cognition', in order to emphasise the distinctiveness of Platonic doctrine with regard to 'ontology' and 'gnoseology' or 'epistemology' which in later philosophical doctrines acquired a systematic nature in the form of a logically structured theory of being and cognition. Despite the coherence of his vision, Plato did not build a theoretical system. The mention of myths in explanations of philosophical problems as well as the aporetic nature of the analyses indicate that Plato approached his own thought with an open and critical mind. It suggests a kind of methodical

posed with a rich and colourful image of the world, where ‘that which is immovably the same’ mingles with things ‘so conditioned as both to be and not to be’ (*Timaeus* 28A, *The Republic* 477A). As a result of this collision of philosophical assumptions and intuitive notions, the monistic categories as defined by Eleatics crumble. Plato creates subcategories – he distinguishes between various stages of being and cognition, which differ with regard to the solidity of being and credibility of cognition.

Initially, Plato made a clear distinction between a true, justified, necessary and exact belief (*epistéme*) from an inexact, approximate and uncertain conjecture (*dóxa*) which is acquired by means of the senses (*aisthésis*), pertains mainly to changeable phenomena (*fainómena*) and is practically oriented (*Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Theaetetus*). Platonic aesthetics is a realm of passive experience (*páthema*), sensations, emotional states, moods and dispositions dependent on impulses and external conditions; the domain of physical agitations that are inspired by external factors and make the soul err and lose focus, since sensual urges it succumbs to are often delusive (See: *Phaedo* 79C). Aesthetics is therefore opposed by noëtics, the realm of inner auto-movement of the soul, activity limited to the virtual motion of the conscious mind (*noús*).

Here the soul may come into contact with that which is identical, unchanging and permanent, thus gaining knowledge, reason and wisdom (*epistéme*, *frónesis*, *sofia*). These are things fundamentally different from sensations and opinions (*Theaetetus* 210A-B, where at the end of the dialogue Socrates refutes the Protagorean thesis, which resembles the doctrine of Heraclitus and Empedocles in its assumption that there is no knowledge but sensation).

Later, however, Plato begins to argue that conjectures may in some respects resemble truths and lead to knowledge, and therefore that cognition may undergo development, while the discovery of the semblance of truth is an important stage in this process (*The Republic*, *Sophist*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*). He places an intermediary domain (*metaxý*) between knowledge and ignorance.

Conjecture is less clear than knowledge, but has more clarity than ignorance – it pertains to what seems both to be and not to be (*The Republic* 478D-E). The condition for veracious conjecture (*orthé dóxa*) is the dialectic method, which starts from hypotheses and arrives at principles (*arché*) and is corroborated by them. In this ascent (*anagogé*) many types

doubt and a poetic ease of expression, as well as the habit of questioning his own vision.

of lore and skills are used – most notably mathematics and geometry – which are not yet knowledge *sensu stricto*, but lead to it. Thus they steer the eye of the soul (*psychés ómma*) ever upwards, lifting cognition beyond notions (*eikasía*), convictions (*pístis*), through discursive thinking (*dianoia*) to knowledge (*epistéme*). The first two forms of cognition fall within the scope of conjecture (*dóxa*) and refer to what is born or becomes, whereas the latter two encompass a purely mental awareness of essence (*ousia*). The relation between the essence and that which is born is analogous to that between awareness and conjectures, while the relation between awareness and conjectures mirrors the link between knowledge and discursive thinking, or conviction and notion (*The Republic* 533C-534A). Understanding must begin from sensations and notions, as it counts among the actions of a soul trapped within a body. However, not every sensation has cognitive value and leads to knowledge. Not all experiences stir thoughts. Only sensations and notions containing a contradiction: both truth and falsehood, showing a thing together with its exact opposite, provoke thought and lift us upwards towards truth and essence (*The Republic* 523A-C).

The mutual interrelations of the domains of being correspond to the relations between different stages – levels – of cognition. They follow a mathematic model of proportional analogy:

Essence: that which is born: :awareness: conjecture

Knowledge: discursive thinking: :conviction: notion.

In his later works, Plato started to define the cognitive relations as THE RELATION OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (*mímesis* – see: *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *The Republic VI and VII*, *Timaeus*, *Letter VII*). Within the framework of ontics, this relation is analogous to DERIVATION with the formal and model nature of a being which is born – the representation – of a being which always and in every manner is – the idea-models (*The Republic*, book V). Within the framework of noëtics this is the relation of REPRESENTATION of a varying, gradable value of clarity, exactness, expressibility and semblance of truth of the image to the represented object.

This is the method Plato uses to radically weaken the Parmenidean treatment of the relation between thought and being – the object of thought – ascribing more and more importance to COGNITION THROUGH ANALOGY. The process, method and result of cognition are described by means of analogous relations. All formal and structural connections within the

framework of ontic and noëtics are explained in terms of representation. Both ontic and noëtics are based on the same logic of analogous relations. These connections are dynamic in nature; they are a motion, a process. In the domain of beings, representation takes the guise of a descendent relation: from an idea-model to a phenomenon-representation, whereas in the realm of cognition representation is an ascent: from the conjecture that has a semblance of truth to factual knowledge which is fixed and permanent. This relation may be depicted in the following model:

Factual being Ideas	Model	↑ Truth
the relation of formal model	the relation of imaging	the relation of representation
changeable being	representation	semblance of truth

In *Timaeus* (28A) Plato returns to the basic distinction between ‘that which is existent always but has no becoming’ and the conviction of ‘that which becomes and perishes and is never really existent’. The former is encompassed by thought with the term (*metá lógou*),² the latter with a wordless conjecture (*áneu lógou*) which results from experience. That which becomes, must have a cause – which Plato understands mostly as a permanent and unchanging model (*parádeigma*) of what is changeable; *ergo* he sees it in

²The term *lógos* has many meanings in Plato’s philosophy (Ast 1908, vol. II: 253n.). It may signify speech, a word, an utterance, a phrase, but also reason, conformity with the law of thought, a principle that determines external possibility (*dýnamis*) of cognition, action and production, e.g.: *lógos erotikós* (*Phaedrus* 262C, *Symposium* 172B), *prospáidzon lógos* (*Phaedrus* 262D), *lógos diagénesis* (*Theaetetus* 143C), *lógos poetikós* (*Protagoras* 317C, 34M; *Phaedo* 115D; *Sophist* 239D; *Laws* 778D), *lógos pragmatikós* (*Laws* 935A). Acting in accord with the *logós* is acting in line with the principle of spiritual harmony, modelled by divine actions (*Phaedo* 85D, 88D; *Philebus* 62A), which are juxtaposed e.g. with acting on whim (*Politeia* 382E). *Lógos* as a term or an utterance which signifies both speech and a written phrase (*Phaedrus* 275E, 277D), a linguistic symbol with an individual meaning (*Theaetetus*, 148D, 194A; *Cratylus* 432C, *Phaedro* 241B; *Phaedo* 65D; *Symposium* 195D; *Laws* 757A; *Gorgias* 499C). It may also mean ‘inner term’ which originates from an inner auto-movement of the soul that transcends external acts: utterances, actions and conscious moves (*Laws* 895E, 964A; *Theaetetus* 201C; *Phaedrus* 245E; *Phaedo* 78C; *Sophist* 221B). *Lógos* gives them the mark of truth, justice and wisdom (*Phaedrus* 270C; *Timaeus* 28A, 38A, 52C; *Phaedo*, 73A *The Republic* 529D, 582E, 586D; *Laws* 689A-D; *Sophist* 239B; *Philebus* 43E).

the logical, and not in the genetic sense. The representation of a model is an image-likeness (*eikón*). The relation between an image and a model mirrors the one between semblance and truth. A term that refers to something constant, unchanging and expressed by thought should, if possible, contain the same attributes, as in the medium of truth. Expressing conjectures is always approximate, changeable and semi-overt, since it is the representation of a semblance of truth. Just as the world of that which is becoming is the ideal image of the model, so conjectures constitute the likeness of irrefutable and unquestionable terms. Terms and likenesses of terms are related to what they express (*Timaeus* 29B-C).

