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PLATO'S ›THEAETETUS‹ REVISTED

Edited by Beatriz Bossi and Thomas M. Robinson

TRENDS IN CLASSICS

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AN: 26[illegible]85 ; Beatriz Bossi, Thomas M. Robinson.; Platos Theaetetus Revisited
Account: ns335141

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Plato’s *Theaetetus* Revisited

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ISBN 978-3-11-071526-2
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-071547-7
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-071559-0
ISSN 1868-4785

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020944309

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

© 2020 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
Editorial Office: Alessia Ferreccio and Katerina Zianna
Logo: Christopher Schneider, Laufen
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

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https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-203

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Introduction

This book consists of a selection of papers on Plato's *Theaetetus* presented at the *Third International Spring Plato Seminar*, 21–22 May 2018, Facultad de Filosofía, Universidad Complutense de Madrid/Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, along with three papers by other authors who were invited to contribute to the volume (D. Sedley, M. Boeri and F. Trabattoni). After previous seminars on two Eleatic dialogues, the *Sophist* (2009) and the *Statesman* (2016), the selected Proceedings of which have been published as the first two volumes of this series, it was time for a third seminar, on the *Theaetetus,* a dialogue which has proved problematic from the very beginnings of Platonic exegesis, and continues to tax philosophers and philologists to this day. Its aporetic implications, date of composition, and attribution by Socrates of various doctrines to philosophers such as Heraclitus and Protagoras, along with a refutation of them, have also been the object of lengthy controversy.

The aim of the seminar was, like that of the previous ones, the promotion of Plato studies in Spain within the framework of discussions among a number of international scholars of distinction in the field, while at the same time looking afresh at one of Plato's most philosophically enigmatic dialogues. The resulting volume consists of papers by scholars from Spain (Lisi, Vallejo Campos, Curnis, Ibáñez-Puig, Bossi), France (Narcy), Italy (Ferrari, Trabattoni), Argentina (Marcos de Pinotti, Mársico), Brazil (Araújo), Chile (Boeri) and the Anglo-Saxon orbit (Sedley, Tarrant, Gonzalez, Robinson).

The papers fall into five categories, which attempt to follow the order of the subjects as they are presented in the dialogue: 1. an introductory section, consisting of papers that focus on two characters, one on stage and one behind the scene, Socrates and Plato; 2. a section focused on methodological strategies and dialectic; 3. a number of papers tackling the question of subject and object of perception in the world of flux; 4. some discussion of knowledge and thinking; and 5. three papers on the dialogue's reception.

The volume opens with a short paper by D. Sedley, which, based on his view that a subtext of the *Theaetetus* is that Socrates was the midwife of Plato's own mature philosophy, sets out to make this hypothesis further credible by cataloguing several more authorial self-references in the *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedo*, *Charmides* and *Parmenides*.

In the same section, M. Narcy attempts to show that Socrates' disavowal of knowledge in the *Theaetetus* is no longer as sincere as it was in Plato's aporetic dialogues: in the *Theaetetus* it has become a teaching technique, as Socrates admits at the turning-point of the dialogue (185e). What Socrates is now able to

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teach is not only the theory of knowledge he had developed in the *Republic* but also, he maintains, the ontology that the Stranger will put forward in the *Sophist*. What hinders him from teaching them to Theaetetus is his persistent reluctance to be overtly didactic.

The second section opens with a paper by G. Marcos de Pinotti devoted to showing that, not only does the refutation of universal flux in the *Theaetetus* prepare the ground for a number of ontological innovations in the *Sophist*, but it also appeals to a refutation strategy, used profusely in the latter dialogue, which consists in demonstrating inconsistencies between what opponents say and how they present what they say. The key to the refutation strategy is thus the *factum* of language. The philosopher, rather than reforming language in accordance with his theory, gets language to reveal the nature of things. The author concludes that Plato's attitude towards flux theorists shifts from negative criticism to re-appropriation, and demonstrates, by his use of the method of hypothesis and refutation, his fidelity to the Socratic legacy.

A. Vallejo Campos examines the similarities between Socrates' use of dialectic in our dialogue and Aristotle's concept of dialectic as expounded in the *Topics*. He relates the practice of the Socratic *elenchus* in the *Theaetetus* to the program of Plato's dialectic in the *Republic*, where the dialectician must find his way 'through all attempts to refute his theory'. The refutation of the doctrines attributed to Heraclitus and Protagoras are interpreted as a positive *elenchus* that demonstrates the validity of Plato's position in the ontology and epistemology of the *Republic*.

In the third section, we offer some papers on the problematic aspects of perception in the context of the theory of flux. F. Lisi defends the view that there is no refutation of the theory, but that it is intentionally interwined with similar theories of other philosophers, and he offers evidence from the *Timaeus* (and the *Laws*) which proves that this theory is genuinely Platonic. He also argues that the doctrine propounded as Protagorean does not belong to him.

B. Bossi attempts to demonstrate that, strictly speaking, Socrates does not seem to refute Theaetetus' first 'definition' of knowledge as 'perception'. As the boy is aware of the fact that knowledge deals with universals and must be rigorously proven, she argues that his assumed incapacity to give birth to a positive outcome seems to be linked to Socrates' ability to take his vague answers for other doctrines he deliberately attempts to refute. If so, Theaetetus does not necessarily mean that knowledge is the same as 'sense'-perception but that it implies the 'grasping' of the nature of what is known, a conception which would not clash with the soul's knowledge of common properties.

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According to F. Trabattoni, who proposes a fresh interpretation of the so-called 'self- refutation argument', the Protagoras of the dialogue does not present his thesis in a qualified way (he never says that it is true *for him*) but refers to it as the Truth without qualifications (166c–d). But how are we to decide, within the Protagorean world, which meta-*doxa* is true and which is false? In the absence of something better than *doxa* itself, the author claims that quantitative considerations are all we have. But these considerations certify that everyone but Protagoras and his followers thinks that he is wrong. If, however, Protagoras is not refuted from a logical point of view, Socrates argues on different grounds that ordinary men in the city believe that some opinions are more stable than others and possess a degree of validity that trascends the constant changeability of things.

In his paper, M.D. Boeri argues that Plato does not limit his view of what knowledge is to the theoretical sphere, but that he is also concerned with stressing the connections between the theoretical and practical realms. He also suggests that Plato noted (and to some extent endorsed) the view that no one can know better than oneself what one is perceptually experiencing when one is experiencing it. If this is right, Plato, even when rejecting the thesis that knowledge is perception, somehow favors Protagoras' relativist view (every *doxa* is true *for* the person whose *doxa* it is), and, understood in this way, at this specific point the *homo mensura* thesis seems to contain a measure of truth.

The section closes with a paper by X. Ibáñez-Puig, who focuses on the humorous educational role that Socrates plays in the dialogue, when he appeals to Theaetetus' 'taste' by using 'encantantions', rather than by appealing to his intellectual powers to judge properly. Though it may seem that the wise resemble their doctrines and their disciples resemble their teachers, the author observes that materialists cannot account for the 'invisible' process of learning, and Heracliteans cannot have disciples, for, according to them, there is no doctrine to be taught. On the other hand, the author observes, Socrates is not made responsible for the character of Alcibiades, and Plato's best disciple (Aristotle) did not accept his most relevant doctrine. He concludes with a reflection on the way the so-called 'humanities' have been gradually dissolved, thanks to the corrosive effect of 'our' Protagoreanism.

Part four is devoted to knowledge and thinking. It opens with a paper by T.M. Robinson, who observes that soul in our dialogue continues to be thought of as intellect (*dianoia*), or the 'intellective *part* (*meros*)' of soul which it was in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* (and also in the *Timaeus*, which he dates earlier in composition than the *Theaetetus*). Missing, however, is any reference to the doctrine of Forms and the theory of knowledge which went hand in hand with it. A possible

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reason for this, he suggests, can be found in the dramatic placement of the dialogue in the days just before Socrates' trial and death. As for soul, Socrates (Plato) is not recorded as ever having engaged in a dialogue that specifically attempted to define it, and the multiplicity of notions of it which underlie his attempts in the *Phaedo* to prove its immortality suggests that he would have had as much difficulty coming up with a complete and exact definition of it as he had experienced for a lifetime trying to define Forms.

In the next chapter, C. Araújo calls our attention to the risk of interpreting the aviary model on the basis of various Aristotelian assumptions concerning its reading. The author shows that the description of dispositional knowledge as learning from oneself, i.e., as the specification of items from previously known kinds, is incompatible with Aristotle's notion of potential knowledge, since it involves a power of selection of the right items (which would not correspond to the activation of an item of potential knowledge in Aristotle's sense); individuation of items are learnt in general (not simply updated of a latent item of memory); and inquiry and learning (not just knowing) are involved. Socrates dismisses the model, because the knowledge of an item cannot be the explanation of a mistake concerning it (199d2). Araújo offers three arguments against its cogency, emphasizing that mistakes should be explained as a failure in knowing how to select an item, rather than not having knowledge of it. She also responds to the objection that the model leads to a regress regarding truth-makers by arguing that Socrates' midwifery turns the dialogue into a performative argument against the objection, for cross-examination provides truth-makers.

F. Gonzalez observes that there is little agreement among scholars about what exactly 'dialectic' is, and finds it controversial whether not only dialectic, which can be and has been in the modern period understood as a method one can employ by oneself, but also *dialogue* with others is indispensable to the attainment of philosophical knowledge. He reports that some have recognized Plato's commitment to such a view, though with puzzlement; others have denied altogether or greatly qualified such a commitment. In his paper, the author turns to the *Theaetetus* to show not only that philosophical thinking requires conversation with others but also why. Given the lack of an expert to serve as a measure of truth and falsity concerning the topics philosophy examines, and given the unacceptability of the Protagorean thesis that each individual's perception is that measure, Gonzalez claims that dialogue is the only measure we can appeal to. According to him, all the proposed definitions of knowledge in the *Theaetetus* fail because they all abstract from dialogue, while in their very act of examination offering an illustration of dialectical knowing.

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F. Ferrari understands that, contrary to what certain interpreters would appear to believe, the aporetic profile of the dialogue does not depend in the least on the lack of a 'Platonic' answer to the question of the nature of knowledge, but on the maieutic nature of the dialogue. The author argues that, while operating within an aporetic context, Plato still provides some insights that point towards the way out of the aporia. The thesis he wishes to put forward is that in the discussion that follows the formulation of Theaetetus' third answer, the one identifying knowledge with true doxa accompanied by logos, Plato provides some meta-epistemological indications by which he aims to outline the general traits that an object must possess in order to prove genuinely knowable.

In the closing section devoted to the reception of the *Theaetetus*, C. Mársico claims that Plato wrote his works in the context of a strong dialogical environment. In her paper she explores the traces of the discussion with Antisthenes which are present in the dream passages of the *Theaetetus*. She provides a novel interpretation of the relationship between Antisthenes and Plato, of the general sense of the *Theaetetus*, and of the Platonic view of the notion of knowledge, which could illuminate his overall philosophy.

According to H. Tarrant, evidence suggests that the New Academy made considerable use of the *Theaetetus* to support their policy of suspension of judgment. Areas included linguistic details, use of argument for and against, and final indecision. Close inspection finds that the dialogue contains high rates of some (but not all) of the language seemingly noticed by the New Academy, and is often surprisingly reminiscent of the *Meno* and the *Cratylus* in these respects. However, the author claims that this language is usually integrated with midwife-style examination of Theaetetus, other sections being virtually free of it. This strongly suggests the existence of different layers of material within them.

M. Curnis closes the volume with a study of the indirect tradition of the *Theaetetus*, which allows readers to establish which parts of the dialogue affected the school programs of Late Antiquity or the environments of Byzantine erudition, oriented above all towards the λόγος μείζων of the last part, that is, the portrait of the philosopher in relation to the city. The author explores the coincidences of many textual passages, which reappear in the humanistic anthological tradition, confirming the consistency of the reading choices throughout all the Middle Ages. He extends the philological comparison among variants to the intertitles of the important Berlin papyrus, which contains an anonymous commentary on the dialogue and constitutes the starting document of the ancient exegetical tradition on Plato.

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The Seminar gave us the chance to participate in some very stimulating discussion sessions, and to dine and socialize in a friendly atmosphere. We thank everyone most warmly for their contributions to the meeting's success.

The Editors, Summer 2020

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Part I: **On Stage and Behind the Scene**

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David Sedley

Plato's Self-References

Theaetetus

In a book entitled *The Midwife of Platonism. Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus* (Oxford 2004), I have argued for a reading of the *Theaetetus* according to which its main character Socrates is not a direct mouthpiece for Plato's current views but, rather, can be recognized as the philosophical midwife who, although himself intellectually barren, brought Plato's philosophy to birth. The Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is, as I put it there, innocent of metaphysics. But his methodology and accompanying insights are shown to have prepared the ground for Plato's philosophical system.

Socrates' skills as a midwife are most directly displayed in his cross-examination of Theaetetus, which however results in the demonstration that this teenage prodigy was *not* after all intellectually pregnant. We should not be altogether surprised at so negative a finding, because already early in the dialogue (150e) Socrates has explained that his critical examinations of young men frequently demonstrate that they have no genuine brainchildren awaiting delivery, reminding us of such youthful interlocutors as Lysis and Charmides. But in the same passage he has also said that some of those he examines do give birth to fine offspring (150c–d):

> Of those who consort with me some at first seem really ignorant, but as time goes by all those to whom the god grants it make remarkable progress, both in their own opinion and in that of others. And it is self-evident that they have done so without learning anything from me, but by discovering many fine offspring born from themselves.

Who can these be? Since no successful parenting takes place within either the *Theaetetus* itself or any of the recognized 'Socratic' dialogues, we must try looking beyond them. And at that point it becomes hard not to recognize Plato himself as a primary candidate.

Some may judge self-praise, however carefully concealed, unworthy of Plato. My aim in this brief note is to forestall any such doubts by assembling comparable authorial self-references that I believe can be found elsewhere in Plato's dialogues.[1] I shall start with a pair that are, I hope, beyond reasonable doubt. On this optimistic assumption, it will then remain to be seen how far down my list readers

1 Some of this material comes almost *verbatim* from Sedley 1995, and from Sedley 2019.

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are prepared to extend their credence. Such evidence is, I believe, more powerful when viewed cumulatively, as I propose to view it here. The self-references are not entirely casual, but on the contrary will prove to be mutually supportive and confirmatory.

Republic IV and IX

The two main interlocutors of the *Republic*, Glaucon and Adeimantus, were Plato's half-brothers, sharing as they did the same father, Ariston. In the course of the dialogue each of them is on just one occasion named by Socrates by his patronymic, 'son of Ariston'. The two occasions correspond to the two pivotal moments in a dialogue whose principal aim is to demonstrate, via the construction of an ideal city, the advantages of being just. On both occasions Socrates generously bestows on the brother in question the credit for their findings. In book IV (427c–d), on completing his construction of the ideal city, Socrates observes to Adeimantus 'Well then, son of Ariston, your city would by now be founded.' And in Book IX, at the climactic moment of his defence of justice, Socrates asks Glaucon a question which encapsulates its conclusion (580c): 'Shall we hire a herald, or shall I myself announce it? That the son of Ariston judged the best and most just person the happiest — that is, the most kingly, and king of himself ...?'

Dramatically speaking, the 'son of Ariston' names Adeimantus on the first occasion, Glaucon on the second. But to contemporary readers this patronymic (the ancient Greek equivalent of a surname) surely signified above all their more famous brother, Plato himself. And it must above all else be Plato's own moment of glory that is being celebrated here when the *Republic's* triumphant conclusions are attributed to the 'son of Ariston'.

Once we appreciate this, we can start to see the subtlety of Plato's concealed self-reference. Dramatically, it is Socrates who has worked to achieve the conclusions, while Glaucon and Adeimantus have played the subordinate role of respondents. Thus Socrates' gift of the dialogue's philosophical fruits to them is, on the surface, wildly overgenerous, not to say ironic. But at the authorial level, the credits are reversed. It is indeed Plato, the son of Ariston, who has guided his revered teacher Socrates to his final vindication of justice — above all by harnessing to the task his own theory of Forms and doctrine of the tripartite soul. This gift of the theory of Forms to Socrates was one that Plato never revoked, either through good times (as in the *Republic)* or through bad (as in the *Parmenides*). That is to say, Socrates continued to be its primary spokesman in the dialogues.

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But Plato's concealed signature, his subtle claim to ownership of the argument, remained woven into the fabric of the *Republic*.

Timaeus

> Socrates: One, two, three … but where, my friend Timaeus, is our fourth of yesterday's guests, now due to be hosts?
> Timaeus: Some kind of sickness has befallen him, Socrates. For this is a gathering that he would not have missed willingly.
> Soc.: Well then, isn't it your job, and that of these others, to play the missing person's role as well, on his behalf (17a, ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀπόντος)'?
> Tim.: Certainly, and so far as we are able we will not fall short.

So runs the notoriously cryptic opening of Plato's *Timaeus* (17a–b). From the exchange we learn that one member of yesterday's audience, who was due to speak today, has unexpectedly failed to turn up. Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates, the remaining three, will be required to stand in for the missing person, making speeches 'on his behalf'. Who is the anonymous absentee?

Surely he is the person whose habitual absenteeism constitutes, paradoxically, a kind of indirect but overwhelming presence in the Platonic dialogues: Plato himself. This suggestion that the missing speaker is Plato, already voiced in antiquity by the Platonic scholar Dercyllides,[2] but more or less ignored by interpreters ever since,[3] rests on a compelling textual hint: 'Some kind of sickness (ἀσθένεια) has befallen him, Socrates. For this is a gathering that he would not have missed willingly' (17a4–5). Hardly by accident, this calls to mind Plato himself, who according to an almost unique explicit self-reference in the *Phaedo* (59b10) would absent himself even from Socrates' final conversation because of sickness (*Phd.* 59b, Πλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἠσθένει: 'Plato, I think, was sick', Phaedo reports). If this is right, it is the habitual absentee Plato who is to be represented by the speech of Timaeus.[4]

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2 Proclus, *In Plat. Tim.* 1.20.9–11 Diehl. Dercyllides' date is unknown. It is safe to say that he is a Middle Platonist, but for legitimate doubts about the surprisingly early *terminus ante quem* often conjectured — mid first century BC — see Tarrant 1993, 11–13, 72–6.

3 Since first drafting the above I have learnt that Dercyllides' proposal is also revived by M-L. Gill, 2015, 43–4, for very different reasons, although likewise appealing to the clue given by the sickness motif.

4 Even if one accepted A.E. Taylor's arguments (1972, 14–27) for a dramatic date of 421 BC (a dating more reliably defended by Lampert and Planeaux (1998, 93–5), when Plato was around seven years old, we should not exclude a covert allusion to him on that ground, as Taylor (1972,

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The special importance of this decoding lies once again in Plato's claim to ownership of the dialogue's central ideas. Timaeus, Critias and Hermocrates, we have been told, will be speaking *on Plato's behalf*. Significantly, Timaeus' own speech, the only complete one within an uncompleted trilogy, will contain many of Plato's most celebrated doctrines, including the theory of Forms and that of the tripartite soul. Scholars who have minimized Plato's commitment to these doctrines might have been less inclined to do so if they had noticed the author's concealed declaration of ownership.

It is worth adding a link back to the *Theaetetus*. If I was right earlier, the Socrates of that dialogue is not so much voicing Plato's current opinions as exhibiting their Socratic pedigree, thus revealing himself as what I call 'the midwife of Platonism'. But any such interpretation of the *Theaetetus* has to assume that we already independently know what doctrines *are* Plato's own. The majority of readers have had no difficulty in extracting an answer from the *Republic*: above all, tripartite psychology and the intelligible-sensible dichotomy. But it is in the *Timaeus* that these and other doctrines are at last integrated into a Platonic world-system, and it is there too, as we have now seen, that Plato finally reassures us that they really are his own.

Phaedo

What we have seen to be the *Timaeus'* intertextuality with the *Phaedo* makes the two dialogues reciprocally illuminating. When, that is, we have recognized the motif of Plato's sickness recurring in the opening lines of the *Timaeus*, we should feel encouraged to revisit its earlier occurrence in the opening pages of the *Phaedo*. Was Plato's vaguely recalled absence from Socrates' final conversation ('Plato, I think, was sick') merely a disappointing accident of history? According

25) does: to do so would be to mistake the symbolic for the historical. Compare the *Parmenides*, set in 462/1 BC, when the 'very young' Socrates, chosen to articulate Plato's earlier position on the metaphysics of Forms, was in fact aged eight, as is shown by Mansfeld, 1986. Proclus' objection to the identification with Plato (*In Plat. Tim.* 1.20.15–18 Diehl) is even weaker: he protests that this cannot be the bout of illness referred to in the *Phaedo*, because the latter occurred on Socrates' last day. That Dercyllides did not mean this, but rather that the two occasions of absence due to sickness are pointedly similar to each other, is suggested by Proclus' own wording, 'Dercyllides [sc. thinks it is] Plato, because Plato also missed Socrates' death due to illness' (*In Plat. Tim.* 1.20.9–11 Diehl).

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to one very tempting exegesis, the detail is a vital part of the dialogue's architecture, being linked to Socrates' dying words (*Phd.* 118a), which are addressed initially to Crito but then widened into a plea to the whole assembled company: 'Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius. Please pay the debt, all of you, and don't neglect it'.

There have been numerous rival decodings of this famously enigmatic dictum, but it is probably a mistake to defend any one of them by arguing that the others are wrong. Plato surely meant to keep many possible lines of interpretation in play, thus leaving his readers with an enduring enigma, rather than a simple riddle that might one day be solved and thereafter set aside. And this web of innuendo surely included — without being in any way limited to it — a hint that Socrates and his circle needed to thank the god of healing for Plato's own recovery from sickness. To those prepared to entertain such a decoding, the final utterance attributed to Socrates insinuated not only optimism about the survival of his philosophical legacy, but his anointment of Plato as henceforth that legacy's guardian.[5]

Charmides

Another credible authorial self-allusion is found at *Charmides* 168e9–169a7. Here Socrates, is engaged in expressing his doubts as to whether there could be such a thing as knowledge of knowledge, any more than, say, vision of vision. He acknowledges that in the present impasse a 'great man' is going to be needed, one who will go beyond what Socrates himself is capable of and determine which if any self-reflexive actions are possible. And the examples listed explicitly include the possibility of 'self-moving motion'. It is hard not to detect a forward allusion to Plato's mature metaphysics of soul in *Phaedrus* 245c–246a, *Timaeus* 37b, and above all *Laws* X 894c, 895c–896c, where soul is formally identified with self-motion. Even if Socrates is himself innocent of metaphysics, he has set an agenda for his metaphysically sophisticated pupil and heir, Plato.

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5 This interpretation is subtly defended by Most 1993.

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Parmenides

The *Parmenides* contains a very similar reference to the future role of a great man who will resolve a metaphysical conundrum.

At least three of Plato's leading associates in the Academy — Eudoxus, Speusippus and Aristotle — argued against his theory of transcendent Forms. In the first part of the *Parmenides*, through the mouth of the august metaphysician Parmenides, Plato shows that he too is perfectly capable of developing objections to his prized metaphysical theory. But having completed the demolition, he has Parmenides remark (135b–c):

> Yet these consequences, Socrates,' said Parmenides, 'and a great many others in addition, must necessarily belong to the Forms, if these characters of the things that are exist and someone is going to demarcate a Form as in each case something in itself. That is why one who hears about them both finds them problematic and disputes their existence. And however true it might be that they do exist, there is a powerful necessity that they should be unknowable to human nature, and that this person in saying so should seem to have a point and, as we were saying just now, be very hard to dissuade. *It is the mark of a really talented man that he will be able to understand that each thing has a kind and a being itself in itself; and of an even more amazing man that he will discover this and be able to teach all these things by clarifying them sufficiently*. … On the other hand, Socrates,' said Parmenides, 'if instead someone will not allow there to be Forms of the things that are, looking to all the ones we just talked about, and others like them, and will not demarcate a Form of each single thing, he will not even have anywhere to direct his thinking to, because he does not allow there to be always the same character of things that are.

Just what spin Plato is inviting us to put on these remarks, as indeed on the arguments that precede them, is controversial. But in view of what we saw earlier, it becomes hard, especially in the lines I have emphasized, not to recognize yet another endorsement of Plato's future role: to consolidate Socrates' legacy, by providing it with a reliable metaphysical foundation.

Conclusion

What has, I hope, emerged from the above passages is a Plato who is constantly, albeit with the utmost restraint and subtlety, representing himself as Socrates' philosophical heir, destined to complete the job which his master had initiated. The task will include the successful development of Plato's own two-world ontology, and of his analyses, both structural and metaphysical, of the soul.

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This network of hints is centred on three dialogues in particular. The *Republic*, by attributing its results to the 'son of Ariston', conveys Plato's intellectual ownership of the theories expounded there. The opening of the *Timaeus* reinforces the same message by having Timaeus undertake to speak 'on behalf of' the absent Plato. And the motif of Plato's sickness, exploited in that same passage, in turn links the *Timaeus* back to the *Phaedo*, where readers were already enabled to suspect that Socrates may have meant, with his dying breath, to anoint Plato his successor.

If the *Theaetetus* does indeed, as I have proposed, present Socrates as the midwife of Plato's philosophy, such a variation on the same theme should not surprise us at all.

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Michel Narcy

The Old and the New Socrates in the *Theaetetus*

In the tri-partition of Plato's dialogues generally accepted nowadays into early, middle and late the *Theaetetus* is generally considered the first in the last group, and in whatever case is posterior to the *Republic*. As is well known, however, it seems to be linked across the middle dialogues to the so-called 'Socratic' dialogues of the first group, and shows the following characteristics:

- it is dedicated to the search for a definition, in this case the definition of knowledge (*sophia*, *episteme*), the way other dialogues attempt to define virtue, bravery, continence, etc.;
- the search takes the form of an interrogation by Socrates, a procedure he justifies by the confidence that he knows nothing more, and possibly less than his interlocutor; in other words, by the habitual profession of ignorance that Plato attributes to him in the *Apology*;
- as in all the 'definitional' dialogues, the *Theaetetus* ends in a declaration of failure, and in this it is in line with so called 'aporetic' dialogues. It is with the way the *Meno* unfolds that the *Theaetetus* shows the most striking similarities. To the question 'What is virtue?' which Socrates poses to Meno, and to the question 'What is knowledge?' posed to Theaetetus, each replies with a list of virtues and types of knowledge respectively, and this compels Socrates to clarify what sort of definition he is demanding — an overall, or, let us say, following Aristotle, general definition. In response, both offer three definitions or attempts at definition, and all three are rejected by Socrates. To Meno, who, discouraged by his three failures, wishes to leave the discussion, and to Theaetetus, who doesn't dare enter into it, Socrates unsparingly offers the same encouragement: without their knowing it, they already have the answer. Meno has it because, in the course of the different cycles of incarnations and discarnations which it has known the soul has seen all things, with the result that, while Meno thinks he has to learn, in reality he only has to recollect. Theaetetus, more simply, has it because the trouble he is undergoing is the sign that he is on the point of discovering it, like a woman about to give birth. From antiquity until now an enduring tradition has maintained that midwifery and reminiscence are one and the same.[1] Should this be right,

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1 Cf. Anon. *In Plat. Tht.* 46.35–59.34; Sedley 1996, 95–98; Brisson 2008.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-002

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> this would be a strong reason to conclude that Plato is re-using in the *Theaetetus* the 'old' Socrates from the early days of his literary production.

However, the course of the *Theaetetus* presents a striking difference from the *Meno*. At the turning-point of the dialogue, the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* will make a declaration which one would not expect from the 'old' Socrates of Plato's first dialogues, a declaration which is altogether absent from the *Meno*. Socrates has got Theaetetus to admit that, if objects perceived by our different senses have common properties, such properties cannot be known by any of the senses, and the young man concludes spontaneously from this that they are therefore known by the soul alone. This makes Socrates exclaim:

> Yes, Theaetetus, you would say that, because you are handsome (καλὸς γὰρ εἶ, ὦ Θεαίτητε), and not ugly, as Theodorus would have it. For handsome is as handsome says (ὁ γὰρ καλῶς λέγων καλός τε καὶ ἀγαθός). And besides being handsome, you have done me a good turn; you have saved me a vast amount of talk (εὖ ἐποίησας με μάλα συχνοῦ λόγου ἀπαλλάξας) if it seems to you that, while the soul considers some things through the bodily powers, there are others it considers alone and through itself. *This was what I thought myself, but I wanted you to think it too* (τοῦτο γὰρ ἦν ὃ καὶ αὐτῷ μοι ἐδόκει, ἐβουλόμην δὲ καὶ σοὶ δόξαι). (*Theaet.* 185e3–9, transl. M.J. Levett, rev. M. Burnyeat.)

This is an admission that he knew in advance where he wanted to lead Theaetetus, and, by that very fact, a disavowal of his initial profession of not possessing knowledge or of being 'sterile' (150c4), a crucial point in the description of his art of midwifery — crucial too in his conduct of the discussion with Meno, up to the end of the homonymous dialogue. Here we can measure the distance separating the *Theaetetus* from the *Meno*: in the *Meno* belief in reminiscence allowed Socrates to reject the very idea of teaching (οὔ φημι διδαχὴν εἶναι, *Meno*, 82a1); here, on the basis of his belief in a reply of Theaetetus which he finds in accord with his own opinion, he thinks the moment has come to reveal to the young man that his profession of not possessing knowledge was simply a pedagogical procedure, in other words a teaching technique.

Of all the dialogues where Socrates' profession of not possessing knowledge is in evidence, it is only in the *Theaetetus* that it is disavowed in this particular way. On the other hand , there is a passage parallel to the one I have just cited in a dialogue where Socrates does not profess not to possess knowledge, but the

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very contrary, and this is the *Euthydemus*.[2] At the moment when, at the end of his first protreptic demonstration,[3] Socrates raises the question of knowing whether wisdom is teachable (εἰ ἔστι γε ἡ σοφία διδακτόν, 282c1), Clinias cuts short the examination of the question by replying without waiting, "As far as I am concerned, I think it can be taught (ἀλλ' ἔμοιγε διδακτὸν εἶναι δοκεῖ, 282c4–5)." The reaction of Socrates is the same, almost to the very word, as in the *Theaetetus*:

> I was pleased, and said, 'I like the way you talk (ἦ καλῶς λέγεις)..., and you have done me a good turn by relieving me of a long investigation of this very point (καὶ εὖ ἐποίησας ἀπαλλάξας με σκέψεως πολλῆς περὶ τούτου αὐτοῦ). (*Euthyd*. 282c5–7, transl. R.K. Sprague.)

On entering the 'undressing-room' where the dialogue was about to take place, Clinias has seen the sophists and their many pupils on one side and Socrates alone on the other side, and he had no hesitation in setting himself next to Socrates (*Euthyd*. 273a–b) — which shows that they were already familiar with one another, and that Clinias belonged, one might say, in some way to the Socratic circle. The rest of the dialogue confirms this, not only by Clinias' alacrity in getting it established that wisdom is teachable, but also by the way in which, further on, as a teaching lesson, he recites from Book 6 of the *Republic* a passage on the subordination of all forms of knowing to dialectic.[4] In other words, the responses of Clinias, despite their clumsiness, bear the imprint of Socratic teaching.

For the parallel to be complete one ought to be able to say the same thing about Theaetetus, and this does not seem at first sight to be the case: Socrates knows him by sight, he knows who his father was, but he doesn't know his name, and it seems that Theodorus knows more than he does about the young man's material situation (144c5–d4).

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2 In the *Euthydemus*, Socrates explicitly claims knowledge of what an exhortation to virtue ought to be. Dissatisfied with the first exhibition of the sophistic pair Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, he takes the initiative in showing them what he conceives to be an exhortation to virtue and what kind of exhortation he wishes to hear (ἐγὼ σφῷν ἐνδείξομαι οἷον αὐτὸ (*scil*. τὸ προτρέπειν 'ὅπως χρὴ σοφίας τε καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμεληθῆναι', 278d2–3) ὑπολαμβάνω καὶ οἷου αὐτοῦ ἐπιθυμῶ ἀκοῦσαι, 278d3–5). After giving them the model (παράδειγμα) to follow, he doesn't hesitate to dictate the program they have to complete if they want to fulfil his exhortation: 'start where I left off and show the boy what follows next: whether he ought to acquire every sort of knowledge, or whether there is one sort that he ought to get in order to be a happy man and a good one, and what it is' (282e1–4, transl. R.K. Sprague).

3 'Scene II (278e–283b)' in the break-down of Sprague 1965; '278e–282d' 2. Episode: 1. 'protreptische Szene' in that of Erler 2017.

4 Cf. *Euthyd*. 290b1–d8. Narcy 1984, 118, 146–52; Erler 2017, 184–5.

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Theaetetus, however, has already heard tell of Socrates. To this Socrates, who, after making his statement concerning irrationals, encourages him to gather the multiplicity of the sciences in like fashion into a single definition, he replies:

> But I assure you, Socrates, I have often tried to think this out, when I have heard reports of questions you ask. But I can never persuade myself that anything I say will really do; and I never hear anyone else state the matter in the way that you require. And yet, again, you know, I can't even stop worrying about it. (*Theaet.*, 148e1–6, transl. Levett-Burnyeat)

So, like the questions posed to Clinias, the question Socrates poses to Theaetetus does not fall upon virgin soil. Theaetetus has already learnt, via various intermediary persons, about Socrates' questioning about knowledge, and the type of response he demands; and this isn't a passive learning — he has himself attempted to reply to the questions that have been relayed to him, but has been satisfied with neither his own attempts nor those of others with whom he has made acquaintance.

It is this reply which makes Socrates decide to present his diagnosis of Theaetetus's 'pregnancy', and to reveal to him his own art of midwifery. It is an art which is very well concealed, since Theaetetus, who knows Socrates by hearsay, has never heard tell of it; and the reader of Plato, likewise, is here hearing of it for the first and only time. Whence the suspicion one might have that Socrates' discourse on midwifery, which is completely unedited, and even literally unheard of, is in reality an extempore improvisation, generated by this opportunity that has arisen of ensuring the survival of Socraticism in the person of Theaetetus.