The relation of causal representation in the realm of being, which Plato refers to as the resemblance between the image and the model, is encrypted in the vision of spatial-temporal reality that changes, ‘becomes and perishes’. The relatively constant elements of this reality, such as numbers and numerical relations, constitute the representation of permanent ideas and its likeness. The spatio-temporal circulation of the spheres of the Platonic universe corresponds to the motion of thought, which proceeds and projects various aspects of being in cognitive representations that differ in the degree of generality and necessity, exactness and semblance of truth.³ The domain of noëtics is a faithful representation of the realm of ontic. The concept of the circulation of ‘the Soul of the Universe’ described in *Timaeus* (36E-37C) may be considered as an ideal model for noëtics.

The circulation of the soul is the perfect model for cognition, to which the human mind must ascend through philosophical *paideia* and dialectic exercises. The level of utmost resemblance to the model is achieved through ascent, if the consciousness of the individual is able to comprehend the truth of ‘the truly existing essence’ (*ousía óntos oúsa* – *Phaedrus* 247C). In this horizontal revolution, in which the soul encounters sensual stimuli, the primary source of convictions and conjectures is perception. It is the nearest semblance-image of mental vision, which takes place in a vertical revolution of the soul and results in knowledge. Philosophy derives from the kinship (*koinoniá*) between the soul and that which invariably is, by becoming a word that – as much as it is possible – expresses being and announces truth. The predilection for wisdom is realised through the focus on being. The ability to perceive is therefore of the utmost importance to philosophers, as

³The analysis of mythological sources of Plato’s cosmogony was presented by A. Olerund (1951). Unfortunately, the author of the present publication had no access to the classical commentary to *Timaeus* written by A. E. Taylor.

it naturally leads from seeing images to a mental comprehension of ideas.⁴

The affinity between visual and mental perception (see: *Sophist* 254B, *Symposium* 21A, *Timaeus* 47A) is among the principal stipulations of Platonic noëtics (*The Republic*, books VI and VII). Seeing is the very nature of cognition. Cognition is mimetic in character – it is a visual (image-like) or mental (abstract) projection and is externally expressed as a representation. The articulation of cognition happens by means of images that resemble truth and are based on a conjecture, or explorative images which lead to knowledge. Only from a purely mental perspective of idea-models can the object be clearly, distinctly and directly perceived. Conjectural vision uses a number of intermediary means: names (*ónoma*), words (*lógos*), images (*eikón*), models (*schéma*) or terms (*noetón*) – see: *Letter VII*.

Knowledge of ideas may be divided into two subcategories. The first is scientific, discursive knowledge (*máthesis*), which uses general concepts and names (definitions) that capture the constant and necessary nature (*fýsis*) of things. What Plato means here is mostly mathematical concepts, definitions and models, as the structure of the nature of the world is based on numerical relations. Knowledge that does not need any intermediary means and is achieved through direct perception of ideas also falls within this category. General representations – those which possess a general meaning– i.e. names, models and some images are somewhere between conjecture and knowledge. Their generality and necessity gives them a scientific nature, but, due to their individual definiteness as intermediary means, they only resemble actual

⁴The term ‘*idea*’, which Plato uses so often, is equivalent to ‘*eídos*’ and constitutes one of the key concepts in his philosophy. It is the nominal equivalent of the verbs ‘*idéin*’ and ‘*eídenai*’ – ‘to see’ or ‘to know’ (Ast 1908, vol. 1, p. 602n; vol. 2, p. 85n.). According to the etymology, one might translate ‘*idea*’ as ‘*vis*’: that which is ‘visible’ or ‘visual’. Words that appear in colloquial Polish: *widmo*, *zwid* and *widok* [‘phantom’, ‘phantasm’ and ‘view’] do not constitute good equivalents, as the first two terms suggest the illusory nature of that which is seen, while the third is too empirical in nature. The term ‘*idea*’, in turn, is a linguistic calque. Its meaning has become almost entirely intentional, whereas for Plato the term ‘*idea*’ has a real ontic quality. It is not easy to draw a clear line between a factual (ontic) and intentional (noëtic) understanding of Plato’s ideas, since both these aspects are in an ‘intimate relationship’ of form and origin. Both languages constantly blend with each other. Another difficulty in translating Plato’s categories into modern languages is the fact that he frequently used participles to create philosophical terms. Such was the case of the term ‘being’ – *óntos ón* – which ought to be translated literally as ‘existing being’ or ‘existing existence’. Due to the conceptual link between this term and the word ‘essence’ – *ousía*, an expression signifying the highest form of being – the author of the present publication decided to translate the term as ‘truly existing essence’.

truth.

The vertical movement of the soul results in the unification of the seer and the seen, on the basis of affinity. The soul's identification with that which is identical and eternal – since identity is the final stage of clarity – may only be achieved in a long process of constant communion and closeness to the object, the fruition of a cognitive effort in which the mind – the immortal and divine element of the soul – goes through successive levels of experience and reasoning, letting oneself be purified of that which is particular, accidental and diffuse. Finally, it reaches the unchanging truth and in a single, intuitive act of perception encompasses all, penetrating the truly existing essence. This vision transcends the boundaries of scientific and discursive knowledge; it constitutes a qualitative leap from dialectic, in which the progress takes place in stages, ascending from the level of sensory vision to changeless principles, with the help of representations differing in the degree of exactness, clarity and semblance of truth. The use of various means and instruments of reaching a clearer perception of truth must be methodically guided.⁵ The criterion of truth and the semblance of truth is

⁵Runciman, quoting Cornford, goes as far as to claim that Plato's entire framework of cognition is built on the concept of 'knowledge how', 'knowledge by acquaintance'. The various types of knowledge would then be distinguished on the basis of the means and instruments of arriving at the truth or the semblance of truth, and not on the theses pertaining to the ontologically grounded difference between various objects of 'knowledge that'. This view seems to be corroborated by the fact that Plato's gradual ontic is – according to Runciman – more like a methodological postulate than a theorem justified by rational argumentation. As he puts it, 'Plato's own ontology is, in fact, assumed, not proved' (1962: 20-29). He also claims that Plato was skeptical about his own theory of ideas. Similar conclusions, though by means of a different argumentation, were presented by Gulley.

The stages of dialectic 'ascent' of cognition towards a perfect perception (contemplation) of ideas are interpreted differently by various commentators of Plato's work. According to A. J. Festugière (1936), dialectic cognition proceeds as follows: (1) pre-empirical existence of the soul, during which it perceives direct ideas – this state is the necessary condition for the later dialectic ascent to knowledge, which prepares the soul in the state of degenerated empirical (incarnate) existence to perceive ideas again, (2) the first dialectic operation which results in 'universals' of an ever higher degree of generality, until a specific and typical form is achieved (3) encompassing the being within oneself, (4) descent from the level of dialectics to the level of that which is indivisible, clear and distinct by means of two operations: distinguishing (*diaíresis*) and comparison (*synagogé*), (5) mental intuition (*nóesis*) of being depicted as unity within plurality. Festugière recognises two moments of dialectic cognition: *dianóesis* which encompasses stages two and four and *theoria* which takes place in stages one, three and five.

M. R. Schaerer (1938) divides the stages of cognition according to the element of

based on the degree of similarity between the representation and the model. Mimetic likeness of the representation is the criterion for its credibility and the usefulness or validity of the intermediary means for naming and defining, the art of proper discourse and producing accurate models, image-likenesses and comparisons that facilitate perception of the nature of things and truth itself. Mimetic intermediary measures are included in one set of cognitive operators by virtue of their common function of representations that bring us closer to the truth.