Socrates, in fact, from the beginning of the *Theaetetus*, already knows what he will only be revealing at the end of the dialogue: summoned that same evening to the King's Porch, he knows his trial is only a matter of weeks away, and he is probably already resolved to do nothing to avoid condemnation. And just now he hears from Theodorus of a student who at one and the same time manifests both a striking physical resemblance to him (143e8–9) and also the qualities which, on his own avowal, ought to be demanded of a philosopher:[5] it is as if Theodorus was announcing to a Socrates who is close to his end the appearance of a new Socrates. So when the young prodigy, overcoming his earlier timidity, announces that he has already heard tell of the way in which Socrates asks what knowledge is, and that he is reflecting on the question himself, it is no unlikelihood to imagine that Socrates sees in him a potential Socratic second-generation.

5 Traditionally compared are *Theaet*. 144a3–b7 and *Resp*. 6, 503c1–d4.

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If that is what he is expecting, he can, clearly, only be disappointed by the first definition of knowledge given by Theaetetus further on: it is 'simply perception' (151e3). This definition is quite simply the direct opposite of his own conviction, which is that knowledge is 'that activity of the soul when it is busy by itself about the things which are' (187a5–6). He will only declare this conviction later, but as I have underlined, he will also say it was his from the start. As a consequence, he also knows from the start that the examination of Theaetetus's reply will result in the declaration that it is only a 'bag of wind' (151e6, tr. Rowe).

One might ask why Socrates does not take immediate recourse in the argument that he will develop from 184b onwards, concerning properties that are common to objects perceived by different senses: this argument is sufficient to make it understood that there exist real properties, starting with the reality (*ousia*) of the objects in question, which are not ascertained by the senses. Instead of producing this argument immediately — an argument as simple as it is convincing — the first reaction of Socrates is to name Protagoras as the source of the opinion voiced by Theaetetus. Why Protagoras? Because from the moment Theaetetus professes an opinion contrary to Socraticism it is natural to see as the father of it the person whose doctrines — at least such as they are presented in Plato's dialogues — are *toto caelo* contrary to Socrates' stances: Protagoras. Whence the question which Socrates puts to Theaetetus as soon as he has mentioned the sophist by name and cited the man the measure principle: 'I imagine you've read it?' (152a4, tr. Rowe). Theaetetus's affirmative reply is confirmation for Socrates that he was not mistaken in attributing his response to the influence of Protagoras.

So, at this point Socrates' concern is not just to un-encumber Theaetetus of a false opinion but to point out its real author — in terms of the midwifery metaphor, its real father. In fact, Socrates' speech about midwifery states clearly that any 'child' — i.e. any opinion — presupposes a father.[6] As it is well known, Socrates has declared himself capable of playing the go-between as successfully as the most expert midwives.[7] He knows 'which woman should marry (συνοῦσαν) which man in order to produce the best children possible' (149d7–8). Rowe's translation, which I am using here, is plainly right: as far as the matter at issue is begetting children, the sexual connotation of *syneinai* is unquestionable, and the

6 By the way, this is very strong evidence that the metaphor of midwifery has nothing to do with the theory of reminiscence propounded in the *Meno*.

7 There is no evidence that real midwives did practice such a function. Theaetetus himself has never heard of this. Cf. Leitao 2012, 238, and more generally 232–243 for a detailed discussion of the historical ground of the metaphor used by Socrates/Plato.

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skill Socrates is claiming here is really that of ‘marrying off’, as Burnyeat translates, young men to ‘suitable teachers’[8] capable of ‘impregnating’ them. As Leitao has rightly pointed out, when Socrates tells how he has sometimes entrusted to the care of Prodicus or ‘other men of divine wisdom’ young men in whom he diagnosed no ‘pregnancy’ (151b5–6), he uses the verb *ekdidonai* ‘the technical language of marriage’.[9]

Certainly, Socrates never speaks of himself as getting ‘married’ to Theaetetus. But I have highlighted earlier that the reason why Socrates suddenly describes himself as a spiritual midwife is that he has good reasons for believing that he had found a Socratic in Theaetetus — good reasons, metaphorically speaking, for attributing to himself, if only by procurement, the paternity of his opinion. So, paradoxically, what gives rise to the midwifery metaphor is Socrates’ belief in his own paternity. A belief belied as soon as Theaetetus equates knowledge with perception and reveals that he is influenced as much by Protagoras as by Socrates.

So let us sum up the situation without worrying about the metaphor. Between, on the one hand, the expression of the interest and embarrassment that Socrates’ question about knowledge arouses in him, and on the other hand, his first formulation of a definition of knowledge, Theaetetus reveals that he is exposed to contrary influences, that of Socrates (from what he has heard tell about him) and that of Protagoras, whose book *On Truth* he has read. If I am right in saying that at 148e Socrates can see a potential Socratic in Theaetetus, at 151e he discovers in Protagoras a person who is preventing him from truly becoming one. Like Clinias in the *Euthydemus*, tossed about between Socrates and the two sophists, Theaetetus is the field on which Socrates and Protagoras battle for influence. From this battle Socrates comes out, or thinks he comes out, as victor at 185e, in the passage which I have designated the turning-point of the dialogue, where he allows his joy to burst forth.

What remains to find out is what he is going to do with his victory. The discovery that the *koina* are known by the soul alone is simply a first step towards defining knowledge. This first step is the discovery that there exist objects which are inaccessible to the senses but are nonetheless objects of knowledge — of knowledge, therefore, by the soul. Every reader of the *Republic* knows that, since these objects are not sensible (*aistheta*) they are clearly intelligible (*noeta*), and consequently knowledge of them is *noesis*. But Theaetetus doesn’t pronounce this word, just as, in the *Meno*, the slave is unable to designate the diagonal as the side of the double square.

8 Burnyeat 1977, 9.
9 Leitao 2012, 130.

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Indeed, whatever the differences between the *Theaetetus* and the *Meno*, we have here a striking analogy between the two dialogues. After teaching the slave of Meno the way of doubling the square and telling him the name used by 'sophists' for the line upon which they draw the double square, Socrates declares that the slave didn't acquire anything more than a 'true opinion' about the solution to the problem: only if he is questioned again and again he will acquire a real knowledge (ἐπιστήσεται) of it.[10] What could such questioning be? We don't know, because, called in only as an example, the slave has now played his part and leaves the scene. Socrates comes back to Meno, who still doesn't even have a true opinion of what virtue is.

At *Theaetetus* 185e, Theaetetus has arrived at the same stage as the slave at the end of Socrates' demonstration. Un-encumbered of his false belief that knowledge is perception, he has admitted the existence of non-sensible objects and of non-sensible knowledge, but he doesn't know yet what knowledge is. Unlike Meno, he has acquired a true opinion of knowledge; unlike the slave, he is not a mere example in the course of the demonstration but the very addressee of it: Socrates has the opportunity to make him move up from true opinion to knowledge.

Contrary to what Burnyeat asserts,[11] it is here that Socrates' maieutic begins. From the outset of his speech about midwifery his intention was to help Theaetetus make clear what he had heard from some Socratics, that is, ultimately, from Socrates himself. But the Protagoreanism implied by Theaetetus's identification of knowledge with perception stopped Socrates from carrying out this plan. In this view, the so-called first part of the discussion, dedicated to the exposition and refutation of Protagoreanism and its antecedents, consisted only in clearing the place out in order to put Theaetetus on the right track. Only when this task has been done can maieutic begin. Burnyeat's objection to this view is that, except for the strange concluding remarks at the end of the dialogue (210b–d), allusions to midwifery are confined to the so-called first part of it. To which we can reply first that these allusions are quite clearly ironical — isn't the newborn baby begotten by Theaetetus an idea as old as Homer? — and secondly that from 185e on the midwifery metaphor is out of place, since Socrates has taken off his mask of midwife and shown himself as a teacher.[12]

10 *Meno*, 85c9–d1.

11 Burnyeat 1977, 8.

12 In response to Socrates' conclusive question, 'have we given birth to everything we had in us [about knowledge]?' (210b6–7), Theaetetus replies without using the language of the metaphor: 'I've said more things than I had in me, thanks to you', which means, in the vocabulary of the

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Since the middle dialogues, above all since the *Republic*, Plato's Socrates is in possession of a theory of knowledge, and one can expect him to teach it, here, to his interlocutor. It is, moreover, what he begins to do when he shows Theaetetus that, among the properties of things which escape our sense-organs the most fundamental one is their very reality, their *ousia* (186a–c) — therein lies the clincher which definitively disqualifies the identification of knowledge with perception, since what does not attain reality does not attain truth either (186c7). This Socrates is no longer the same Socrates as in the so-called 'Socratic' dialogues, but the transformation is antecedent to the *Theaetetus*; it has already been accomplished, as I have just said, in the *Republic*. As in the *Republic*, moreover, the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* remains attached to the interrogative method. Even if this method, contrary to the denials of Socrates in the *Meno*, has become a method of teaching, one can say that the 'old Socrates' I mentioned at the beginning of this paper survives along with it.

By contrast, the discussion about false opinion, which, on Socrates' initiative, follows upon the new definition proposed by Theaetetus, is in no way a reminder of the teaching of the *Republic*, but rather an anticipation of the *Sophist*. This discussion consists of five successive hypotheses, all of them proposed by Socrates. None of these hypotheses turns out to be fruitful, or more exactly the examination of each one of them ends in failure**.** Though all of these hypotheses are proposed by Socrates, his habitual affirmation that he shares the embarrassment of his interlocutor makes us impute the failure as much to him as to Theaetetus. This might reasonably be taken as an illustration of the non-knowledge or sterility that is characteristic of the 'old Socrates', which was reaffirmed at the beginning of the discussion as being his most manifest point of resemblance to midwives. But one would be forgetting that at the end of the discussion about Protagoras Socrates recognised that the profession not to possess knowledge was simply a pedagogical procedure. In the discussion of false opinion, his pedagogy remains the same, that of questioning his interlocutor without ever himself saying what response he is expecting, but it is understood from that point on that it is a teaching method which is at issue. So there is no question of his adventuring into *terra incognita* with Theaetetus. It is strange to think that, if the problem of false opinion elicits no response in the *Theaetetus*, it is either because Plato

metaphor, 'I've given birth to more than I was pregnant with!' Only the distance from Socrates' metaphorical language prevents this reply from being absurd: this is an indication that Theaetetus has been clever enough to grasp the irony present in the metaphor and, with 'thanks to you' (διὰ σέ), that he has taken Socrates' disavowal of knowledge for what it is: a method of teaching.

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would have had to do further work to find a solution to it[13] or because he would have chosen to turn Socrates into a sort of Moses, who reaches the Promised Land without being able to enter it.[14] The most probable is that, if Socrates does not give the answer to Theaetetus, it is not because he does not know it but because he judges Theaetetus to be not yet capable of profiting from it.

As we know, the problem posed by false opinion is the impossibility, as it is claimed, of 'saying or thinking non-being'. The solution which the *Sophist* will supply is the distinction between absolute non-being, which can indeed be neither spoken nor thought, and the non-being of a particular being, that is to say, what this particular being is not, which is other than it, or which makes it other than everything which is not it. Now, whether it is possible to think that which is not is the question which Socrates poses to Theaetetus at his second attempt to explicate the problem of false opinion. And he poses it in the very terms the Stranger in the *Sophist* will use the next day: "What are we going to say, Theaetetus, if… we are asked, 'Is what these words express possible for anyone?' Can a man judge (*doxasei*) what is not, either about one of the things which are, or just by itself?" (188d7–10). With the first alternative, judging what is not 'about one of the things which are', Socrates in a way slips the terms of his response into the statement of the problem: it is up to Theaetetus to grasp them. If in the end this second attempt fails, it is not because Socrates doesn't perceive the issue himself, but because Theaetetus, perhaps hindered by a residue of Protagoreanism, has not been able to understand the clue that Socrates has offered him. All along this second part of the discussion it is not Socrates but Theaetetus who shows himself to be sterile. If Socrates has made a mistake anywhere, it is when he declared him to be pregnant. At the end of the episode, and despite the goodwill that Theaetetus has shown him, the consequence he draws from it is to put an end to the conversation, and next day to entrust the boy to one of these men of divine wisdom whom he had mentioned at the beginning of the *Theaetetus*, this stranger, in the event, who, Theodorus will assure him, is indeed 'divine' (*Soph*. 216b9).

What can be concluded from all this? In what has preceded I have insisted on the fact that Socrates, at the turning-point of the *Theaetetus*, gives up seriously pretending that he has nothing to teach. The rest of the dialogue shows that, not only does he have something to teach, he has something new to teach even in respect of the *Republic*: he is in possession of the ontology that will be developed in the *Sophist*. That is why there is a 'new' Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, by contrast

13 Cf. Burnyeat 1990, 70.

14 If I may thus summarize Sedley's interpretation of the dialogue in Sedley 2004.

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with the Socrates of the aporetic dialogues. This Socrates, however, can conceive of no other manner to teaching than the interrogative method already employed by the 'old' Socrates. To which of these must we attribute responsability for the dialogue's aporetic conclusion? To the insufficiency of the pupil Theaetetus, or to that of the teacher Socrates? The action Socrates performs at the beginning of the *Sophist* suggests that he himself inclines towards the second alternative. Indeed, in entrusting Theaetetus to the Stranger he is treating him the same way he treats those who do not appear to be pregnant, and whom he entrusts to those 'whose company (*sunousia*) they might benefit from (*hois an sungenomenoi onainto*)' (151b4, tr. Rowe). He does it therefore because he takes him to be, not sterile and infertile but one who has not yet been impregnated though susceptible of being so.

The *Theaetetus* is the last dialogue in which Socrates is the protagonist. For this reason, it can be viewed as a farewell to Socrates. What I have tried to show in this paper is what Plato is saying good-bye to. This is not Socrates' philosophical knowledge, since, on the contrary, he credits him — in anticipation — with what he is himself about to expound in the *Sophist*. 'Socrates, says Aristotle, used to ask questions and not to answer them — for he used to confess that he did not know' (Arist. *Soph. El.* 183b7). Plato's response, if I can put it this way, is that, once deprived of this justification, the Socratic method should be replaced by one that is overtly didactic.[15]

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15 I am grateful to Thomas M. Robinson for the translation of this paper into English.

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Part II: **Method**

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Graciela E. Marcos de Pinotti

On Plato's Methodological Strategy (*Theaetetus* 151d–186e): From Hypothesis to Self-Refutation

In this paper I attempt to draw attention to certain peculiarities of the methodological strategy adopted in the first part of the *Theaetetus*, within the framework of the discussion of the definition of knowledge as perception. The treatment of the flux doctrine, a radical position which initially seems to support this definition but which eventually deprives it of any sense, plays an important role in the strategy, which, as I shall try to show, bears features which are peculiar to it and which allow us to link it both to the hypothetical procedure used by Plato in previous dialogues and to a special kind of refutational argument used later on in the *Sophist*. This is accounted for by the special place the *Theaetetus* has in the *corpus platonicum*. In its search for a definition, its aporetic character and the absence of any reference to the Forms link it, *prima facie* at least, to the *early* dialogues of Plato, whereas its discussion of knowledge and the physical world and becoming, apart from paving the way for some of the main ontological innovations announced in the *Sophist*, appeals to a refutation strategy which is widely relied upon. The *Theaetetus* being a dialogue capable of forming a bridge between those preceding it and those succeeding it, it should come as no surprise that the examination of certain lines of investigation developed in both the former and the latter succeeds in revealing its argumentative structure.

1

At *Tht.* 151e2–3, in response to Socrates' question concerning the nature of knowledge, Theaetetus defines it as perception (οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη ἢ αἴσθησις). Socrates associates this definition with two positions which, while formulated differently, in fact affirm the same thing: one claims that man is the measure of all things, the other states that "nothing ever is, but is always coming to be" (*Tht.* 152e1).[1] This flux doctrine is introduced at *Tht.* 152d2 and discussed at length throughout the first part of the dialogue until its refutation at 181b–183c. Its discussion is part of a broader argument whose structure, as will be seen, is,

1 All references are to Levett's translation in Burnyeat 1990.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-003

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in many aspects, akin to the procedure that starts "from a hypothesis" which is used in the *Meno*.

The problems which in one dialogue and the other lead to resorting to a hypothesis are certainly of a different nature, since it is not the same thing to ask what something is like and to ask what something is, what exhibits its nature. Whereas in the *Meno* the question that triggers the search, and which is examined via a hypothesis, is whether virtue is teachable, in the *Theaetetus* the question concerns the nature of knowledge, and the first answer defines it as perception. However, this does not prevent several points in common arising from both treatments.

(i) In both cases, the stance adopted by Socrates' interlocutor is indirectly subjected to examination, making its truth-value depend on that of another proposition which, as a hypothesis, provides grounds for it.[2] The hypothesis expresses a condition which makes that stance plausible, and which, if satisfied, inclines us to give credit to it. Thus, in the *Meno*, in order to determine whether virtue is teachable, the hypothesis that it is knowledge is assumed, whereas in the *Theaetetus*, in order to ascertain whether knowledge is perception, it is proposed that everything is in motion.[3] The main indication that this doctrine of total instability is assumed as a hypothesis[4] is provided by *Tht*. 183a3–4. Once this assumption has been refuted, Socrates, without concealing his disappointment, refers there to efforts 'to prove that all things are in motion, in order to make that answer [that knowledge is perception] come out correct'.

The affirmation leaves no room for doubt that the theory of universal motion is formulated in support of the definition suggested by Theaetetus, in that it lays down a condition that makes it plausible.

(ii) The next step consists in examining the hypothesis. The peculiarity of this examination is that it first argues in favour of the hypothesis, but then some items that militate against such support are brought to light. Though they do not invite us to reject the argument outright, they at least incline us to restrict its scope. Let us explain this.

In the *Meno* Socrates offers us two arguments of differing signification, one in favour of and the other contrary to the contention that virtue is teachable. The

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2 See the general characterisation of the hypothetical method offered by R. Robinson 1962, 105–113, particularly the example found at *Meno*, 116–117.

3 On the universal flux as the necessary condition of perception's infallibility see Crombie 1963, 4 and Sedley 2004, 40.

4 Apart from the fact that it is identified as such at *Tht*. 183b4, where Socrates refers to it as a *hypothesis* whose followers do not find adequate language to express it.

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first one (*Men.* 87c–89a) supports the hypothesis that virtue is knowledge by the consideration that virtue is useful. The conclusion about its teachability, however, is postponed, since a second argument (*Men.* 89d–96c) leads to a rectification of the answer Meno is expecting. If virtue is teachable, Socrates alleges, another condition needs to be met: the existence of teachers of virtue. Since it seems there are none, it must be concluded, cautiously, that virtue is *not* teachable[5] and another explanation as regards its usefulness must be sought. The result of the whole discussion depends on both arguments. Virtue, by being useful but not teachable, will not be knowledge but true opinion, a precarious apperception that it is undoubtedly good, but unlike an object of *episteme*, not something teachable.[6]

So the discussion concerning the teachability of virtue in the *Meno* covers two stages, such that the second leads to a nuanced version of the conclusion which follows from the first. In the discussion that takes place in the first part of the *Theaetetus* it is possible, it seems to me, to detect a similar movement. Socrates starts alleging reasons in favour of the hypothesis that everything is in motion, and then brings items to light which deprive the hypothesis of support and invite us to view it less favourably.

At *Tht.* 153a–d a true encomium of flux takes place, and in it Socrates puts forward evidence enough (σημεῖα ἱκανά) in its favour. Motion is associated with what passes for being and coming to be, inactivity, with not being and ceasing to be. Motion, he affirms, is beneficial both for body and soul, whereas inactivity has the opposite effect. Later on, to the subtlety present in this thought Socrates opposes the coarseness of those who do not think there is anything other than what they can grasp firmly in their hands, and who do not admit that doings, comings to be, or anything invisible share in being. At this point, the credit which this doctrine deserves demands that some special language be coined, in accordance with the nature which flows from things, some language which does not

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5 Cf. *Men.* 90a–96c. For Devereux 1978, 123, this argument can be characterized as *ad hominem* in the sense that it appeals to Meno's limited notion of teaching. It does not prove that virtue is not teachable *simpliciter*, but that it is not taught. According to R. Robinson 1962, 116–117, the end of the hypothetical procedure is probably at *Men.* 89c, 'for after page 89 neither the word 'hypothesis' nor any methodological remark occurs in the dialogue'. Socrates *directly* disproves the proposition that was originally in question (virtue is teachable) and concludes therefrom the falsehood of the hypothesis.

6 For Gonzalez 1998, 179–180, at the end of the *Meno* we have two contradictory conclusions drawn from two different arguments, and the key to the 'antinomy' is the ambiguity of the word 'teachable'. The method of hypothesis does not inquire into the meaning of the terms used, and it presents us 'only two ambiguous half-truths: virtue is teachable and virtue is not teachable'.

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include the verb *to be*, and which is limited to verbs capable of expressing the processes to which everything is subject.[7] Without it, Socrates reflects, 'if you speak in such a way as to make things stand still, you will easily be refuted' (*Tht*. 157b7–8).

The consideration here is that saying is doing something, and that we should adapt language to what flows incessantly. Otherwise, by portraying what is in permanent flux as stable one will be refuted. At this stage of the discussion, I would like to insist, Socrates and Theaetetus are placing great emphasis on those aspects of the flux doctrine which invite adherence, and are allowing it be considered an acceptable explanation of what is real. Socrates appears to subscribe himself to what these 'wise men' are saying, to the extent that Theaetetus does not succeed in discovering whether the things Socrates is saying are what he himself thinks, or whether he is just testing him.[8]

Instead of concluding, in the *Meno*, that virtue is knowledge and is, as such, teachable, a second line of reasoning leads to a lessening of the connection initially suggested between virtue and knowledge. At *Tht*. 181b8–183c3, similarly, a new argument is developed which, even if it does not shatter what was said in support of the view that everything is in motion, reveals that this doctrine, by virtue of its radicality, is untenable. At *Tht*. 179e1–2 Socrates proposes 'to examine it by going back to its first principle, which is the way they [the fluxers] present it themselves'. This announcement gives way to the second stage, which extends to 183c3, in which the doctrine will be refuted. The starting point of the new argument is the distinction between two kinds of change, spatial movement and change of quality, to which all things are subjected should it be the case that everything is in constant motion.[9] The problem is that such a stance, it now becomes

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7 Cf. *Tht*. 157a7–b9, on the analysis of the flux theory first attributed to Protagoras (152c, 155d) and then to the entire range of philosophers, with the exception of Parmenides. In this context Socrates expands on an elaborate theory of perception which, according to Cornford 1935, 49, has its origin in Plato himself. What is new in this passage, McDowell observes 1973, 141, n. *ad loc*. 157a7–b8, "is the exclusion of 'something', 'someone's', 'my', 'this' and 'that'… as a denial that things persist through time". What is significant, to my mind, is that Socrates introduces it as a plausible explanation, and he formulates his conclusion using the first person plural.

8 Cf. *Tht*. 157c4–6. Socrates, invoking his ignorance and his maieutic art, answers that only about the latter is at issue: he is practicing midwifery on Theaetetus.

9 Cf. *Tht*. 181c3–d7. Otherwise, Socrates argues, 'things are both moving and standing still, and it will be no more correct to say that all things are in motion than to say that all things stand still'. McDowell 1973, 179, n. *ad loc*. 179d1–180d7, distinguishes 'the doctrine of total instability introduced in the present passage from a less radical doctrine which turns out to be that involved in the theory of perception'. The flux doctrine, as I interpret it, is presented, from the beginning, as a radical doctrine according to which *nothing* is but *everything* is subject to becoming. What is

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evident, far from supporting the definition of knowledge as perception, leads rather to the fact that no affirmation has a precise meaning or has more value than any other: 'if all things are in motion, every answer, on whatever subject, is equally correct' (*Tht*. 183a5–6).

Theaetetus' answer to the Socratic question about the nature of knowledge therefore becomes irrelevant. The flux doctrine finally deprives the definition of knowledge of the support which it was called on to sustain.[10] As for the special language that had demanded to be coined if the radical flux theory is true, it is now observed that, if it is indefinite enough, as the theory demands, it will prevent its followers from putting it into words. This theory cannot be communicated through any language akin to the flowing nature to which everything would be subject, because such language would communicate nothing. Thus 'the exponents of this theory need to establish some other language; as it is, they have no words that are consistent with their hypothesis' (*Tht*. 183b2–4).

While at *Tht*. 157b1–9 Socrates seemed to include himself among those who considered it viable to reform our language in order to avoid that the fact of flux refuted what is said, it is now the theory of radical flux that turns out to be refuted by the *factum* of language. His followers are reduced to silence, caught in their own hypothesis.

According to R. Robinson, Plato professes to show that the fluxers are wrong because from their doctrine there follow consequences which are obviously false; therefore, the doctrine which entails them must be false too.[11] For Kahn (2007, 45) the conclusion of the argument is rather that there can be no description of a world without stability: a coherent statement of the thesis of total flux is not possible. Both readings are probably partly true. Plato believes that the use of language requires a certain fixity in the object, enough stability so that what is said conveys a precise meaning. This is something which the fluxers silently accept

modified is the perspective concerning it. First its positive aspects are exposed and then its weaknesses are brought to light.

10 For Sedley 2006, 96, the definition of knowledge as perception can survive only if perception is radically unstable, but this concession renders the definition unstable, no more true than false. And "this is a collapse, not of language, but of *dialectic*" (98). Socrates' objection is 'that it postulates a world in which there can be no dialectic, and no definitions (…). Theaetetus' definition undermines itself: it is a definition that presupposes a world in which there can be no definitions' (99).

11 Cf. Robinson 1950, 9: their view "entails that nothing can have any description applied to it (*Tht*. 182d4), or all answers are equally right (*Tht*. 183a5), or all existing language is useless except perhaps the phrase 'not so' (*Tht*. 183b4). We are tacitly given to understand that these consequences are obviously false and therefore the view which entails them must be false too".

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when they use language to express their doctrine, but which they deny when claiming that everything is subjected to constant movement and change. From Plato's standpoint, they are confronted with the dilemma of remaining silent, refusing to communicate the doctrine they embrace, or claiming that everything changes and moves, at the price of being caught out in an irreparable state of falsity, since the statement of this thesis presupposes a certain stability. I shall return to this point later on, to show the connection between the present argument and a refutation strategy profusely used in the *Sophist* against the kind of opponent who contradicts himself when he tries to articulate his thesis. First I would like to address another aspect which, to my mind, corroborates its similarity to the methodology used in the *Meno*.

(iii) In the arguments offered in both dialogues, as I have been saying, there arise elements which deprive the hypothesis of support and invite us to rein it in. Socrates' argumentation erodes our trust in the view that virtue is knowledge, or that everything is in motion, just as certain facts seem to refute it too, such as, in the *Meno*, the non-existence of teachers of virtue, and, in the *Theaetetus*, the very act of asserting that everything is in motion. However, the items initially alleged in favour of the hypothesis are not totally discarded. In the *Meno* the initial identification of virtue and knowledge is rejected, while it is not denied that virtue, as true opinion, is based on a certain knowledge. Similarly, in the *Theaetetus* the reduction of everything to movement is called into question while still acknowledging the latter as possessing a privileged role in what is real. In fact, in the *Sophist*, which Kahn (2007, 53) considers a sequel to the *Theaetetus*, Being includes both the unchanging and what changes. The encomium that the theory of flux initially deserved is not shattered, and its positive features are not ignored, but its scope is restricted so as to include a certain stability, which is necessary for the theory to be presented as a plausible picture of what is real. Its own discussion and subsequent refutation entail the tacit affirmation of a certain fixity, which is a condition for the theory to be able to be put into words and be an object of examination.

From the refutation of radical flux the inference is drawn that *not everything* is subject to change in all its aspects, even though the content of this negation remains ambiguous, and in the rest of the dialogue — let us remember that in the *Theaetetus* Plato omits all reference to the forms, and constructs a Socrates who is ignorant of his metaphysics — it is not clarified.[12] Hence the need to prove that

12 Is Plato trying to show that there is *something* which keeps itself from change in all its aspects, a stable world of intelligible Forms (Cornford, Cherniss)? Or does he mean that *nothing* changes in the radical sense that the fluxers proclaim, not even the physical world subject to

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perception does not constitute knowledge by means of an argument such as the one offered at *Tht.* 184b–186c. Such a refutation deprives the definition of knowledge as sensation of support, and in that sense weakens it, but it does not refute it. Although the definition is no longer plausible in view of the flux doctrine, it could be presented as sound on a different basis. Socrates suggests this when he affirms that they will no longer accept that knowledge is perception, 'not at any rate on the line of argument which supposes that all things are in motion' (*Tht.* 183c1–2: ἐπιστήμην τε αἴσθησιν οὐ συγχωρησόμεθα κατά γε τὴν τοῦ πάντα κινεῖσθαι μέθοδον).[13]

This means that, following another line of reasoning, Theaetetus could uphold that knowledge is perception. Refuting this formula too, then, is a future project, and that is exactly the aim of *Tht.* 184b–186c, the formulation of a proof that perception is not knowledge, the details of which I shall not dig into in this paper. Let it suffice to say that perception is belittled there on grounds of its being incapable of grasping *ousia*, a definite character belonging to everything which it is possible to talk or think about.[14] The refutation of the radical flux doctrine by demonstrating the impossibility that Being, Motion and Rest exclude each other, prepares the ground for some of the main ontological innovations of the *Sophist*.[15]

2

The refutation of universal flux, apart from being part of an argumentational procedure which contains traces of the hypothetical method used in previous dialogues, appeals to a refutation strategy profusely used in the *Sophist*. In this dialogue Plato resorts to the *factum* of language to show the weakness of certain positions which cannot square with with the fact of being stated. In every case, the opponent finds himself in difficulty trying to articulate his position, since the

becoming (Robinson, Owen, Crombie)? The question has been discussed since Aristotle's day, and it continues to divide scholars.

13 For Castagnoli 2010, 214, n. 35, Socrates envisages the possibility that Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as *aisthesis* 'finds support in some different ontology'.

14 Cf. Modrak 1981, 50. For Kahn 1981, 120, the *ousia* required for knowledge and truth is 'the propositional structure of thought, provided by or modelled on language, and entailing reference, predication, and assertion. It is this structure that is required for thought to be true or false'.

15 According to Kahn 2007, the most important change is the explicit enlargement of the notion of Being to include the nature of things that change. Cf. *Sph.* 247d8–e4, 248e7–249a3 and specially 249d3–4, where Plato insists that Being must include both the unchanging and what changes (249d3). As this author emphasizes, the inclusion of change is new (48).

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very act of asserting it entails the commitment to something which is in conflict with the content of what his position is meant to express.[16] For Plato the use of language requires, among other things, enough stability for what is being said carry a definite sense. This is something the fluxers tacitly accept when trying to articulate their position in *logos*, but which they deny when claiming that everything is in incessant motion.

At least two examples in the *Sophist* point in this direction. One is that of the Monist, who denies multiplicity when stating that only the one is. The assertion of this thesis demands, however, the use of names, something which a Monist, for whom there exists only one thing, cannot admit.[17] The way in which the Monist presents his theory, Castagnoli (2010, 220) explains, is incompatible with the content of what the theory is meant to express. Although he phrases his thesis in words, he implicitly contradicts it.

Another example is that of those who claim that things are unblended and incapable of having a share of each other. Nevertheless, they cannot avoid combining terms in their speech. Strictly speaking, there is no need for others to refute them, since they have their enemy inside themselves, like Eurycles the ventriloquist (*Sph.* 252c5–9). The image leaves no room for doubt that the conflict comes to light as soon as the opponent asserts his thesis and by virtue of his *own* admissions, which are refuted the moment he tries to articulate his position; once again there arises a conflict between the way in which his thesis is asserted and its content.

These arguments proceed, without exception, from what is said by the opponent. We should not forget that they are positions whose articulation in language is a key instance in which it is made clear that they are incompatible not only with ordinary opinion — they are literally paradoxical — but also with the conditions of their own statement. The method, as it is described at *Sph.* 243d, thus consists

16 In the *Sophist*, as Wilmet 1990, 97 says, Plato on at least four occasions (238a–239a, 243d–244a, 244b–d, 251e–252c) takes on opponents by taking advantage of inconsistencies between what they say and the particular way in which it is put forward. These arguments show that their claims 'are *intrinsically* incoherent: what is proposed and how it is proposed are inconsistent and incompatible'. See Castagnoli's (2010, 205–247) examination of 'operational self-refutation' in Plato.

17 Cf. *Sph.* 244b6–d13. Perhaps the Monist would not mind admitting that only the one is and that the rest is a mere name, in the spirit of Parmenides B8, 38. However, as Crombie 1963, 393 explains, "'that there exist two names' must mean something like 'that there exist *grounds* necessitating the use of two non-synonymous words', or 'that the one substance contains two aspects'". Plato infers that the Monist cannot even admit there is *a single* name, because this implies affirming the existence of more than one thing, and thus falling back into multiplicity.

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in imagining that the followers of these doctrines are present. This explains the profuse use of verbs of *saying* throughout the discussions with such opponents.[18] The dialogue with the defenders of universal flux poses a special difficulty, since it is not easy to obtain an explanation from people who are as unstable as the philosophy they defend. Socrates and Theodorus thus decide to take charge of the issue themselves and investigate this theory as a problem (*Tht*. 180c5–6).