2 The Mimetic Concept of Language

The issue of language is the sole focus of one of the most hermetic and inaccessible of Plato's dialogues – *Cratylus*, which discusses the problem of the accuracy of names (*onómaton orthótes*).⁶ At the beginning Plato describes the relativistic view of Cratylus, who claims that names are ascribed to things by nature, but nature is – according to Heraclitus' doctrine – changeable, inconstant *and* contradictory. Hermogenes enters into polemic with Cratylus and claims that the accuracy of names is conventional in nature – it depends on the agreement of the speakers. Socrates admits that the issue is a difficult one and that a 'semblance of truth' solution will have to suffice. He points out

clarity and distinctiveness (pragmatic perfection) of knowledge: (1) illusion – an untrue conjecture based on sensual experience and on the semblance of truth, (2) ignorance – the awareness of the contradiction between being and non-being, (3) understanding – the intuitive comprehension of the first and transcendent principle of identity – admonition of truth and revelation of good, (4) knowledge – the return to the visible object in the light of the paramount principle of identity.

Goldschmidt (1963) conducted an analysis of books VI and VII of *The Republic* and *Letter VII*. He offers a division of the stages in the dialectic process based on the method used: (1) cognition through image, (2) cognition through definition, (3) essential cognition, (4) certain and necessary knowledge.

⁶Some authors (e.g. A. E. Taylor 1956) perceive *Cratylus* as a kind of a dialectic play of words, a presentation of uncoordinated opinions Plato was yet to make up his mind about. Others perform a logical reconstruction of the dialogue, attempting to reach the epistemological grounds of the discussion between Hermogenes, Cratylus and Socrates and ascertain Plato's own viewpoint. Robinson, for example, (1955: 221-236) presents a dichotomous view, juxtaposing Hermogenes' opinion with that of Cratylus and Socrates. Allen (1954: 271-287), Lorenz and Mittelstrass (1967: 1-20), Weingartner (1970: 5-25), Berger (1970/71: 213-233) and Kretzman (1971: 126-138) claim that *Cratylus* presented three different approaches and interpreted Socrates' perspective as Platon's own. In their opinion Plato was attempting to find some middle ground between Cratylus' radical naturalism and Hermogenes' conventionalism. The latter interpretation, supported by most scholars, seems the most convincing and in line with the message of the dialogue.

that Hermogenes' conventionalist view also leads to the kind of relativism Protagoras revealed by claiming that 'man is the measure of all things' and that reality is just as it seems to everyone. Yet, if every particular user of language could decide how things are to be *named*, the issue of correctness or truth and lies could not be discussed and each usage would be equally accurate.

At first, Plato probes the strength of Cratylus' naturalistic argumentation. Every action (*práksis*) falls within the scope of the natural order of things, and thus is, by nature, accurate. If it is not done accurately, it does not produce the accurate intended result. The speech-language (*léksis*) is a kind of action, so it must also be subject to specific rules of natural accuracy.⁷ Each person perceives a given thing differently and that no object is the same for everybody, but it does not mean that objects are divided into the manifold images we produce. Finding a solution to the problem of names requires us to acknowledge that things of which we speak possess a fixed essence adequate to its nature. This assumption stems from the obvious fact that speech-language pertains to objects and that the sensibility and the truth or un-truth of utterances is verified by referring to the object which is being spoken of.

Naming is an action (*práksis*) that concentrates on objects (*perí ta prágmata*). The name – the smallest unit of speech with an independent meaning, composed of sounds and syllables or letters of script – is the means (*órganon*) used. The aim of naming is to CATEGORISE OBJECTS (*díakrísis*) according to their nature and to EDUCATE (*didaskaliá*). A user of names should be called a teacher, such as the person who moves the shuttle between the warp and the weft of a cloth is called a weaver. Both of these actions may be perceived as an art and consist in choosing tools appropriate for the task – not arbitrarily but in line with the nature of the action, defined by its object and purpose. Thus, a teacher is a lawmaker

⁷Plato's views on the nature of language are in many respects similar to those held by the so-called philosophers of language (not to be confused with linguistic philosophy which uses the methods of logic and linguistics and is aimed at a formal reconstruction of the language system – *langue* – and not at studying linguistic facts and reconstructing the ways of using speech – *langue-parole*). According to philosophers of language (W. Quine, L. Linsky, B. Mates, P. F. Strawson, J. L. Austin, J. Katz, J. R. Searle may all be counted among them) language is not a perfect model, but above all a collection of utterances whose communicative function is based on the practical knowledge of language USAGE – the knowledge of how one should talk – which guarantees successful communication. Thus, speech-language is a form of a highly complicated action that involves various rules (Searle 1977: 16).

(*nomothétes*) – the creator and the giver of an accurate name to the object he distinguishes and teaches about. A master of the art of naming (*onomastiké téchne*) is someone who knows how to ask questions and provide answers – a dialectician philosopher.

By putting emphasis on the cognitive and communicative aims of using speech-language, Plato takes into consideration primarily the semantic aspect of the meaning of names – designation of objects – as well as the pragmatic aspect of speech acts, which is aimed at discovering the truth about the world and sharing it.⁸ The accuracy of names and utterances is judged on the basis of the nature of the things discussed and the nature of the speaker. Plato tried to resolve the problem of name accuracy through analysing the origins and sources of language. He started from etymological considerations of proper names and common nouns as well as some abstract concepts. In his view, all categories of names share a basic semantic function of representing the object or phenomenon they refer to. Plato strived to disentangle the process of building complex names from simple elements with respect to the mechanism of associating designations. The highest level of conformity to the nature of objects and phenomena is expressed through proper names. In this case, accuracy equals the aptness of description of a given person. Particularly accurate are the names of gods and the descendants of gods – heroes.⁹ However, some names may be given randomly; sometimes they

⁸A comparison of Plato's description of the aim of naming (*onomázein*) and Searle's categories of language philosophy reveals similarities in their distinction of elements of a speech act, connected to one another in many different ways in various situations: the phonetic act, the semantic act (which encompasses topical reference – the categorical or individual identification of an object – as well as declaring the state of things; reference and predication) and the pragmatic act (illocution). The latter should not be confused with perlocution, which aims at producing a given, material result through speaking. It should be noted that, similarly to modern philosophers of language, Plato claims that a given utterance has a meaning if it is used by the speaker in a meaningful way, whereas a declarative remains a declarative so long as it is a part of a declarative utterance, i.e. one that aspires to be true (Searle 1977: 28-29). Authors interested in pre-verbal origins of utterances, inspired by neo-Cantism and phenomenology – such as Urban (1961), Arendt (1978) or Sokolowski (1978, 1979: 639-676) go even further.

⁹Searle (1969: 26n) defines singular the functions of definite referring expressions as identification, distinguishing and indication: 'Any expression which serves to identify any thing, event, process, action or any other kind of "individual" or "particular", I shall call a referring expression. Referring expressions point to particular things; they answer the questions "Who?", "What?", "Which?" It is by their function, not always by their surface grammatical form or their manner of performing their function, that referring expressions are to be known'. The function of identification or reference (simi-

express the intention of the name-giver rather than any characteristic of the name-bearer. Plato drew from the Greek naming tradition but claims that this assumption is also valid for other ethnic languages. Regardless of the external form (phonetics and graphic transcription), the origins of human speech are basically the same. The aim of the process was always to produce an effective tool for expressing the essence of things. The means and materials used are of secondary importance.

The large number of different tongues and their constant changes prevent us from reaching back to the very first words that could reveal the firstlings (*stoiheía*) of speech-language. Etymologies are not to be treated too seriously; what is important, however is that the basis for the accuracy of names needs to be constant and unchanging, regardless of the spatial, temporal and contextual circumstances. It has to be the same when we express something with sounds that form words or with gestures, as the deaf and dumb do.