In addition, theirs are radical positions, which involve absolute denial. The denial can be explicit, as in the case of the rejection of all manner of blend or combination, or just implicit, as in the case of Monism, which implies the denial of multiplicity, or of universal flux, according to which no stability is possible. The negative nature of these theories imposes restrictions on the use of language. However, instead of attaining a language which is capable of satisfying the requirements of the theory which is embraced, Plato shows that the nature of things ends up revealing to the language. This theory, because of its radical negativity, is refuted. The attempt to subordinate language to ontology fails.[19]

So does Plato really prove that such theories are false, or does he at the most place his followers in a vulnerable situation? The question is not easy to answer. Even if it is not expressly said that this is about false theories, it is shown that there is no coherent statement of such theories, and, if they were true, they could not even be expressed or, more strictly, nothing could be said at all; in a word, there would be no language.[20] Since this is obviously false, we are entitled to suppose that the theory leading to it — a theory which is incompatible with the ordinary practice of language — is also false. In this sense, the radical opponent with whom Plato is in confrontation, whatever the figure he incarnates — the Monist,

18 Cf. *Tht*. 181a6, 8, b2, c4, c6, d8, *Sph*. 244b6, 9, c12, 251e8. As Wilmet 1990, 97–99, points out: "such a method is already implicit in the early, 'definition' dialogues, where Socrates forces someone to say what he thinks, i.e. forces him to *speak*, and tries to derive from that sole speech either inconsistencies or conclusions that the speaker is *not* ready to endorse".

19 The first stage of the discussion of the theory of radical flux is at *Tht*. 157b, where the attempt to adapt language to what flows incessantly takes place in order to avoid being refuted. However, at *Tht*. 181b–183c (second stage), by proving that total instability would make the language practice impossible, the theory of radical flux is refuted by the *factum* of language. As I explain in Marcos de Pinotti 2017, 141–145, some kind of permanency is the *sine qua non* of the meaningfulness of language, so that if the assertion 'nothing is, everything is changing' makes sense, it is false, because some sort of stability is possible.

20 Baltzly 1996, 153: 'Plato is interested in philosophical views which are such that if the conditions which would make them true obtained, those same conditions would make it the case that neither they, nor anything else, could *ever* be expressed in any way… Someone who, like Plato, is convinced that philosophical conversation is an important path way to truth will of course be very mindful of the pre-suppositions of the possibilities of thought and discourse'.

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the follower of flux or any other — is reduced to silence, or, if ready to articulate his position, to an irremediable state of falsity.[21] The key to the Platonic refutation strategy, understood as such, is none other than the *factum* of language. The moral of these arguments is that the philosopher, rather than reforming language according to his theory concerning the way things are, uses dialogue to make language reveal the true nature of the things that are. This is how a theory is subjected to testing. And if its content is such that, were it true, it could not be expressed, it will be a theory not deserving to be embraced by the philosopher.[22]

It is worth highlighting that Plato, as Socrates' true heir, instead of precipitately rejecting theories which could be considered obviously false or deprived of sense, subjects them to thorough scrutiny and seeks to show their inconsistencies. He considers that his paradoxical nature does not relieve him as a philosopher, but rather makes him turn them into a subject of inquiry. These theories appear as possible explanations which deserve credit until their internal contradictions come to light. In this instance they are refuted, and the purpose of the refutation is not the opponent's defeat but the success of the investigation.

I find that in the case of the theory of universal flux, the criticism of the *Theaetetus* is constructive inasmuch as it introduces restrictions which permit the value that Plato acknowledges in the theory from the beginning to remain unscathed. In fact, this criticism paves the way for a conception of Being which is generous enough to include changing as well as unchanging entities, which is the key to the ontology of the *Sophist*, in which motion is one of the genres of Being. In this sense, as Kahn says (2007, 53), Plato's attitude towards the fluxers shifts from negative criticism to re-appropriation.

This criticism, according to the interpretation offered here, is inserted into an investigation procedure which draws inspiration from previous dialogues and anticipates the refutation strategy used later in the *Sophist*. This confirms the special place of the *Theaetetus* in the progress of the dialogues, and suggests a continuity as regards the method which Plato considered characteristic of philosophy. In it, hypothesis plays an important role. A hypothesis is a proposition the philosopher knows he does not know, a supposition temporarily assumed, whose

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21 See Robinson 1950, 9, cf. *supra* n. 11), and Baltzly 1996, 153. *Contra* cf. Castagnoli 2010, 218: the self-refutation argument in *Tht.* 181–183 'has not proved that extreme flux must be false'; the Monist "had been reduced to stupid silence or meaningless babbling ('the one is one of one'), but had not been explicitly rejected as false" (224).

22 On the possibility of subsisting as true without the possibility to articulate in language cf. Wilmet 1990, 100: 'a philosophical thesis that cannot be said is not a philosophical thesis (and Plato in various places repeats that the worst would be to be deprived of the means — language — to philosophize)'.

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truth value he is ready to explore and establish, though not without first going through the difficulties and facing possible objections. In this sense, the use that Plato makes of hypotheses evokes his teacher's practice, determined to scrutinise opinions and to fight the presupposition about knowing what is not known. Also, the refutation strategy used against an opponent that, when trying to articulate his thesis, contradicts himself, is a reminder of Socrates' own strategy and his interest in making his interlocutor speak. Hypothesis and self-refutation, key ingredients in the philosopher's investigation procedure, show Plato's fidelity to the Socratic legacy.

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Álvaro Vallejo Campos

Dialectic in the *Theaetetus*

1 Introduction: Dialectic and *Elenchus* in the *Theaetetus*

In this paper I would like to examine the role and character of dialectic in the *Theaetetus*. In the middle of his analysis of Protagoras's man-the-measure doctrine, Socrates declares that if whatever anyone judges is true for that person, then not only Socrates himself, but also his art of midwifery (τῆς ἐμῆς τέχνης τῆς μαιευτικῆς) and the whole business of dialectic (σύμπασα ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι πραγματεία) would incur absolute ridicule.[1] This sentence unites the fate of the Socratic technical method of examination with the entire *pragmateia* of this art of dialogue that Plato called 'dialectic'. We should also observe that Aristotle, in the very first words of the *Topics*, presents his major work on dialectic as a *pragmateia,* the same as Xenocrates.[2] In the ensuing lines of the aforementioned passage, Socrates clarifies the nature of both activities, that is, his own method and the practice of dialectic, which coincide in the task to 'examine and try to refute each other's appearances and judgments' (ἐπισκοπεῖν καὶ ἐπιχειρεῖν ἐλέγχειν τὰς ἀλλήλων φαντασίας τε καὶ δόξας, 161e, Levett trans.). Therefore, another version of the Socratic *elenchus* seems to be at the core of the Platonic concept of dialectic in the *Theaetetus,* forming an essential part of it.

The metaphysical restraint in the *Theaetetus* is obvious, because there is no explicit, unmistakable reference to the forms of the previous dialogues. This has been a common topic of all commentaries on the dialogue and one of the main philosophical questions under interpretation. Nevertheless, as we shall see, this Platonic attitude is notoriously limited through indirect references to the forms and to other aspects of the philosophy that we already know from other works. It is also a fact that, as many scholars have indicated, in the *Theaetetus* Plato seems to go back to the 'semi-historical Socrates' of the early aporetic dialogues, in the sense stipulated by Sedley,[3] and presents him in a manner that would be incomprehensible if the dramatic setting of this work had been occupied by that other

1 τὸ δὲ δὴ ἐμόν τε καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς τέχνης τῆς μαιευτικῆς σιγῶ ὅσον γέλωτα ὀφλισκάνομεν, οἶμαι δὲ καὶ σύμπασα ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι πραγματεία (*Tht.* 161e4–6). I very much appreciate the comments of E. Berti and M. Narcy, who read a previous version of this paper.

2 The title of one of his works is *peri to dialegesthai pragmateia* (D. L. IV 13).

3 Sedley 2009, 3 and *passim*.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-004

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incarnation of Socrates who expounds the metaphysics of the *Phaedo*, the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*. My explanation of this circumstance is that Plato is trying to depict the practice of a dialectical conversation, the task of which consists in arguing from a philosophical point of view that runs contrary to the doctrines dogmatically expounded in previous dialogues. If the most accepted chronological order of the dialogues is true and we take into account the mutual internal references, we also have to notice that the *Theaetetus* is placed in a series of dialogues beginning with the *Parmenides* and continuing with the *Sophist* and the *Politicus*. I will therefore reflect on the lines of continuity running through these two groups of dialogues, namely, between the preceding dogmatic texts, such as the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*, and the ensuing works of the later period that seem to start with the *Theaetetus* or make reference to this dialogue. In my view, the Platonic concept of dialectic and the use of the *elenchus*, which is so prominent in this work, can be interpreted not as a rupture with the preceding dialogues but as an external support to basic elements of their metaphysics that emerge from the refutation of those theses that are opposed to it, as well as anticipating the new elements that would be expounded in the dialogues that followed.

2 Dialectic in the *Theaetetus* and Aristotle

In the *Theaetetus*, Plato lays stress on Socrates' ignorance and on the elenctic character of his maieutic *technē*, which apparently are two sides of the same coin. Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is not wholly absent from the non-aporetic dialogues, but no one would deny that in the *Theaetetus*, compared with other dialogues of the same chronological group, this is a very distinctive feature that determines its philosophical methodology. Many scholars trying to interpret the dialogue have asked 'why does Plato make such a point of (Socrates) being philosophically barren (150c–d)?'[4] My answer to this question is that the *Theaetetus* is a dialogue that has a predominant concern with methodology and that Socrates embodies the *elenchus* as an essential trait of Plato's concept of dialectic in order to exhibit its refutative dimension. Aristotle occasionally distinguishes between dialectic and *peirastic*, but sometimes also acknowledges 'the art of examining' or *peirastike* as a 'branch of dialectic' (trans. W.A. Pickard) or, more literally, as a certain kind of dialectic (*dialektike tis, Sophistical Refutations: S.E.* 171b4–5). He

4 See Sayre 1992, 228.

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even says that 'the essential task of the art of dialectic and of examination' is the same and consists of 'discovering some faculty of reasoning about any theme put before us from the most reputable premises' (183a37–b1). The Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is the perfect character for representing the technical method of refuting that constitutes, in Aristotle's opinion, this essential part of dialectic. Aristotle gives us an outline of this dialectical expertise, describing certain characteristics that can all be applied to the Socrates of the *Theaetetus*. First of all, in this dialogue, Socrates, does, indeed, speak in many passages of his art of midwifery as a *technē* (cfr. *Th.* 149a4, a7, 150b6, 161e5, 184b1, 210b8, c4) and Aristotle in *The Sophistical Refutations* confirms the technical mode of this way of examining, because although 'everybody is engaged in refuting (ἐλέγχουσιν)', as he says, and they 'take a hand as amateurs in this task', only 'dialectic (ἡ διαλεκτική) is concerned professionally (ἐντέχνως)' with this practice, for 'he is a dialectician who examines by the help of a theory of deduction' (ὁ τέχνῃ συλλογιστικῇ πειραστικὸς διαλεκτικός, *S.E.* 172a34–36).[5]

Second, for Aristotle, 'dialectic proceeds by questioning' (172a18) and, as we know, Socrates affirms that he limits himself 'to questioning others' and that he never 'makes any pronouncements about anything himself' (*Th.* 150c5–6). Socrates says in the *Theaetetus* that 'none of the arguments ever comes from me, but from the person who is having the discussion with me' (Mcdowell trans. 161b2–3) and Aristotle seems to corroborate this statement when he warns us that, in the event that the answerer did not concede us any thesis, we 'would then no longer have had any grounds from which to argue any longer against the objection' (172a20–21). A refutation, says Aristotle (*Analytica Priora* 66b11–12), is a deduction 'which establishes the contradictory. But if nothing is conceded, a refutation is impossible'.

Third, however, the interrogative character of Socrates' dialectic is intimately linked to his disavowal of knowledge. Aristotle seems to be describing the procedure of Socrates' midwifery, for he says that the interrogative nature of this form of examining an interlocutor's views is a technique that 'a man may possess, even though he has not knowledge' (172a22–23). So the return to the Socrates of the early dialogues, barren as he apparently is of any substantive philosophical knowledge, and his image as a man who practices the art of midwifery, used for the first time in the *Theaetetus*, fits the character of this dialogue very well and seems so different from the Socrates of the middle dialogues. Aristotle also makes

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5 This quotation leaves no doubt about the intrinsic relation between the *elenchus* and dialectic, although it is also possible to use it in a non-dialectical domain. On the possible differences between Plato and Aristotle in the use of the *elenchus*, see Dorion 2012, 257, 259.

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reference to geometry, which is represented in our dialogue through characters such as Theodorus and Theaetetus, just to say that dialectic, unlike geometry, 'does not consist in knowledge of any definite subject' (172a28). In a direct reference to Socrates (*S.E.* 183b7–8), he states that this was the reason 'why Socrates used to ask questions and not to answer them, for he used to confess that he did not know'.

Fourth, the aim of the art of examining is, naturally, to refute the opinions upheld by the respondent (cf. *S.E.* 172a34–5) and, as we have already seen, this is the fundamental task of Socrates' art as practised in the dialogue with Theaetetus (161e7). The imaginary appearance of Protagoras takes place in a dialectical scene where the aim, as he says, is to dispute (ἀμφισβητεῖν, 167d5) his doctrine, for, as Aristotle reminds us in the *Topics*, a thesis, such as the opinion put forth by Protagoras, constitutes a dialectical problem about which 'either the mass of men disagree (ἀμφισβητεῖ) with the wise about the thesis, or that the one or the other class disagree among themselves' (*Top.* 104b32–34). In the *Theaetetus*, contrary to the first attitude that he manifests in the *Protagoras* (cf. 334c–335a), he agrees to proceed 'by asking questions' (δι' ἐρωτήσεων, 167d6) and declares that it is the best procedure for a man with any intelligence. Thus, disagreement, discussion through a discourse based on questions and answers and, finally, refutation of the respondent are intimately related in the dialectical setting as presented in the *Theaetetus* and in the handbook of dialectic written by Aristotle. *Elenchus* is, of course, a central topic of the dialogue: Protagoras has to protest because he declares that he will be refuted (ἐλέγχομαι, 166b1) by Socrates' questions only if the respondent is giving the answer that he would have given. The Socratic *elenchus* is a well-known characteristic of the early dialogues, but we will have to see if we can distinguish a new spirit in its use, as I believe there is, which the *Theaetetus* is designed to display as a central trait of Socrates' midwifery.

Fifth, we could add, in my opinion, another additional similarity between Aristotle's concept of dialectic and the Socratic art of midwifery presented in this dialogue: both Aristotle and Plato try to show the differences between dialectic, on the one hand, and the eristic or antilogical practices, on the other, which have a merely agonistic character. In the passage just quoted, where Protagoras tries to defend his thesis from the Socratic *peirastic*, he asks him not 'to be unjust in his questioning' (167e1), because it would be a great inconsistency that someone who professes to be concerned about virtue could 'behave unjustly in arguments' (ἀδικοῦντα ἐν λόγοις, 167e2–3). Once more, even the vocabulary used by Aristotle is very similar in expressing the same claim: the eristic or antilogic concept of dialogue must be distinguished from dialectic because 'the art of contentious reasoning (*eristike*) is foul fighting (*adikomachia*) in disputation (*antilogia, S. E.* 171b23)'.

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Plato, as he does in many other passages of his works, presents his concept of dialectic establishing a contrast between a merely agonistic controversy (ἀγωνιζόμενος, 167e4) and the kind of dialogue (διαλεγόμενος, 167e5) that should be used in the practice of serious philosophy.[6]

Aristotle explains this injustice, committed with arguments by eristic and sophistic practitioners, due to their common aim, which is 'to win at all costs' (*S. E.* 171b24) without obeying the rules of fair discussion. Plato and Aristotle realized that, from an external and superficial point of view, dialectic was confused with the kind of dialogue that could be found in the sophistry and eristic.[7] As Nehamas, for example, has shown, terms, like philosophy, dialectic, eristic or sophistry, 'do not seem to have had a widely agreed-upon application' during the fourth century.[8] Nevertheless, Nehamas maintains that the difference between the Socratic practice of the *elenchus* and his sophistic opponents 'is a difference more in purpose than in method'[9] and that the difference between Plato's dialectic and the sophistic method only becomes clear when he introduces the theory of forms in the middle dialogues and connects his concept of dialectic to this doctrine with the result of 'underwriting the nature and practice of dialectic'.[10] It is true that both Plato and Aristotle establish a very important difference between dialectic and the antilogical (*Tht.* 164c7, 197a1) or eristic practices (*S.E.* 171b32), which depend on the agonistic motivation of the latter. The contrast on this basis between controversialists (ἀγωνισταὶ) and philosophers (φιλόσοφοι, 164c9–d1) is clear in the *Theaetetus*. The 'spirit of ill will or contentiousness' (δυσμενῶς οὐδὲ μαχητικῶς, 168b3) that characterizes their practices should not taint the philosophical nature of the dialectic employed by Socrates. In fact, Aristotle, in a well-known text, where he tries to establish a line of demarcation between sophistic, dialectic and philosophy, declares that the difference depends on the 'purpose of life' (*Metaph.* IV 2, 1004b24–5). The mood of this contrast is similar in the *Theaetetus*, wherein the difference depends on the educational motive of dialectic and philosophy, trying to help the interlocutor and show him his mistakes

6 As we know, in the *Meno* Socrates distinguishes between a questioner who belongs to the group of *eristikon te kai agonistikon* and one who proceeds 'milder and in a more dialectical manner' (*dialektikoter*on, 75c9–d4).

7 See Nehamas 1990, 3–16. In the *Philebus* (16c–17a), the difference between a dialectical and an eristic discussion is clearly established in terms of method, in this case directly related to the number of intermediates between the one and the multiplicity comprised in every form that the dialectician is able to discern.

8 Nehamas 1990, 5.

9 Nehamas 1990, 11.

10 Nehamas 1990, 12.

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(168a1), while in the agonistic controversies the aim is just 'to make jokes and trip people up as much as one can' (167e5–6). Nevertheless, in my opinion, there is not only a difference in aim or purpose, as Nehamas upholds, but also in method, for those who proceed in an antilogical way only found their agreements on a mere verbal basis (πρὸς τὰς τῶν ὀνομάτων ὁμολογίας, 164c7–8). On the contrary, the dialectical discussion, as Protagoras's claim in the dialogue manifests, cannot proceed 'chasing after words' (166c1).

The results of the antilogical and dialectical practices can be the same, for both have as their aim the contradiction of the respondent, but for Aristotle the sophistic and eristic practitioners proceed on an unfair basis and present as deductions what are not, and this is why he proposes to call them not merely deductions but contentious deductions 'since it appears to deduce, but does not really do so' (*Top.* 101a3–4). The case of refutation, analysed specifically by Aristotle, also admits, naturally, a false illusion sometimes dependent on language, as Plato states in the *Theaetetus*. Aristotle gives us plenty of information about the 'the arguments used in competitions and contests' to achieve refutation, which rely on a specific method, such as exploiting the homonymy or ambiguity of words, of which we could also give plenty of references in Socrates' dialogue with Theaetetus or Protagoras. This contrast between a legitimate use of dialectical reasoning and other unfair practices does not seem to depend only on a different purpose, but also on a distinct method that constitutes dialectic as a rational conception of discourse not based merely on tricks and ambiguities.

I come now to a sixth analogy between Socrates methods as shown in the *Theaetetus* and dialectic as conceived by Aristotle. When the *peirastic* examination of Theaetetus and Protagoras proceeds, we realize what the true object of dialectic is that the Socratic analysis is bringing forth. These things are all those 'which are common to everything' (185c5; *ta koina*, 185e1) and, as once was observed by G. Ryle,[11] Plato and Aristotle agree almost completely that they represent the dialectician's concern. We can leave aside for the moment the probable allusion to Platonic forms and confirm that even if Theaetetus and the Socrates of this dialogue are not experts in the depths of metaphysics, they are no less concerned with these predicates with which, as Sedley puts it, 'Socratic dialectic was already starting to be exercised in the early dialogues'.[12] The most interesting point is that these common predicates can be used without metaphysical commitment since, as C. Kahn says,[13] 'the *Theaetetus* says nothing whatsoever about

11 Ryle 1967, 59.
12 Sedley 2009, 107.
13 Kahn 2007, 47

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the ontological status of the *koina*'. Although the list given of these common attributes is extensionally equivalent, as he sustains, to a list of forms (Being, Different, Same, Similar, Dissimilar, One, Admirable, Shameful, Good, Bad, etc.), the truth is that many of these could be 'the kinds that function in dialectical argument in *Parmenides* and *Sophist*'.[14]

As we have seen before, for Aristotle dialectic 'does not consist in knowledge of any definite subject' and 'for this reason, too, it deals with everything' and 'even amateurs make use in a way of dialectic and the practice of examining'. 'What serves them here is these *koina* or general principles' that are used in dialectical discussions and which everybody knows as well as the scientist (cf. *S.E.* 172a27–33). In a sentence that can be interpreted as a definition, Aristotle asserts that the dialectician is 'a man who regards the common principles (*ta koina*) with their application to the particular matter in hand' (*S.E.* 171b6–7). This is why the practice of dialectic is not incompatible with Socrates disavowal of knowledge and this, as expressed by E. Berti,[15] can be understood. Aristotle considered Socrates a dialectician in the most genuine sense of the word. Thus, the dialectical activity displayed in the *Theaetetus* satisfies the fundamental conditions specified by Aristotle for a discussion to be considered truly dialectical. With regard to these *koina*, the dialecticians 'try to inquire', says Aristotle (*Met.* 995b23–24), 'doing their investigation from the *endoxa* only'. The specific difference of the dialectical deduction is, indeed, that 'it reasons from *endoxa* or reputable opinions' (*Top.* 100a30), which he defines as premises 'which are accepted by everyone or by the majority or by the wise –i.e. by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and reputable of them' (100b21–b23). It is true that in the *Theaetetus* the difference with other dialogues seems to depend on the notorious authority of the philosophers or sophists who have upheld their opinions subject to dialectical scrutiny.[16] In this case, it is not only important to analyse Theaetetus' views, as

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14 Kahn 2007, 47; see Vallejo 1988, 154.

15 Berti 2004, 203.

16 See Vlastos 1991, 266. Unlike what happens with the practice of *elenchus* in the Socratic dialogues, as Vlastos observes, the thesis that is put into Theatetus' mouth is 'compound with a strange metaphysical doctrine' that 'by no stretch of the imagination could have been fished out of Theaetetus' own belief system'. Nevertheless, Vlastos defended a very sharp distinction between the 'peirastic' *elenchus* of the Socratic dialogues and Aristotle's concept of dialectic reminding us of his distinction between *dialektikoi* and *peirastikoi logoi* (*S.E.* 165b38; see Vlastos 1999, 49, n. 39). Although in this paper we are not dealing with the version of the *elenchus* in the Socratic dialogues, we can also say that in other texts this contrast is not so sharply established and Aristotle speaks of *peirastike* as a part or a characteristic of dialectic (*S.E.* 171b4, b9, 172a21, 172a31, etc.). See Berti 2004, 203.

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in most of the early Socratic dialogues, but also, and especially, the opinions of very well-known philosophers such as Protagoras, Heraclitus and Empedocles or 'the best poets in each genre, Epicharmus in comedy and Homer in tragedy' (152e3–5). Socrates presents the doctrine implied by Theaetetus definition as 'an agreement' of many 'wise men, apart from Parmenides' in a manner that fits perfectly with the definition of what Aristotle calls a dialectical 'thesis', 'a paradoxical belief of some eminent philosopher' (104b19–20) and, in fact, he quotes as such 'the view of Heraclitus that all things are in motion' (104b21–22). Nevertheless, the dialectical character of the discussion of this thesis in the *Theaetetus* is still possible given Socrates' avowal of ignorance for it can proceed from *endoxa* or by considering those common questions that are within the reach not only of the wise and the expert but also of amateurs who 'make use of dialectic and the practice of examining' (*S.E.* 172 a 30–31).

3 *Elenchus* as an Essential Part of Dialectic

The *Theaetetus*, if we believe in the most credited results of the stylometric methods, is placed between two groups of dialogues: on one hand, it is very close from a stylistic point of view to the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus;* on the other hand, it is inserted into the sequence of *Parmenides, Sophist and Politicus*, as the mutual internal references of these dialogues show. So my purpose in the rest of this contribution is to analyse briefly, first, the presence of the elenctic dialectic displayed in the *Theaetetus* in these two different groups of dialogues between which it seems to be inserted, and second, the possible differences between this dialectical practice and the Socratic *elenchus* of the early dialogues. Naturally, we should not completely neglect the philosophical contents of our dialogue, if our aim is to understand the relation of this apparently aporetic dialogue with Plato's work.

Starting from this last question, we should remember what I take as the two main epistemological and ontological theses of the *Republic*. The demarcation of the true philosopher is established under the epistemological antithesis of two different *dynameis* that correspond to *episteme* and *doxa* or, in other words, to reason and sense perception. From an ontological point of view, this difference depends on the existence of another antithesis formulated in terms of *ousia* and *genesis*. These two central philosophical theses, which are not explicitly present in the *Theaetetus*, are, nevertheless, confronted in this dialogue with their contradictories in a way that seems to follow the dialectical method recommended not only by the *Republic* but also by the *Parmenides*. Socrates' difficulties in this dialogue are due to the fact that, in accordance with Parmenides, he has tried to

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define (ὁρίζεσθαι, 135c8) the forms before going through the preliminary stage of 'training' (πρὶν γυμνασθῆναι) and the evolved character that we find in the *Theaetetus* recognizes his 'terrible passion' for these exercises (οὕτω τις ἔρως δεινὸς ἐνδέδυκε τῆς περὶ ταῦτα γυμνασίας, 169c1). This training with the *logoi* is exemplified in the *Parmenides* by the case of Zeno, who in the *Sophist* (frag.1 Ross), the lost dialogue written by Aristotle, was presented as the discoverer of dialectic. The advice that Parmenides gives to a young and inexperienced Socrates is that he 'must not merely make the supposition that such and such a thing is and then consider the consequences (συμβαίνοντα ἐκ τῆς ὑποθέσεως, 135e9–136a1); he must also take the supposition that that same thing is not'. If we, as readers of the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*, come from these dialogues to the *Theaetetus*, we realize that 'the entire dialogue', as C. Kahn says,[17] can be interpreted 'as a dialectical enterprise'.

We cannot help but recall what Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics* about the possibility of 'demonstrating negatively' (Ross trans., ἀποδεῖξαι ἐλεγκτικῶς, 1006a11–12) or, more literally, of 'demonstrating by refutation'.[18] Yet even in the *Republic,* a text which is, in my opinion, very relevant for understanding the task of dialectic, Plato declares that the dialectician is the man who is 'able to give an account of the essence of each thing' (τὸν λόγον ἑκάστου λαμβάνοντα τῆς οὐσίας, 534b4). So the distinctive characteristic of dialectic in the *Republic* is not only the rational justification of hypotheses, but also to give an account of the essence of each thing, which is nothing more than being able to define it. Moreover, in the ensuing lines of this text we learn, in relation to the Idea of the Good, that in this case, 'likewise (ὡσαύτως, 534b8), as in the others, we have to define (διορίσασθαι) and distinguish with our discourse' the object of the definition and, as if 'we were in battle', we have to find our way 'through all attempts to refute our theory' (διὰ πάντων ἐλέγχων διεξιών, 534c1). This text seems to confirm that the justifi-

17 Kahn 2013, 52. Nevertheless, for Kahn the *Theaetetus* 'does not imply support for the specific ontology of the *Phaedo* or *Republic*' and this is why the positive sequel will be assigned 'not to Socrates, Plato's spokesman for the classical theory, but to a sympathetic visitor from Elea'(*ibid*., 51).

18 It falls outside the scope of this paper to tackle the question of the oxymoron character that has been attributed to this expression in Aristotle' s thought (see Brunschwig 2000, 125–6; Narcy 1989, 97), for we are just looking at the *Theaetetus* from the perspective of his concept of dialectic. I just want to highlight the positive implications of the *elenchus* in order to establish philosophical theses. The paradox of an apparent oxymoron in the case of Aristotle derives, says Narcy (1989, 98), from his own terminology, while for Plato 'refutation is the same thing as demonstration'.

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cation of hypotheses and the dialectical task of giving definitions of every concept cannot be conceived in the *Republic* as two different functions. To give a definition in the sense specified (of giving 'a *logos* of the essence') implies for Socrates in this work that the dialectician is able to 'render an account to himself and others' (534b4–5), but this last function is precisely what he finds missing in the work of mathematicians, because they leave their hypotheses unaccounted and do not 'render any further account of them to themselves or others' (Shorey trans., 510c6–7). What I want to emphasize is that these two related functions of dialectic are directly linked to the necessity for the dialectician to defend his point of view through all kinds of refutation.

In the *Theaetetus,* the fundamental theses of the *Republic* from an ontological and epistemological perspective are examined following the recommendations of Parmenides to Socrates. In fact, the contradictory position, asserted by Theaetetus in his first definition of knowledge as perception, has to be tested to see 'whether its consequences are mutually consistent or not', if we want to express it in the *Phaedo*'*s* words (εἴ σοι ἀλλήλοις συμφωνεῖ ἢ διαφωνεῖ, 101d5). Protagoras, with his well-known statement of 'Man, the measure of all things', and Heraclitus, with the doctrine of the universal flux, give to Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as sense perception the necessary philosophical dimension to represent the contradictory thesis of all that was sustained from this point of view in the *Republic*. Aristotle would establish that in virtue of the law of excluded middle, of two contradictory sentences one is true and the other false.[19] The dialectical development of Theaetetus' definition seems to deliver contradictory statements to the theses upheld in the *Republic*, thus philosophically reinforcing them by refuting the possibility of the doctrine that is equivalent to their negation.

We all agree that the *Theaetetus* has the external form of an aporetic dialogue, but, as Sedley has indicated, we can distinguish between its internal and its external midwifery, for whereas the first fails, the second, 'practised on us the readers may yet succeed'.[20] The definition of knowledge as sense perception, when dialectically developed, is examined against those who 'don't think that there is anything other than what they can grasp firmly in their hands', for 'they don't admit doings, comings into being or anything invisible (τὸ ἀόρατον), as sharing in being' (ὡς ἐν οὐσίας μέρει, 155e6). So the refutation of the definition of knowledge is examined and its falsity is *elenctically* demonstrated when considered in conjunction with that ontological 'hypothesis' (183b3), as it is called in the dialogue. We are inevitably reminded of the case, mentioned by Aristotle in

19 Cfr. Berti 2004, 366.
20 Cfr. Sedley 2009, 11.

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the *Metaphysics,* of those who deny the principle of non-contradiction. One of the fundamental concerns of Socrates in his examination of the definition of knowledge is the consequences of this hypothesis for the problem of *ousía*. Based on the thesis that everything is in motion, it leads to the conclusion that reality is necessarily (ἡ ἀνάγκη, 160b6) of a merely relational character (*pròs ti,* 160b9) and that 'by nature' nothing 'has a being of its own' (ὡς οὐκ ἔστι φύσει αὐτῶν οὐδὲν οὐσίαν ἑαυτοῦ ἔχον, 172b4–5). This ontological thesis, examined together with the definition of knowledge as sense-perception, is based on a concept of 'moving reality' (φερομένη οὐσία, 177c7, 179d3) that represents the contradictory view of the *ousía* which is defined in the *Republic* by opposition to *génesis*. The dialectical analysis of that ontological position leads to a contradiction, for 'if all things do change', it could be established 'both that things are so and that they're not so' (183a6). As Aristotle will show in his *elenctic* demonstration of the principle of non-contradiction, those who deny the validity of this principle 'do away with substance (*ousía*) and essence' (*Met*. 1007a21). Both texts highlight that the referential function of language proves to be impossible because, as Socrates shows, 'every answer' (183a5) is equally correct and those who state this theory 'must establish some other language' (183b2).[21] The *reductio* of this ontological position is so powerful in Socrates' eyes that the definition of knowledge as sense-perception cannot be accepted 'at any rate not according to the line of argument that all things change' (κατά γε τὴν τοῦ πάντα κινεῖσθαι μέθοδον, 183c2–3). The reader can apply the logic of contradictories and safely conclude that, if it is not true that all things change, something must be at rest and unaffected by the universal flux of Heraclitean theory. This seems a positive conclusion valid not only retrospectively but also for the ontological position that Plato has to adopt, whatever changes may be introduced in the ensuing dialogues.

Nevertheless, the dialogue proceeds and continues examining the specifically epistemological aspect of the definition of knowledge as sense-perception. The elenctic character of the dialogue with Theaetetus explains the point of de-

21 See Burnyeat 1990, 45. As Burnyeat puts it, 'language is emptied of all possible meaning', because '183b seems to leave us with the option of a language of pure denial'. See also Kahn 2007, 45. The commentators have rightly observed the similarities of Aristotle's passages in the fourth Book of the *Metaphysics* with Plato's assertions of the Heraclitean views in the *Theaetetus*. Plato, as Irwin (1988, 551 n. 28) observes, 'relies on points similar to those Aristotle makes about the termini of change'. On these similarities and, especially, on the differences between both philosophical approaches, see Narcy 1989, 61–85, who speaks of 'an economy of refutation rigorously opposed to that of the *Theaetetus*' due to the 'Aristotelian rejection of Platonic idealism' (1989, 70).

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parture used to demonstrate the role of rational thought, because Socrates' considerations are directed towards the perceptible material that should be the basis of knowledge in accordance with such a theory. Even dealing with sense perceptions such as sound and colour, Theaetetus cannot help considering whether they are different from one another or similar or, given his fondness for mathematics, what numbers, odd or even, can be applied to them (cfr.185a–d). When the *koina* come onto scene, Theaetetus has to conclude that 'it seems to me that the mind itself, by means of itself (αὐτὴ δι' αὑτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ), considers the things which apply in common (τὰ κοινά) to everything' (185e1). Naturally, these common predicates comprehend not only being (*ousia*), but also beautiful and ugly, good and bad, exactly the predicates that the dialectical examination has to address 'when we put our questions and give our answers', as Socrates says in the *Phaedo* (Hackforth trans., 75d2–3). The conclusion reached is that the pure sensual processes cannot provide 'the calculations about those things with respect to being and usefulness' (ἀναλογίσματα πρός τε οὐσίαν καὶ ὠφέλειαν, 186c3) that have been revealed as an essential part of knowledge. So the refutation of the definition of knowledge as sense perception means that it is true that the real subject of knowledge is reason and mind. This indirect conclusion, reached in the *Theaetetus* through the refutation of knowledge as sense perception, represents a philosophical position that was defended in the *Republic* and will reappear in the ensuing dialogues as a still Platonic doctrine. The conclusion that is explicitly established for the reader is not insignificant for it unites in a few lines the most important concepts discussed under the method of Socrates' *elenchus*. We can sum up the results remembering that it is not possible to attain truth (*aletheia*) without being (*ousia*) and that 'knowledge' (*episteme*, 186d2) 'is located not in our (sensible) experiences (*pathemata*), but in our reasoning about those things (the *koina*) we mentioned'. This triad of concepts, — knowledge, being and reason —, which are so philosophically significant in Plato's dialogues, projects us outside the mere uncertainty of the early dialogues.