In his search for the basis of the accuracy of names, Plato introduces the very same term he used to describe the cognitive relation between thought and being: each act of speech expressed by a gesture, a sound or in writing is a REPRESENTATION (*mímesis*) of things. He even goes as far as to try to ascribe the natural property of representing elementary qualitative essences to individual sounds and the corresponding letters.¹⁰

There is, however, a fundamental difference between linguistic representation and communication signals used by animals, aural representation known from music or visual similarity known from painting or sculpture. The art of naming does not aim to represent specific sounds, shapes or colours – i.e. the properties of the things we experience – but to capture their constant, general and necessary nature. The name shows WHAT a given thing IS (*hó ti estín, tó dé tí*) and not WHAT it IS LIKE (*ti poíon ti*).¹¹

lar to the Platonic *diáíresis*) may either be definitive or non-definitive (and appear singular or plural). Utterances that contain or constitute proper names may be counted among definitive expressions. Plato also notices the factual, semantic accuracy of pointing to an object by referring to its name and – interestingly – derives this accuracy from the method of qualitative and quantitative (i.e. universal) characteristic of the thing that is so named. Does he consider the first names to be some proto-universals defining basic ideal qualities? If so, then the actual source of language should be sought in some primary, elementary experience of the essence, which triggered the first act of naming.

¹⁰K. Lorenz and J. Mittelstrass use this concept as the basis for their analogy between the platonic representational concept of meaning and the picture theory of language developed by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. See also: Daitz 1953: 184-201.

¹¹Here Plato formulates the primary question of philosophy. The question ‘What is

The dissimilarity between language and other forms of representation lies primarily in the MEANS OF ARTICULATION and in the NATURE OF MEANING. The two are tightly interrelated, but Plato clearly favoured the latter. In his view, musical and artistic representations differ from linguistic representation in the method of imaging rather than in the form of articulation. Thus, the issue of the accuracy of names proves to correspond to the issue of the accuracy of iconic images-likenesses in music and visual arts, with the reservation that the latter two types of representation do not show the nature of things – the essence – but the external characteristics and shapes. In both cases the aim is essentially the same: to create a representation faithful to the actual object. Visual and musical images may be considered to be likenesses of things due to their individual properties, which is why Plato held them in low regard from a cognitive point of view. Their resemblance to the truth is arbitrary and narrow, whereas truth itself is absolute and universal. The meaning of names contains an element of permanence, since it represents the necessary and general essence and not the particular givenness of a single object.

Plato does not clearly recognise the difference between what is meant (*signifié*) and the reference term (*signifiant*), so crucial for modern linguistics. Neither does he use the general term ‘sign’, which was introduced later, by Plato’s student – Aristotle (*Perí hermeneías* I, 16A1). He considers the essence of semiotic relation to lie in representation – the function that is universal to all images containing cognitive nature. Finally, he does not distinguish between arbitrarily or symbolically denoting signs and natural (indication) signs or icons (images). He is not familiar with the concept of abstraction; it was developed later by Aristotle. For Plato, the general is equally visible and particular in nature as the particular – the only difference is that the former is seen by the purified ‘eye of the soul’, whereas the latter may be perceived by the senses. The only thing that may be discovered within Plato’s framework is what can be labelled as the intuition of a BASIC SEMIOTIC INTENTION and compared to the contemporary concept of meaning as individual reference. This intuitive view pertains to the relation of representation, which Plato considers to be the most important in view of the role of language in learning and cognition. In Plato’s eyes, individual

a given thing?’ constitutes the foundation of the dialectics of doubt. Plato understands the question ‘What is a given thing like?’ both within the framework of the search for various manifestations and similarities in conjectures and discursive thinking and the framework of assessing the degree of realising values and their relative and absolute nature, which enables the representations-beings to be hierarchically structured.

reference is iconic in nature.

Plato considered searching for the origins of language by referring to the oldest names (*onómata próta*) and the primary means of forming words from individual sounds or letters as a hypothetical solution that has only the semblance of truth. Where does language come from? Was it bequeathed to us by the gods, is it the invention of some primitive tribe? If we cannot be certain of anything, should we stop trying to ascertain the beginnings of language altogether? Etymological considerations on the origins of individual terms are significant from the point of pragmatics – the art of proper application of language. A person who does not know the origins of a given name is not able to apply it correctly. According to Plato, ruminations on the origins of language as such remain in the domain of historical speculation, yet knowledge of some elements of – so to speak – historical and comparative linguistics are important factors in enhancing one’s linguistic competence.

Just as the conventionalist arguments of Hermogenes seem to be refuted, his adversary – Cratylus the naturalist – enters the stage. Socrates also tested the strength of his argumentation, bringing to light the potential dangers of the naturalistic hypothesis. He starts by establishing the departure point in the discussion: all participants agree that a name is accurate if it shows the nature of the described object or phenomenon. Naming is subject to rules and therefore may be considered an art. If it is so, then – as any art – it begins with the creator. There are those who have mastered it and those who have not. The masters create their art in accordance with the rules. Cratylus believed that a name which is not accurate is not a name at all, but a sound without a meaning. However, those who use inappropriate names do not speak nonsense, but un-truth. An incorrect name – one that does not fit the object – remains a name nonetheless. It is like a portrait that remains an image even if it bears no resemblance to the model. Both the name and the portrait represent something, but not the object or person they were supposed to, or not in a sufficiently efficient manner.

Names are accurate if they are a representation of likeness – then they are true. The same may be said of utterances that state or deny something by combining names: nouns and verbs. Such a synthesis is a word (*lógos*) which tells the truth or a lie or, strictly speaking, is a likeness of a word “spoken within the soul.” Truth and lies originate from the soul and speech-language is their incorporated form.

Images-likenesses represent objects or states – in language or mimetic arts – and therefore cannot be identical to the things they signify. They are not facsimiles. Similarly to visual images or musical compositions, names

and declarative utterances are complex creations – and therefore cannot be considered entities but pluralities. Pluralities by nature have their shortcomings. The accuracy or inaccuracy of utterances in speech-language is relative – analogous and gradable.¹² In some cases the name may be a representation of an object despite having some flaws – it is inaccurately composed. We say that such a name is ugly, whereas an accurate name is considered beautiful.

Plato's Socrates defends the natural basis for the accuracy of names, linking it with the analogous resemblance to the represented object. He rejects Hermogenes' hypothesis in its radical, arbitrary and conventional form. The accuracy of speech-language cannot be brought down to an entirely subjective usage. In Plato's eyes, the limitations of language are not ones with the limitations of the world expressed in semantic categories. The reality portrayed by linguistic images-likenesses constitutes the model for human speech, which ought to represent objects and phenomena as accurately as possible. The danger of the naturalistic vision of the mimetic theory of language and the basis for the accuracy of names lies in the fact that such an approach allows us to treat the process of naming – creating and using names – as a representation of the process of emergence and demise of a changing reality which is EXPRESSED in words by the human race (Calvert 1970: 26-47). Plato's notion of meaning is nominal and representational, and therefore differs from the picture theory of language described by Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, not only due to the naturalistic understanding of the origins of language and the reference to the hypothesis of etymology and origin, but – more importantly – due to the noëtic substantiation which Plato saw as the basis for resolving the argument around the issue of the nature of speech-language.¹³

¹²Kretzman (1971) interprets this thesis in the following manner: The factual name N is accurate (= it ought to be used) if and only if by sounds or graphic symbols N incorporates the model of an accurate name for a given XY, i.e. (a) there exists such an XY, (b) N is used or is ready to be used as a name for this particular XY and (c) there is a model for an appropriate name for XY. He also claims that the model for an appropriate name for XY exists if and only if it is natural that it imitates the form X at least in (a) having a sufficient number of relevant XY qualities constitutive of the form X, so it may be the name of another form and (b) ruling out all individual qualities of all singular Xs and the distinctive features for all sub-groups of XY.

¹³Plato's noëtic approach to the issue of ultimate sources and bases for the accuracy of names in speech-language is similar to the views presented by Sokolowski (1979: 643n). What Plato sees as the most primordial (in the noëtic sense) is the differentiation between essence and disposition, which corresponds to the division into two aspects of being: 'that which is invariably the same' and 'that which becomes and perishes, but is never really existent', i.e. idea-models and phenomena-representations.

A person who wishes to use language properly must, first of all, have a degree of knowledge about the surrounding world. Getting to know objects and phenomena is the starting point for speaking; cognition in turn results from convictions, discourse and conjectures, which may or may not be true. Discursive thinking and the spoken word are one and the same, with the proviso that the first constitutes a silent conversation of the soul with itself, whereas the second is heard as sounds that form a declarative or negative statement. When secretly born in the soul, a statement or a negation (*fásis kaí apofásis*) becomes a conviction. A conviction which stems from passive sensory experience (*páthema*) is a mixture of truth and un-truth – a supposition we express by uttering the formula: I suppose (*faínetai*). Speech-language may be compared to producing images (*eidolopojiké*) which might either be likenesses of things or figments of imagination (see: *Sophist* 263D-264C). Here, Plato speaks of the beginnings of speech-language in the noëtic, and not in the historical or etymological sense. In his view, it is only that beginning which truly shows the true source of speech-language. The spoken word, directed at the listener, contains a clue (*semeíon*) as to how the sounds are to be understood in accordance with their meaning.¹⁴

Sokolowski mentions four methods – degrees – of recognising essentials (1978, 135n). The first stage is naturally the most basic in the noëtic sense and constitutes the foundation for the others. Plato would perhaps call it innate knowledge which is retrieved through dialectic ascent in making distinctions and finding similarities. This allows us to recover what our soul has forgotten – reaching *anamnesis*. However, what Plato considers the highest degree of being conscious of differences and similarities is not the meta-theoretical level of reflection, but contemplative vision (*theoria*) in which a pure essence, unblemished by happenstance, reveals itself. In this sense, the Platonic concept of experiencing unity in multiplicity would correspond to the over- or beyond-philosophical thinking described by Sokolowski (1978: 172n).

¹⁴In Plato's works the term *semeíon* may be used to signify a natural indicator (*Theaetetus* 129B, 208C, 194C; *Timaeus* 50C, 72B), the phonetic aspect of the spoken word (*Sophist* 262A-D) or a linguistic symbol – graphic or acoustic – which contains a meaning (*Cratylus* 392A, 415A, 427C), or a sign from the gods (*Phaedrus* 242B, 244C; *Timaeus* 72B) in a sense similar to the contemporary notion of a symbol (Ast 1908: vol. III, p. 245n.). The meaning of an indicator or a symptom may also be conveyed by the term *epiklen* – mark (*Philebus* 48C). At times Plato also uses the word *séma* – a sign – which may also mean a grave (*Cratylus* 400B-C, *Gorgias* 493A). He plays on this ambiguity by pointing to the phonetic similarities between the terms 'grave' and 'body' (*séma* – *sóma*). The body may be considered a grave for the soul, but it also allows the soul to show signs of life. The term 'symbol' appears in later dialogues in two forms – the noun *symbolé* (feminine gender) which signifies a union or link in the physical sense (*Timaeus* 74E, *Phaedo* 98D) and the noun *sýmbolon* (neuter gender) meaning a conventional sign (*The Republic* 371B) or a natural or conventional signal of expression (*Letter XIII* 360A, 363B). Sometimes the meanings of *sýmbolon* and

The combination of significance and sound which enables the speaker to communicate with the addressee must be based upon a convention – a set of customs and agreements known to all language users. Convention is also the basis for assessing similarity and accuracy of phrases. If speech is to result in mutual understanding, custom must walk arm in arm with social agreements. Convention is added at the stage where the silent conversation within the soul – a mental proto-understanding – is turned into a post-understanding – human communication.

In effect, we have to accept that the accuracy of speech-language and its smallest units – names – stems from two sources: similarity, i.e. the conformity between the verbal reference and the nature of the object or phenomenon it signifies and the convention adapted by language users. Plato offers an intermediary solution, an attempt at a compromise between two fundamentally different hypotheses: Cratylus' naturalistic theory and Hermogenes' conventionalist views. Both of these approaches lead to relativism, albeit by different routes. This compromise does not topple the notion of mimesis: it proves to be the strongest, as it ultimately pertains to the noëtic origins of speech-language, whereas both the naturalist hypothesis and the conventionalist framework only refer to the incorporated – i.e. secondary – semiotic situation. The act of speech contains two aspects: it stems from inner speech which the audible utterance is modelled after.¹⁵

symbolé are identical (*Symposium* 191D). The mentioned words appear occasionally, and are ambiguous and not clearly defined; therefore they cannot be regarded as semiotic terms. The most symbolic of these terms is *mimesis*, as it may indicate a semiotic function of representation. It is used to signify various types of formal and analogous accuracy, with regard to being, cognition, language and creation (Ast 1908: vol. III, p. 245, 300).

¹⁵Saint Thomas Aquinas lists three types of words (*triplex verbum*): inner words (*verbum cordis, verbum interius*) which are tantamount to the act of understanding (*apprehensio, cognito, comprehensio*), simple or complex concepts which are the intellectual product of the cognitive act (*conceptus, verbum mentis, intentio intellecta, similitudo rei intellectae*) and words expressed outwardly (*verbum exprimens*) which are the incorporated synthesis of the previous two types. Such a holistic view on signification which also pertains to sentences is characteristic of the so-called old school of logic (*logica vetus*) in the Middle Ages. Within this framework the term 'sentence' had a very broad meaning. It could be understood as (a) the general sense of an utterance, (b) that which has the qualities of truth or falsehood, (c) that which is necessary, possible, circumstantial or impossible, (d) that which is known or thought; the object of knowledge, conviction or doubt. The old school of logic is sometimes called the dictional theory (from the Latin term *dictio*) in opposition to the terministic school with a nominalistic approach (Kneale 1921). Naturally, the categories of Platonic philosophy are even less varied and analytical in nature.

Both of these hypotheses may be compared to naïve realism and extreme nominalism in contemporary theories of language. Plato's conceptualistic compromise avoids the traps of the two extremes – the problematic hypothesis of a genetic conformity between language and reality and the operationist hypothesis according to which the linguistic 'rules of the game' are the only criterion for accuracy (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*). The latter hypothesis identifies the veracity of utterances within the domain of a given language. Brought down to the level of conventions applied in a given universe of discourse, the question of the basis for rules becomes insoluble.

Aware of all these problems, Plato formulated questions of real significance: what is the clue that prompts the listener to understand the utterance directed at him? Can searching and discovering (*heurésis kai zétesis*) – studying the meanings of language and inquiring about the nature of things – be regarded as the same process in terms of aim and methodology? Is the consistency of language and the image expressed by it a sufficient warrant for the truth of utterances? – after all, even accurately formed diagrams used in geometry (which is an exact science based on logic) may contain errors resulting from faulty stipulations. The line of thought may be flawless and consistent, and yet a small error renders them entirely untrue.

Plato realises that exactitude is a characteristic and unavoidable feature of any language: polysemy and homonymy are very common,¹⁶ which makes it more difficult to ascertain the similarity between words and relevant phenomena or determine the truth or un-truth of an utterance (*Sophist* 251B). Names may 'mutiny' and 'take sides' – all of them aspire to be true and accurate. How can we determine, which of them indeed possess such qualities? Linguistic competence and knowledge of names alone does not provide the decisive criterion. Truth is not an immanent property of speech-language, but of being. If speech aims to identify objects and phenomena and at teaching what is true, this objective may be achieved only after acquiring knowledge of objects and phenomena, which is not the same as the ability to use speech.