These positive conclusions which I interpret as a direct result of the *peirastic* dialectic displayed in the *Theaetetus* do not completely eliminate the sense of *aporia* produced by the Socratic *elenchus*, but now this result seems to be inserted in a more positive spirit. This is why many scholars have highlighted the novelty of the image of midwifery as applied to Socrates' procedures. R. Robinson thought it was a subterfuge in order to accommodate the *elenchus* to Plato's productive personality[22] and Burnyeat showed that 'where earlier dialogues had valued perplexity (*aporia*) as a necessary step towards disencumbering someone of

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22 R. Robinson 1953, 89.

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the conceit of knowledge, the *Theaetetus* treats it as a productive state'.[23] Now the *elenchus* seems to be a less personal affair than when it was strictly governed by the 'say what you believe' rule, and it has to do more specifically with the necessity of dealing with the powerful enemies of Plato's philosophy. The *elenchus* was, in the Socratic dialogues, an instrument that was devoted to the ethical improvement of the interlocutor, but now seems to have attained greater independence as a purely dialectical way of testing the philosophy of Plato's adversaries.[24] Moreover, the reader is now given full indications of the perspective from which the object of the Socratic *elenchus* has to be interpreted. The so-called ethical digression (172c–177c) proclaims philosophical truths that are incongruent with a standard aporetic dialogue and the destructive effects of the Socratic *elenchus* as exhibited in these works. The defence of the philosopher that we find in these pages is a clear indication to the reader that knowledge cannot be found within the limits of the definitions given in the dialogue and that the *elenchus* must permit us to go beyond them. His theoretical connections with geometry and astronomy (173e), his search for 'justice and injustice in themselves' (εἰς σκέψιν αὐτῆς δικαιοσύνης τε καὶ ἀδικίας, 175c2), his desire to become 'as nearly as possible like a god', 'with the help of intelligence' (μετὰ φρονήσεως, 176b2) or his belief in the existence of two 'patterns set up in that which is' (Παραδειγμάτων, ὦ φίλε, ἐν τῷ ὄντι ἑστώτων, 176e3) leaves no doubt about the positive background within which the *elenchus* is to be exercised.

The recommendation of Parmenides to a young Socrates, already mentioned (*Parm.* 135e9–136a1), in favour of the usefulness of supposing not only the affirmation but also the negation of a philosophical thesis seems to be recognized by Aristotle as being within the positive epistemological contributions of dialectic to the philosophical sciences (πρὸς τὰς κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμας, *Top.* 101a27–28), 'because the ability to puzzle on both sides of a subject will make us detect more easily the truth and error about the several points that arise' (ὅτι δυνάμενοι πρὸς ἀμφότερα διαπορῆσαι ῥᾶον ἐν ἑκάστοις κατοψόμεθα τἀληθές τε καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος, 101a34–36). I do not claim to deny the differences between the Platonic

23 Burnyeat 1977, 11. For the difference between the use of *aporia* in the *Theaetet*us and the earlier dialogues, see also, for example, Brown 2018, 94.

24 For Dorion (2012, 267), the difference between the Socratic *elenchus* and the use of it in Aristotle's dialectic is that 'Aristotle's respondent is not obliged to answer as a function of his personal conviction'. Nevertheless, in the *Theaetetus* the theses examined peirastically are only incidentally Theaetetus' views for what is really important is the philosophical ideas that are being discussed. This is why I propose to include this dialogue among those others, such as the *Parmenides* and the *Sophist*, where we can perceive, as Dorion recognizes (2012, 269), 'harbingers in Plato' of the supposed 'depersonalization of dialectic'.

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and the Aristotelian concept of dialectic,[25] but I do think that it is undeniable that the *Topics* also give us a testimony of a common practice of dialectic in the Academic tradition that lends plausibility to interpreting the *Theaetetus* in the light of it. The position of the *Theaetetus* between the middle group of the *Republic* to which it belongs on stylometric grounds and the series of dialogues (*Parmenides, Sophist, Politicus*) in which, according to internal references, it is apparently inserted, seems very interesting for evaluating the evolution of dialectic. The keyword for the middle dialogues is hypothesis, as R. Robinson once said,[26] and 'the later keyword, division', seems to prevail in Plato's concept of dialectic, as it is practised in the other group. What I want to suggest is the possibility of a difference in emphasis with many indications of continuity. For example, the elenctic examination of hypotheses is not only the method of the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, but also of dialogues such as the *Parmenides* and, as I have tried to show, of the *Theaetetus*. We should also remember that in the *Republic* the philosophical method of *dialégesthai*, as opposed to the mere eristic practices (ἐρίζειν, cfr. 454a8) is characterised by the 'ability of applying the proper divisions and distinctions to the subject under consideration' (κατ᾽ εἴδη διαιρούμενοι τὸ λεγόμενον ἐπισκοπεῖν, 454a6–7). We would like to know, like Glaucon in the *Republic*, 'what is the nature (ὁ τρόπος τῆς τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμεως) of this faculty of dialectic, into what divisions does it fall (κατὰ ποῖα δὴ εἴδη διέστηκεν) and what are its ways' (τίνες αὖ ὁδοί, 532d8–e1), but Socrates does not explain this apparent plurality to which the dialogue makes reference. Nevertheless, whatever the different ways may be, dialectic seems to work through two different procedures that are closely related. One of these, as can be discerned through the vast majority of the dialogues, consist in the positive task of giving a definition, probably reached through the cooperative work of philosophical discourse and the aid of intuition. But this proposal has to face the negative side coming from objections, contradictions and refutations, which can also have positive consequences, as we have seen in the case of the *Theaetetus*. Although I cannot deny the differences in the display of dialectic in the dialogues that come after the *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus,* in the *Sophist* and the *Philebus*, these two procedures seem to be clearly maintained as an essential part of dialectic.

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25 Although I would agree, in certain aspects, with those that have highlighted the differences between Plato's and Aristotle's concept of dialectic (see Moreau 1968, 80–90; Solmsen 1968, 49–68), I cannot accept Moreau's conclusion when he states that 'the critic reflection that allows the Socratic *exetasis* is not this general and common knowledge where, in accordance with Aristotle, dialectic is practised' (1968, 90).

26 R. Robinson 1953, 70.

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In the *Sophist*, within the sixth definition of the sophist, the Eleatic Visitor mentions 'the sophistic of noble lineage' (231b8) which describes the practice of refutation (ἔλεγχος, 230d7), attributed to Socrates in the *Theaetetus,* as 'the greatest and chiefest of purifications' (Cornford trans.). Although Kerferd thought that the practitioners of this art were not Socrates but the sophists, the Visitor warns us that it would be a mistake 'to ascribe to them too high a function' and to confuse a dog, the tamest of animals, with a wolf, the fiercest (231a). As a matter of fact, many other interpreters agree on taking this text as a description of the *elenchus* practised by Socrates.[27] Even the terms used to describe the positive effects of this practice are reminiscent of those used in the *Theaetetus*, for the Visitor says that the person who is subject to this operation 'grows gentle toward others' (ἡμεροῦνται, 230b9), just as Theaetetus will become (ἡμερώτερος, *Tht.* 210c3) in the event that he remains barren as a consequence of the Socratic examination.[28] The conclusion of the passage underscores the importance of the *elenchus* as an intrinsic part of the art of separation (διακριτική τέχνη, 231b3), perhaps not only as a mere preliminary stage of the positive method of discovering the truth, but also as a necessary accompaniment of all dialectic discussion. This is the impression that the reader receives from the *Philebus*, for in the preliminary stage of the discussion Socrates asserts the power of refutation (ἐλεγχόμενοι) in order to reveal whether the title of the good is to be given to pleasure or to intelligence or to some third thing (*Philebus* 14b3–4). The dialectical nature of the conversation in fact examines the definition of the good as pleasure and, as happens with the first definition of knowledge given by Theaetetus, Protarchus has to recognize that pleasure has received 'a beating' from the force of the arguments (22e4–6) in a way that makes it unnecessary, in Socrates' view, to subject pleasure to a more thorough refutation (23a7), thus opening the discussion to other possibilities. Despite all the differences that the practice of *elenchus* undergoes throughout Plato's dialogues, from its destructive character in the early dialogues to its more positive use in the late ones, the *Seventh Letter* seems to certify the need to contrasting the philosophical definitions with an examination based on 'benevolent refutations' (ἐν εὐμενέσιν ἐλέγχοις ἐλεγχόμεν, 344b5) or on a critical assessment 'by the use of question and answer' that for the author of the *Letter* is consubstantial to the practice of philosophy.

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27 See Narcy 2007, 196–198 and recently Dorion 2012, 252–3, who gives many other bibliographical references (see n. 3). For Dorion (2012, 258), Aristotle probably borrows the conditions of validity of the *elenchus* specified in these passages of the *Sophist* from Plato.
28 Brown 2018, 94–5.

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Part III: Subject and Object of Perception in the Flux

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Francisco Lisi

Heraclitus, Protagoras and Plato: *Theaetetus* 155d1–160e4

1 State of the Research

The interpretation of the *Theaetetus* has been problematic in modern philology and in the history of ancient philosophy since the beginning of the Platonic exegesis. The idea that it is an aporetic dialogue has generally prevailed, even if its composition is dated to Plato's mature period.[1] This is not the only difficulty in the interpretation of the dialogue and my intention is not to focus on it. The attribution of the doctrine or doctrines, which Socrates proffers, have also been object of a long controversy, especially the passage concerning the definition of knowledge as sensation (151d8–186e12), in which Socrates offers an extensive refutation of Protagoras' relativism. Nevertheless, the knowledge we have of Protagoras' doctrine comes mainly from Plato's dialogues, and especially from the *Theaetetus*.[2] The first question that needs to be asked is whether Plato's text gives a fair version of it and how far his version contains useful information about the sophist's ideas. Another question, more interesting for me at the moment, concerns the real relationship between Plato and the sophist. Different studies have already point to Protagoras' influence on Plato's practical philosophy.[3] In the passage I propose to analyse in this paper, the debate has mainly been focused on the attribution of the proffered theory of sensation to some pre-Socratic philosophers or schools or to Plato himself either as his own re-elaboration of a supposed pre-Socratic doctrine or as his own view of the sensible world. All these approaches have good defenders and can be backed by good reasons.

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1 Friendländer 1930, 418, e.g. states 'daß Platon mit dem Theaitetos die Struktur der aporetischen Definitionsdialoge in das Werk seiner späten Reifezeit hineinnimmt'. 'Der Theaitetos steht in der Reihe der aporetischen Definitionsdialoge, und die erste Antwort im *Laches Thrasymachos Euthyphron* ist von ähnlicher Art, indem sie irgendeinen Tatbestand aus dem Erfahrungsbereich des Gefragten aufgreift' (421, cf. 457f.).

2 The *Protagoras* focuses on the practical philosophy of the sophist, and there is no mention of the *homo mensura* doctrine.

3 See, for instance, Saunders' book 1991 on Plato's penal code in the *Laws*, which illustrates the significant influence of Protagoras on Plato's conception of punishment.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-005

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Since Schleiermacher the prevalent interpretation was that the theory of perception put forward by Socrates belongs to Aristippus and the Cyrenaics.[4] Ernst Stoelzel[5] proposed in his dissertation, that the theory has no factual basis in the history of philosophy, but was formulated by Plato on the basis of contemporary Heracliteans. Stoelzel's thesis had the consequence of introducing Heraclitean Philosophy in the discussion. Capelle attributed the theory to the neo-Heracliteans mentioned by Theodorus at 176e2.[6] For Capelle, there is a structural unity from 152d to 183c–d, in which this neo-Heraclitean theory of perception is put forth. After Capelle other scholars too attributed the passage to the Heracliteans.[7] Mejer differentiated two theories in the passage, one attributed to Protagoras and other related to some Heracliteans under the influence of Democritus via Protagoras and he did not completely exclude the possibility of Aristippus and the Cyrenaics.[8] Zeppi did not accept the relationship to Aristippus and the Cyrenaics, and related the flux-theory to the Heracliteans.[9] With some variations, many scholars after Stoelzel's book have attributed the doctrine to Heraclitus or the Heracliteans. Russell M. Dancy also considered that the flux theory belongs to Heraclitus, but he asserts that it is contradictory to Protagoras' approach.[10] Bühler by contrast considers it to be genuine Protagorean philosophy.[11]

Another important hermeneutic current, developed mainly in Anglo-Saxon research, attributes the doctrine of flux to Plato. The first to propose this was Jackson 1885, 250–56.[12] Based on a well know passage of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (987a32), Cornford added an interesting point in his attribution to Heraclitus: 'as applied to sensible things, Plato accepted the Heraclitean thesis',[13] he says, and he concludes that Plato has modified the Protagorean definition by substituting 'become' for 'being'.[14] Further on, he continues to treat the doctrine as a Platonic

4 This interpretation was maintained, among others, by Schleiermacher 1818, 183 f., Campbell 1883, xxx–xxxiii; n. 42 to 153a3, n. 56 to 156a, Dümmler 1889, chap. 6; Natorp 1890.

5 Stoelzel 1908.

6 Capelle 1962.

7 Cf. e.g. Cooper 2015.

8 Mejer 1968.

9 Zeppi 1975.

10 Dancy 1987. Fine 1998, 207 f., also attributes the doctrine of flux to Heraclitus. Cf. also Maguire 1973; Modrak 1981.

11 Bühler 1989.

12 Jackson 1885, 250–56. Archer-Hind 1885 also considered that the theory propounded here is substantially Platonic.

13 Cornford 1935, 39.

14 Cornford 1935, 39 ff. Yolton 1949 defends a similar position, maintaining that Plato's theory of perception depends on Protagoras' own epistemology.

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one, stating that there has been a change with respect to the doctrine defended by Socrates in the *Phaedo*. One of the main criticism against this interpretation consists in the fact that for some scholars the doctrine is clearly refuted. Other scholars have preferred to see in the doctrine expressed in this passage not Plato's interpretation of the sensible world, but a creation of himself in order to refute the view of Protagoras. Such is the case of Day, who in a long and detailed paper tries to contest the opinion of Jackson, Cornford and others.[15] She maintains that the doctrine is coherent Protagoreanism, but probably a creation of Plato himself in order to adapt Protagoras' principles and to refute the conception of knowledge as perception.

It is in fact just about impossible to add some new perspective on the variety of hermeneutic finesse that scholars have deployed over more than two centuries, and I shall not attempt to do so here. Following for the most part the old Anglo-Saxon interpretation, I shall simply try to defend the Platonic character of the flux theory propounded by Socrates, and to relate it to other passages in different dialogues. I cannot address here all the problems that these theory presents for the interpreter, and especially whether it represents some change in Plato's position. One of the greatest hermeneutic difficulties is the confusion that exists between Socrates' refutation of the definition of knowledge as perception with a refutation of the doctrine of flux.[16] This has led many scholars either to believe that there is an actual refutation of the theory in question or to put together a simple and confusing paraphrase of the text — as it is the case, e. g., Dancy[17] or Cobb-Stevens[18] — without noticing that in the text there is no refutation of the flux doctrine as Jackson 1885, Cornford 1935, and many others had seen with clarity.[19]

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15 Day 1997.

16 As is de case, e. g., by Cooper 2015 *passim* or Reshotko 1994.

17 Dancy 1987.

18 Cobb-Stevens 1989.

19 Day 1997, 51 states solemnly that the flux theory is refuted at 183–184 (*sic*!) without noticing that in these pages Socrates uses the flux theory for refuting the assumption that sensation/perception is knowledge, without rejecting the 'ontological' part of it (cf. 183 d1–e5). It is clear that Day does not know the scholar literature in languages other than English, since she asserts that the majority of interpreters considers that the flux-theory is Platonic (cf. n. 1 at p. 53).

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2 The Lineage of Some of the Philosophical Views Set forth in the Passage

One of the hardest difficulties of the *Theaetetus* is its different levels of composition. It is apparently an aporetic dialogue, and in fact it finishes up proving that the search for a definition of knowledge/science has failed. However, as Szlezák[20] has brightly shown, Socrates is far from knowing nothing. In the dialogue, there are several hints to Plato's own theory of Forms and dialectical method (175b9–3; 176a6; 185c9–d3, etc.),[21] and, in general, the refutation of Protagoras' relativism[22] is made on the basis of a coherent philosophy, which always stands in the background of the discussion, but is intentionally mixed in with the several philosophies that defend the sole existence of a phenomenal world in continuous flux. Even if there are several labyrinthine digressions, the central point remains to show that reaching genuine *episteme* on the basis of the sensible world is impossible.