¹⁶These are the phenomena Plato ultimately considers as inherent properties of speech. He even counts them among the merits of language. From the perspective of science and dialectics such phenomena are disadvantageous, as they hinder the process of arriving at clear definitions and names. They may, however, be used in the symbolic and metaphorical aspect of describing visions which transcend dialectic categories and allow us to 'see' being as a unity within multiplicity. In a hermeneutic clarification of such a climactic experience, the faults of language may be transformed into a transparency if a deep meaning of a poetic metaphor which constitutes the tenor of a myth, i.e. a complex symbol.

Since speech-language is a representation of reality, how else can we assess the similarity between the original and the image, if not by knowing the model and comparing the likeness to it. How should accurate knowledge be obtained without the involvement of the faulty names, is a different question altogether. In any case, Plato considers reaching such knowledge to be a sufficient and necessary condition for learning to use speech accurately. Accurate speech means telling the truth in a clear and unambiguous (revealing) manner by pointing to true similarities. If, as in Heraclitus' view, the entire reality was undergoing constant change – its essence fleeting and fickle – cognition of truth would be impossible. By nature, cognition cannot both be and not be cognition. A changeable conjecture pertaining only to that which is changeable does not deserve to be deemed cognition. The latter term should above all refer to that which is immovably the same. If such a cognition had no *raison d'être*, we would remain forever limited to the level of fickle convictions about things 'so conditioned as both to be and not to be'. If the imperfections of speech-language were to become the measure of things and the only indication of the nature of what is meant, we would have to adapt Heraclitus' doctrine of universal and eternal changes of the world, cognition, representation and speech. We would then be forced to accept contradiction as the sole warp of reality and sophistry as the last word of apparent knowledge. Neither the essence, nor the cognition of truth would have any *raison d'être*.

The only way out of the dead end of universal relativism, postulated by the discussion between Hermogenes, Cratylus and Socrates, is the acceptance of a possibility of a direct cognition of idea-models and a language that would lead to a direct perception thereof. Speech-language appears to be a tool imperfect by nature – as any other indirect means of cognition. It might, however, be perfected and may effectively serve dialectics – the strenuous way up, which lifts the 'eye of the soul' and allows us to see the truth of being.

To sum up, an important aspect of Plato's views on speech-language is that the basis for the accuracy of names is linked with the nominal and representative function of their meaning, which reveals the truth – though only partially and approximately, as well as with the linguistic competence of the speaker whose art of discourse is based on the knowledge of things and methods as well as on the familiarity with the customs and conventions. Thus, the accuracy of speech-language may possess a – to use contemporary terms – a semantic and pragmatic aspect. We may also speak of a semantic and pragmatic aspect of the truth of utterances, based on the ontic truth

of being. The art of discourse ought not to lose sight of this truth, as it determines whether discourse may be called art at all. It might as well be turning into sophistry, i.e. a linguistic game based on a fantasy and conjectures, incapable of distinguishing between truth and un-truth.

3 What is the Model for the Art of Discourse

All knowledge, according to Plato, has two aspects which correspond to the dual goals it is aiming for. These are either the understanding of things or acting and creating. The dual idea of knowledge: scientific (*gnostiké epistémé*) and practical (*praktiké epistémé*), provides great competence to the one who possesses the said knowledge (*Statesman* 258D). The difference between examination leading up to gaining knowledge and the utilisation of science lies in the conclusions reached. The goal of examination is passing judgement and evaluation, the goal of applying knowledge is setting rules and law for action and creation. The first one is theoretically-critical in nature while the latter is characterised by norm-creation and practicality (*Statesman* 260A-B). All practical abilities must be utilised in the cognitive process. Both those who use logistic – the art of proper deduction and leadership – and those who engage in the art of construction or of ruling a country have to possess an appropriate scope of knowledge about the subject matter, otherwise the outcomes of their actions will be inherently misdirected. Therefore for Plato ‘knowing’ meant: the ability to determine what the object is according to its nature – idea – and to know its natural utilisation, be able to use it properly. A person who has such knowledge is the lord of objects and his science is the art of kings (*basiliké téchne* – *Statesman* 258B, 259B, 292B, 300B).

All art worthy of its name must be based on cognition. Cognition, in turn, connects with art in utilising the laws of logistics and the methodological rules of discourse and the rhetoric which teaches the proper way of expressing oneself, of convincing and clarification of knowledge. Art and cognition meet through the pragmatic aspect of knowledge, speech-language and the mimetic production of similarities. The latter refers to the semantic function of imaging – representation – which is shared by cognition, language and other mimetic forms of expression.

Rhetoric is contemplated in two dialogues: *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, which present Plato’s position on the art of discourse’s role in the upbringing of a citizen and in the process of dialectic discourse. Together they form an outline of an in-depth communication theory covering a wide scope of issues,

based on assumptions of ontic and noëtics, i.e. the science of using speech in such a way, that it is in line with the nature of the act and the tool of cognition and understanding.¹⁷

The title character of the first dialogue states that the art of discourse has its source in the capability of creating convictions (*peithó poiesis*). This art has the power to convince elders at council meetings, judges in the court, or the audience during a general meeting to proceed in the direction designated by a seasoned speaker. Socrates asks: what level of importance of beings does rhetoric pertain to? He does not concern himself with the behaviour of the rhetorician but with the aim of discourse. It is revealed that the force of rhetorical persuasion may have two results: it may either persuade without providing true knowledge or both persuade and educate. The formulation of these disjunctive options has a profound impact, as it results in the polarisation of two different concepts of the communicative speech act. The first one treats discourse as A WAY OF USING A TOOL IN A LANGUAGE 'GAME' in accordance with the speaker's preconceived strategy, *ergo* it pertains to practical philosophy. The second one emphasises THE GOAL OF TRUTHFULNESS AND THE ALLIEGANCE TO THE TRUTH OF THE SPEACH-LANGUAGE which is the tool of 'divulging' the truth through proper similarity to the object.

Gorgias is enchanted by the captivating power of the word of rhetoric.¹⁸

¹⁷One should, as etymology suggests, speak of the theory of the art of dialogue, i.e. dialectics. In Plato's texts the word *dialégien* means: expressing one's opinion, distinguishing, discerning, but also conversation, deliberation or discussion about something (Ast 1908: vol. I. p. 480). *Dialogós* means statement but also conversation (Ast 1908: vol. I. p. 483). The last meaning is positive, as it refers to a statement that leads to understanding, and is therefore oriented towards the contact between the speaker and the listener; moreover it is oriented towards the information and the expression of a subjective point of view (especially in terms of values) – towards everything that is connected with the word 'communication'.

¹⁸'The power of the word', as understood here by Gorgias, is not unlike Austin's 'perlocutionary act', where the goal, intention and preconception of discourse is to inspire a particular result in the form of a true effect on the feelings, thoughts or actions of the audience and of some accidental bystanders (Austin 1978; see also: Searle 1977: 25). The philosophers of language distinguish the general 'power of the word' from its meaning and the designated object (reference). This division is connected to the idea of language acts, which may simply aim at making a statement ('to say something IS to do something'), or what is being achieved through just saying something ('to do something IN saying something'), or what is being achieved through the said statement ('to do something BY saying something'). The first type of a statement is named by Austin a locutionary act, which makes sense and refers to an object, but at the same time may either be true or false. The second type he calls an illocutionary act; the

He claims that there is no subject about which a rhetorician would not be able to speak to a crowd in a more convincing manner than a representative of any other profession. The conclusion of the above statement, as Socrates observed, is that the art of discourse does not require knowledge, only the skill of convincing uneducated listeners to accept the facts presented by the speaker. The power of rhetorical persuasion does not depend on the knowledge of the subject, but on the skill to influence others. Therefore rhetoric preys on ignorance and the inability to reach an agreement between the parties as to the matter at the core of a discussion or a dispute. People generally find it difficult to define the subject of a discussion and to present their point of view in a manner that would lead to a conclusion and establishing the positions of both parties. Instead of leading to a reasonable conclusion, a discussion often transforms into a dispute, where one party accuses the other of evil intentions and invectives follow.

Rhetoric seems to be an activity completely unrelated to art, requiring only cunning, courage and an ease when it comes to dealing with people which boils down to flattery. Another such activity is cooking – it seems to be an art yet it boils down to purely practical experience and skill. Two similar ones are cosmetics and sophistry. All activities performed to flatter are phantoms (*eidola*) and art imitations based on pretence: cooking is an imitation of curing, cosmetics of gymnastics, sophistry of an aspect of politics, namely legislation (*Gorgias* 465C). Arts, which do not need to flatter, cater to the physical and spiritual well-being of the citizens, while pseudo-arts only pretend to do so. For example, the aim of sophistry is not to say what is best for the listeners, but that which would give them pleasure and would also be to the benefit of the speaker, who baits his audience and presents his particular interest as something of utmost value. The above may also be said of a badly executed painting which fails to resemble the model – instead of representing the depicted thing it merely imitates, becoming an example of deceitful art.

From the point of view of the educational influence, the basis for the art of discourse must be the TRUTH OF VALUE; the speaker should encourage the listeners to accept this truth and model their behaviour accordingly.

third is a perlocutionary act (Searle rejects the difference between a locutionary and illocutionary act, he simplifies the typology to a dual-division). The latter two types, apart from making sense and referencing an object, also hold the ‘power of the word’ (Searle gives the power of the word to all statements within the appropriate quality proportions) which is never connected to the truthfulness or falseness of a statement. Statements bearing the power of the word, but deprived of logical value are called performatives in contrast to the purely informative utterances – ascertainties.

The goal of rhetoric should be the creation of thoughtful convictions and, in consequence, the formulation of just attitudes and actions. Therefore, what seems to be the main problem is the philosophically-axiological (ethical in particular) explanation for the art of discourse. This is an issue of utmost importance, for it is the JUDGING POWER of the spoken word and the influence achieved through it by the speaker. Speech-language has a particular assessing quality which colours most statements. Public speakers usually express their attitude towards values, thus influencing the assessing mechanisms of their listeners. Such an attitude may be based on the truth or on a lie. Flattering rhetoric is deceitful (*pseudologia*), born from an un-truthful attitude towards values. The axiological falsity described above originates in ignorance (*agnosia*) and leads to a deceitful upbringing (*pseudopaidēia*). If someone is able to accurately recognise the truth, right and beauty – this trinity of utmost values – then it is impossible for him not to be able or willing to express and teach them, making himself similar to them in the process.¹⁹

The basis for the judging power of the word is the knowledge of the nature of values. The nature of values causes them to be a measurement tool

¹⁹Plato interprets the word *pseúdos* very widely: both as ‘a falsity’ and as ‘a lie’. Dąbbska (1979: 121-133) translated Plato’s *pseúdos* as ‘falsity’, pointing out that “Plato does not clearly distinguish between ‘a judgement in terms of logic as true or false content of a sentence’ and ‘a judgement as an act of accepting or rejecting the state of affairs denoted by the content of the sentence’,” to the contrary, he seems to broaden (e.g. *Philebus* 37-40) “the meaning of the term ‘truthfulness’ and ‘falsity’ to encompass ‘emotional state.’” Taking into account his concept of mimicking or creating forms, we have to assume that all images which are – a natural or artificial – copy have an element of the *pseúdos*, i.e. a lack, in every representation. Sometimes the said element strips the copy of any semblance of truth, making it cognitively useless. For Plato this means an axiological deprivation in general. Looking at the issue of *pseúdos* from the perspective of the axiological basis, we see that “the evil of telling the untruth, including telling lies is, considered by Plato as relative; on the other hand the evil coming from inner falsity, i.e. ignorance and mistake – is absolute.” The reduction of evil coming from falsity is through awareness which “is the necessary condition of getting rid of [evil], and is therefore the condition a human must fulfil to get closer to the truth which is an important goal in his life.” Such are the origins of Plato’s ethical optimism. Not unlike Socrates, he believed that it suffices for a human to get to know the truth and accept it so he will be cured of lies. It is the utmost evil because it hurts the most important part of a human – the soul. Rhetoric may be useful if it is necessary to dissuade someone from committing an injustice or to convince that person of the need for atonement and undergoing a just punishment. The biggest evil is not suffering, but an untrue assessment of values which originates in axiological ignorance and leads to unjust actions. It is better to suffer unjustly than to commit unjust deeds (*Gorgias* 466D-469B).

for humans, a model governing their behaviour – their goal. Are pleasure and good the same thing? No. Do we seek pleasure to find good, or seek good for the pleasure of it? The former, of course. Pleasant things satisfy us, yet only good things make us better people. Our own good and all other kinds of goodness originate from action (*aretée*). All activity of the body and the spirit and anything that is alive does not happen accidentally, but originates from the natural order, correctness and art. Each being is, by its nature, entitled to some form of order which makes it good. The good for the soul is the ability to put its abilities in order. What is organised is wise. Therefore the whole universe is called ‘order’ (*kósmos*).

In this cosmologically grounded philosophy of values the science of geometry becomes useful, as it teaches us about the natural proportions between elements and parts of reality which form the basis for general order. Rhetoric should be based on such a knowledge of nature and its axiological laws, if its argumentation is to be not only convincing, but also true. Convincing must result from agreement which is achieved through mutual understanding between two similar parties of a conversation, that is between two friendly speakers. Every agreement requires knowledge, mutual goodwill (*eunoía*) and honesty (*parrhesía*) on both sides.²⁰ A common ground for communication is achieved through conformity of reference to values mutually accepted and recognised. From Plato’s point of view, conformity of the speakers’ ethos, based on accepting the truth about values, is a necessary prerequisite for reaching an agreement.

One who wishes to be a good speaker must be just and know what justice is. The same applies to a politician who fights for power and position in a state, and to everyone who wants to perform some kind of civil service. The state and its offices are best when both the citizens and the civil servants are good and beautiful. When the state and the citizens rebel against an evil tyrant, and he protests against this impudence and the questioning of his merits, how will he build his defence? It is the citizens, whom he allegedly taught good and justice, that want to remove him from office in the name of these very principles. A state ruled in a truly just manner never unjustly rebels against a just ruler. Such an assumption is in itself absurd. It is more

²⁰These three basic conditions of successful communication – and efficient dialogue – may be compared to Austin’s analysis of a happy usage of performatives. The cases of unhappy, infelicitous usage are described by Austin as misfires or abuses. Misfires are purposeful acts, but they do not achieve their goal – are void – because they are done in a way which is disallowed, or vindicated, or improper and is characterised by misapplications. Abuses are declarative or alleged acts, insincere and masking, which pretend to be something else (Austin 1970: 18, 233, 253).

likely that the defence of the tyrant is based on sophistry and lies, when he pretends to abide by the values and courage, while truly disregarding them (*Gorgias* 519B–E).

In *Gorgias* Plato analysed the art of discourse in terms of practical philosophy, whereas in *Phaedrus* he considered the theoretical grounds and searches for the nature of the skill of convincing based on the persuasive power of words.

If this art is not to be limited to the skill of conducting disputes in courts and at public assemblies, but also applied to all kinds of statements, then it must be based on a proper use of similarities. A good speaker should know how to methodically compare some things with others and, if possible, show the similarities and differences to invoke comparisons made by others. Noticing the similarities and differences in terms of truth is not a question of supposition, but of the proper distinguishing between beings. A person who makes suppositions based only on a superficial similarity of a phenomenon and relies only on the technical rhetoric skill, cheats only himself and his discourse cannot be called art. It is so because he does not discern the proper traits of the nature – idea – of things, he cannot combine the scattered multitude into one, or correctly define that which is particular. Without the above listed characteristics, the discourse cannot be clear or coherent (*Phaedrus* 261E-263B). The basis for the art of discourse is the wisdom of the word, i.e. the ability to see all that is naturally connected into one and all that is divided into multitude. Such distinctions (*diuresis*), connections (*sympállein*) and utilisations of similarities (*analogisma*) belong to the realm of dialectics. The art of discourse is therefore a part of the art of conversation – dialectic hermeneutics. Its essence is the noëtic rule of imitative representation (*afomoíosis*) based on the principle of paradigm – of seeing the relationship of analogy between the model and the image. It is difficult to present an idea without using analogies and images as references. The language of comparisons is the utilisation of appropriate speech to express being and paradigmatic thinking is the imaging of the analogy-based structure of reality.²¹

²¹In the integral vision of reality, at the end of the ascent, the basic duality emerges in the intuitive synthesis of purified thought encompassing the whole visible world (*kósmos hóratos*) with a single glance. This duality is the relationship with the invisible world perceived only by thoughts (*kósmos noetós*). Both these words transcend one another, yet this reality may only be discovered at the price of understanding insight above or beyond the discourse, into the nature participating in the importance of ideas. At that moment the whole world transpires in a symbolic manner: as a diversely meaningful structure, clear through its corporeality to what is beyond, and full of

Since the word is able to “lead the soul through convincing,” then anyone who wants to be a speaker must also know what form-ideas the soul has. Speeches should be adjusted to listeners, because they are born different, and different words provoke different convictions in their souls. One has to learn what kind of speech would influence a particular kind of person, in accordance with the nature of the listener. In educating or convincing one must always know when it is better to speak and when to be silent, when one should speak simply and briefly, and when to talk more extensively with more refined language, when is the time to persuade, regret or to threaten. These are the rules of rhetoric correctness, and those who fail to abide by them cannot be masters of the art of discourse, and are inferior to the people who refuse to trust their discourse.

Thus, the art of discourse requires many skills: factual and axiological knowledge, knowledge of the method, psychological insight into the souls of the listeners and the ability to sense the appropriate moment (*kairós*) that is: the conditions and circumstances surrounding the discourse. People limited to the knowledge of discourse techniques, rhetoric figures and tricks how to psychologically influence the audience are similar to swindlers and fortune-tellers. Convincing should be based on an accurate portrayal of the semblance of truth which is accepted by the listeners because it is similar to facts. Those who learned the truth are capable of disclosing its similarities.

The fact that Plato connected rhetoric with dialectic and noëtic is profound in the context of the language concept based on the analysis of THE GOAL AND FUNCTION OF THE SPEECH ACT, while grammar and lexis are secondary. The invention of writing and grammatical systematisation of language – as shown in the tale about Theuth-Ammon, the Egyptian father of letters, mentioned in *Phaedrus* – is secondary, and may even be deceiving if the written word is granted more power than it really has. Trusting in writing causes the soul to succumb to oblivion (*léthe*), trusting in letters and images (*týpos*) rather than in training inner memory (*mnéme*). Writing is not the cure for oblivion, but is there to remind.²² It is not there

tension building between what is open and hidden, true and untrue, constant and changing, important and accidental, light and dark. Obviously Plato does not conduct an interpretation of reality in the spirit of symbolic forms, however the above can be reconstructed from and imprints upon the metaphysical meaning of the later dialogues.

²²Plato uses two different words to describe recalling from memory: *hypomnéme* and *anámnēsis*. The first one carries the meaning of simple remembering, recalling. The second one is synonymous with retrieving knowledge (*analambánein epistéme*) which is not to be understood as a psychological process of impressions association and a recalling of previously acquired experiences. The act of anamnesis – rediscovering – is

to regain knowledge, but it is a game of ‘sowing gardens of letters’. It gives students an alleged knowledge, but does not give them the truth, because while reading we do not learn the living word: we think we get to know something, but in reality we stay ignorant. The only value of the written word lies in materialising what is already known. Writing (*grafé*) is similar to drawing (*zografía*). A portrayed thing looks lifelike, yet if asked anything it shall remain silent. The same may be said of written words: one may assume they speak wisely, yet if one asks and tries to learn what they say, it turns out that they constantly speak one and the same thing. They know not when and with whom to speak, they hover around those who want to listen, but also around those whom they never reach. They cannot defend themselves, they do not have the strength to survive an attack, so when they are abused and mistreated they need a ‘father’ to protect them. This said ‘father’ is a living discourse of the teacher of wisdom who like a farmer ‘sows discourse accompanied by knowledge’ directly to the fertile ground of a student’s soul. Such a word is not barren and defenceless; it bears immortal fruit (*Phaedrus* 275D-E, 276E-277A).

The art of discourse proves useful for upbringing and teaching, both from the point of view of the object and the subject. To understand the nature – idea – of things one must look into the importance, the deep structure hidden under a multitude of various, changeable and fickle phenomena. One must also prepare the mind to such a perception of truth which comes slowly after a long journey of dialectic ascent of cognition from supposition to knowledge. When in the beginning one sees relationships within the multitude, one must move forward until one sees all the differences. When one sees the dissimilarities, one should not rest until one connects together all important things which are in relation – proportion – to one another, with a circle of similarities according to their importance (see: *Statesman* 285B). The above is simple, if things have clear similarities; however, the highest, most beautiful and valuable essences do not have any likeness that can be discerned and noticed by the physical eye. They can be only encompassed by the knowledge discourse born within the mind (*Statesman* 286A). To explain them, one needs special preparations and an art of discourse capable of

equal to clearer and clearer introspection (*episkopé*) into the nature of things, mental, monumental understanding of the general and essential importance which transpires in a fact; however it is not an inductive process in the modern understanding of the word, neither is it an abstract operation as understood by Aristotle. It is an ideation, a mental penetration with the ‘mental eye’ into the deep sense of a thing, phenomenon, image or concept. For Plato’s concept of anamnesis see: Gulley 1954:194-213; Allen 1959: 165.174; Dorter 1972: 198-218; Yates 1977: 49.

clarifying things transcending the object of various sciences, things accessible to only few minds of those not only proficient in sciences and gifted with memory, but also co-creative (*syngéne*) with the object. Such an awakening of the consciousness requires special preparations. Plato accepts the existence of an art which most quickly and effectively ‘shifts or converts the soul’ from unclear supposition towards the world of forms and introduces the possibility to mentally see it (see: *Republic* 518 B–E). Utilising this art, a teacher of wisdom becomes a divine hermeneutor who introduces the mystery of seeing not unlike an Eleusinian priest²³ (see: *Statesman* 260D, 290C; *Cratylus* 407E).

In his later works (*Phaedrus*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Timaeus*) Plato made intensive use of images, comparisons and parables, displaying his mastery of rhetorical art. He also enriched his noëtic with the notion of allegorical and symbolic thought which involved a model of discourse and art of interpretation far beyond the methodically organised dialectic of questions and answers, or the battle of arguments. In the intellectual struggle with these issues, understanding and expressing of which the discourse was not enough, he finally reached for POETHIC METAPHOR as the most suitable method of interpretation. The language of Socrates’ disputes changes – Plato’s dialogue transforms into a story-myth of allegorical or symbolic nature. The issue of the structure and function of platonic mythical images is a topic to be considered separately.

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²³Plato’s understanding of hermeneutics encompasses all three basic meanings of the verb *hermeneueîn* which were listed by R. E. Palmer (1969: 12-32): (1) to announce, to propagate something (2) to reveal, to explain, to interpret (this meaning is used by Aristotle in the treaty *Perí hermeneías – De interpretatione*); (3) translation (from one language to another). The first meaning connects hermeneutic to Hermes – the divine messenger (*Cratylus* 407E). The second and third – with the function of a philosopher-dialectician and a legislator (*Republic* 524B, *Laws* 907D). A particularly divine hermeneutician is a poet-prophet inspired by the Muses, whose message includes prophetic aspects and whose art may reveal metaphysical truths – great ideals (*Ion* 534E-535A, *Phaedrus* 261E). Plato transfers all benefits of religious initiation and poetic prophecy into philosophy and by doing so he aspires to light the being to its full brightness.

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