In what follows, I shall proceed in three stages in order to show that in the proposed passage the authentic Platonic good is to be found. I shall work first in a formal way looking for the textual hints. In this way, I hope to demonstrate why there is no refutation of the flux theory. I shall then try to demonstrate, that this doctrine is intentionally intertwined with other philosophers' similar views of the sensible world. Finally, I shall look for evidence in other Platonic dialogues, mainly the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*, that prove that this theory is genuinely Platonic.

The refutation of the second, or if you prefer the first, definition of knowledge by Theaetetus constitutes the main argument of the dialogue and also its structural nucleus. It is preceded by a first attempt (145d4–148e5) that is in fact simply a listing of intellectual and artisan knowledge, but no real definition, and by a digression in which Socrates explains what maieutic consists of as well (147e6–151d3). Up to this point we have had a lengthy introduction, following on the prelude of the dialogue itself in which the situation is explained and the characters are introduced (142a1–143c7). The identification of knowledge with perception is refuted in eight progressive movements, which I cannot pursue in detail here, but

20 Szlezák 2004, ch. 6.

21 For more examples, cf. Szlezák 2004, 110 f.

22 Fine 1998 argued quite convincingly that Protagoras propounded not a relativistic, but an infallibilistic philosophy. I shall nonetheless continue to use the term relativism because this is more usual and this is an issue I cannot go into here.

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it does manifest a very careful structure, in which the disavowal of Theaetetus' answer is related first to the Protagorean *homo mensura* sentence (151e8–152d1) and later linked to the philosophers who defend that all reality is movement (152d2–153d7). To these premises Socrates adds a theory of perception, whose origin is not specified, but which has usually been attributed to the flux-philosophers on the basis that for them all reality is movement. However, nowhere is stated that this doctrine is Protagorean, Heraclitean or from any other provenance.[23]

During the proof of the definition of perception as knowledge, Socrates differentiates at various times between Protagoras' theory and the position of other philosophers like Homer or Heraclitus.[24] And the connexion of the 'flux-philosophy' with the Protagorean *homo-mensura* sentence is in fact in no way evident, at any rate not on the basis of the description of it proffered by Socrates. In other words, even if the Protagorean view might have implied a permanent change in the perception of things, this does not mean that for Protagoras the constituents of the sensible world were in fact in continuous change, as it is supposedly the case in Heraclitus, Homer or all other unnamed philosophers who are defenders of the doctrine of flux. Protagoras points to a *subjective* fact, namely that the reality of objects is what I believe it to be, or rather that I am the measure for determining what is and what is not for me. I would not see in this a statement about what we consider an objective fact. At most we could interpret it, if we wanted to do so objectively, as a statement that the reality of things is determined by the particular relation that objects have to every subject.[25]

Plato also plays with the meaning of *phainesthai,* which shifts from 'come to light', 'become' to 'seem', 'appear to be'; a change that is intentionally underlined by the passage from *phainesthai* to its synonym *dokein* in this connotation.[26] This changes are accompanied by another important one, the shifting from *einai* to *gignesthai.* Socrates attributes this change to a supposed secret doctrine of Protagoras, who had spoken the plain true to his disciples in secret (ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ; 152c10), while for the common people he spoke enigmatically. I find this shift from *einai* to *gignesthai* significant, because it goes against Protagoras' statement

23 Cf. Natorp 1890, 353 f.

24 Most clearly at 160d5–e3. For other passages, not so clear, cf. Mejer 1968, 42 f., 49; cf. Natorp 1890, 353.

25 Cf. οἷα μὲν ἕκαστα ἐμοὶ φαίνεται τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοί, οἷα δὲ σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ αὖ σοί; 152a6–7. Boeri 2006, 88 n. 50 sees here a pun on the meaning of φαίνεσθαι.

26 Cf. especially the hints at 152c4 and c7, and the complete change of meaning at 153a6, where *phainesthai* has already completed its change to *dokein*. This displacement has been underlined by Maguire 1973.

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that humans are the measure of what is and what is not. Furthermore, there is a clear allusion to the title of Protagoras' book *Truth* (152c10).[27] I believe that it is a clear and intentional contradiction to Protagoras' theory which alludes as it does to the difference between the ontological doctrine referred to and the arguments of Protagoras himself.[28]

What I have translated as 'common people' is also an interesting locution, because the Greek τῷ πολλῷ συρφετῷ (152c9) is actually very derogatory for one who belongs to the inner circle of Pericles, a democratic leader, since it reveals a clear aristocratic approach.[29] As we know, Protagoras' book could be bought everywhere, his doctrine was open to everybody and he probably also owned a democratic character. I imagine that, there is not only an ironic intention here, but also another clear indication that in what follows the theory propounded is not that of Protagoras.[30] For this interpretation, I have several reasons. First, Socrates qualifies the flux-argument through a litotes as 'not bad' (οὐ φαῦλον λόγον; 152d2).[31] Secondly, the argument is correct from the Platonic point of view, if applied only to the phenomenal world, since it affirms that the sensible world is always in movement and is the circumstantial product of mixing. We should not forget, as Cornford pointed out,[32] that, according to Aristotle, Plato followed Heraclitus in his conception of the fluctuating sensible world, and because of that for him *episteme* of the phenomenal world is not possible.[33] Thirdly, he refuses to use the verb 'be' and proposes to replace it through 'become', as I have indicated above. Fourthly, Socrates uses a phrase for explaining the principal axiom of Protagoras' doctrine that is also an allusion to the Forms: "there is nothing that is a unity existing by itself" (ἓν μὲν αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτὸ οὐδέν ἐστιν; 152d2–3). More significant is that the locution αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό occurs each time Socrates introduces a new aspect of the flux theory. It occurs when he describes the reality as movement and change (152d2–3) and describes this theory as good (οὐ φαῦλον λόγον). It also occurs in the explanation of the theory of perception (153e4–5). In the central assessment of the theory of perception, it is formulated twice (156e8–157a1;

27 Cf. Campbell 1883, 40; Cornford 1935 36, n. 1

28 Bostock 1988, 44–83 devotes 39 pages to the 'secret theory', which for their lack of hermeneutic subtlety are a clear example of how a classical text should not be read.

29 Apparently, Protagoras had no school and everybody could buy his book and attend his lectures. Cf. Cornford 1935, 36.

30 For other passages in the dialogues containing similar hints, cf. Boeri 2006, 101 f., n. 82. Lee's 1999 analysis of this passage completely misses the point.

31 In his note *ad loc.*, Campbell 1883 translates it as 'high argument'.

32 Cornford 1935, 39 n. 1.

33 *Metaph.* I 6, 987a29–b1.

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157a9–b1) and also in the final treatment of the flux theory (182b3–4). Finally, a similar insistence can be seen in the rejection of Being and the assertion of Becoming as predicate for the sensible objects (cf. e.g. 157b3–c7), which seems to be the main point in Socrates inquiry (cf. 157d7–8). In short, the text offers insistent hints to indicate that this theory of perception is not Protagorean.[34]

Plato also indicates that it is not Heraclitean. It happens in a central moment of the first refutation, before introducing a more detailed presentation of the doctrine once again (155d9–156a2). This interlude comes after Socrates has refuted Protagoras' view on the basis of his 'own' theory of flux. Theaetetus confesses that he has not yet understood the reason why Socrates attributes the enumerated consequences to Protagoras' theory, and Socrates asks whether Theaetetus will thank him, if he helps him to discover the hidden truth of the thought of a famous man, or better of famous men (ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν τῆς διανοίας τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀποκεκρυμμένην; 155d10). This mysterious introduction can be taken neither to refer to Protagoras nor to the aforementioned Heracliteans, as the subsequent statement shows:

> Then just take a look round and make sure that none of the uninitiates overhears us. I mean by the uninitiates the people who believe that nothing is real save what they can grasp with their hands and do not admit that actions or processes or anything invisible can count as real.[35]

The reference here excludes any relationship of the following report to materialist schools. Probably, we should include among the latter all Milesians and the Heracliteans in particular. I think it is remarkable that Socrates speaks of a multiplicity of philosophers which are πολὺ κομψότεροι (156a2). The expression has been interpreted as 'ironic' without major substantiation.[36] First it must be made clear that Socratic irony has nothing to do with our concept of irony, so that to apply the contemporary concept in this context is methodologically erroneous. Secondly, in its 27 occurrences in the Platonic corpus the adjective *kompsos* never once has a negative or derogatory sense. It refers rather to the subtlety of some

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34 With these reasons I hope to have counter Mc. Dowell's 1971, 121–137 simplistic interpretation of the 'secret doctrine', i.e. that it should not be taken seriously (121). This prejudice prevents him from understanding the real meaning of Plato's hint concerning the 'secret doctrine'.

35 153e3–6. Translation Cornford 1935.

36 Capelle 1962, 291 sees in these words an ironic intention (ironische Färbung). Similar position is adopted by Day 1997, 74. Natorp 1899, 353, n. 15, thinks that 'es kann sich nur um einen Autor handeln, der der jüngsten Vergangenheit angehörte und ebendeshalb nicht wohl von Sokrates genannt werden konnte.'

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piece of reasoning, theory or idea[37] and is very often related to philosophy and to a philosophical character or activity. These philosophical applications appear again in the Gigantomachia of the *Sophist*. The Eleatic guest undertakes a *diairesis* which is parallel in form and content to our passage in the *Theaetetus*. On the one side, he puts the materialists (246a7–b3; cf. 247c3–7); on the other are the defenders of the Forms (246b6–c3). The way in which the guest of Elea describes this philosophy makes it clear that Plato must be included among these defenders of the Forms.[38]

3 The Content of the Doctrine and its Relation to Plato's Approach

Thematically, the argumentation against the conception of knowledge as perception has a rhythmic structure, in which the leitmotiv of the theory of perception occurs periodically. On its first occurrence (152d2–e9), Socrates makes the following statements:

1. In the sensible world there is no unit that is stable and self-existent (ἓν μὲν αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτὸ οὐδέν ἐστιν; 152d2–3; cf. 152d6).
2. It is impossible to apply any name to refer to these 'realities' because of their permanent change (152d3–6).
3. Everything is the product of translation, movement/change and mixture (152d7–8).
4. There is not being, only permanent becoming (152e1–2).

At the end of the passage Socrates states that all philosophers, with the only exception of Parmenides agree περὶ τούτου. What does this 'about this' refer to? To the whole passage, or only to the fact that everything is in permanent becoming? As a matter of fact, we have no testimony indicating that other philosophers maintained that there are no entities existing by themselves in the sensible world or that everything is the product of movement and mixture. Furthermore, and above all: there is no testimony pointing to the impossibility of giving names to sensible things, but rather, through the *Cratylus* we know that the Heracliteans maintained that names are *kata physin*. Therefore, it is most likely that the *toutou*

37 I cannot discuss the issue here in detail, but cf. e.g. *Soph.* 259c4; *Resp.* 376b1, *Phil.* 53c6.
38 Mejer 1968, 53 n. 17, denies the identification I propose here, but the formal parallelism, especially in the case of the materialists makes this identification, I think, unavoidable.

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refers only to the contention that everything is in permanent becoming. This interpretation is partially confirmed by the conclusion, in which Socrates asserts that everything is offspring of flux and movement/change (ἔκγονα ῥοῆς τε καὶ κινήσεως; 152e8).

The motif occurs a second time[39] at 153e4–154a4. This time, Socrates develops the subject of perception through the sample of vision. The passage itself is preceded by a brief analysis of vision (153d8–154a1), which denies the independent existence of the sensation in any place (ὃ δὴ καλεῖς χρῶμα λευκόν, μὴ εἶναι αὐτὸ ἕτερόν τι ἔξω τῶν σῶν ὀμμάτων μηδ' ἐν τοῖς ὄμμασι μηδέ τιν' αὐτῷ χώραν ἀποτάξῃς· ἤδη γὰρ ἂν εἴη τε δήπου ἐν τάξει καὶ μένον καὶ οὐκ ἂν ἐν γενέσει γίγνοιτο; 153d9–e2). The main new points are:

1. Colour is produced by an emission (προσβολῆς) of the eyes which contact the corresponding translation (φοράν); 153e5–7.
2. Colour is neither the eye nor the motion which is struck by the eye emissions, but something arisen between the two; 154a2.
3. The colour that arises in this way is an exclusive phenomenon, in which only the eyes and the motion of translation participate (ἑκάστῳ ἴδιον γεγονός); 154a2.

From this passage it is clear that all reality is reduced to a continuous movement where the idea of the existence of an object which has an independent or substantial existence is, if not expressly denied, clearly excluded, since Socrates refers to the perceived object as motion. It is clear that the notion in the background is that of event and not of substance. I do not know any pre-Socratic or Socratic philosophy which maintained a similar conception.

Socrates gives an expanded version of this theory at 156a2–157c2, when he presents the doctrine of the κομψότεροι, which I mentioned earlier. The main issues of his exposition are as follows:

1. The universe is simply movement, nothing more (τὸ πᾶν κίνησις ἦν καὶ ἄλλο παρὰ τοῦτο οὐδέν; 156a5).
2. There are two classes of movement, which have an unlimited number of members: the capability of acting and of being acted upon; 156a5–7.
3. The meeting and friction of these two movements produce an infinite number of offsprings (ἔκγονα), which come into being in pairs: the perceived thing and the perception; 156a7–b2.

39 The return of the motif is intentionally remarked by Socrates: Ἑπώμεθα τῷ ἄρτι λόγῳ; 153e4.

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4. The perceptions are: seeing, hearing, smelling, chilling, burning heat, pleasure, pain, desire, fear and an infinite number of others that have no name (156b2–7).
5. Perceptible entities come to birth simultaneously with the perceptions and are congruous with them; 156b2–c3.
6. The perceptible movement is slow and on the same point and related to the movement of the percipient. From the meeting of the movement coming from the percipient and the perceptible movement arises the perception, which is quicker than the perceived movement; 156c7–d3.
7. There are no independently subsisting entities, only motion: motion is the perceived and motion is the percipient; cf. 156e8–157a1, 157a8–b1.
8. The same motions can be agent and patient; 157a6–7.
9. The way of existence of these motions is always relative (cf. τινι ἀεὶ γίγνεσθαι; 157b1).
10. There is neither a statement about them nor even a name for them. It is more according to nature to refer to them as actions and not as objects or assemblages to which we apply nouns; 157b5–c2.

Summarizing the arguments presented by Socrates, they state that there is a reality which is solely motion and –he repeatedly stresses– that there is nothing like a substance or unity beyond this motion. In my view an important point is that the existence of this reality is always relative. More important still are the hints to the theory of Forms, for instance the allusions to the Good, the One, the Beautiful and other important Forms, which occur often in the text.[40] In such a world neither knowledge nor language is possible, if there is no reference to the Forms. Even if perception is the only thing we have, we cannot know through or with perception. The clear message is that we need another device to know this reality. More important is that this doctrine is not refuted. What is refuted is that our perceptions can be considered knowledge, and this is not possible because they are only a mirror of a permanently changing reality. In other words, the doctrine is used to destroy Theaetetus' definition.[41]

40 Cf. The passages mentioned above and e.g. 157d7–8; 175c2 *et passim*.

41 Nowhere is stated by Socrates that perception is an unfailing criterion as Natorp assures 1890, 356.

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4 The Theory of Perception and its Relation to Other Platonic Dialogues

As I stated above, the idea that the theory of perception propounded here is not truly Cyrenaic or Heraclitean is not new. It has been around more than a hundred years, and the English scholars in the 19th and 20th century have insisted on it despite the German interpretation. Campbell expressed it clearly enough:

> Plato's account of sensation in the *Timaeus* coincides in many points with this part of the *Theaetetus*, showing that, although rejected as a theory of knowledge, the hypothesis is retained as a 'probable' doctrine of sense.[42]

A reading of the *Timaeus*' description of the *chora* shows that Socrates is expounding a theory that in many points coincides with it. In the receptacle (ὑποδοχήν; 49a6), becoming is in continuous change and nothing remains stable, so that any firm statement about it is impossible:

> (...) since no one of these (the elements) ever remains identical in appearance, which of them shall a man definitely affirm to be any one particular element and no other without incurring ridicule? None such exists. On the contrary, by far the safest plan in treating of these elements is to proceed thus: Whatsoever object we perceive to be constantly changing from one state to another, like fire, that object, be it fire, we must never describe as "this" but as "suchlike," nor should we ever call water "this" but "suchlike" nor should we describe any other element, as though it possessed stability of all those which we indicate by using the terms "this" and "that" and suppose ourselves to refer to a definite object. For such an object shuns and eludes the names "this" and "that" and every name which indicates that they are stable.[43]

Sensible things are only reflections on the receptacle of the *dynameis* of the Forms and are, therefore, simple imitations depending on the Ideal World with no independent existence. It is not possible to set forth the similarities in detail here, but

42 Campbell 1883, 59f. Cf. Yolton 1949, 26–40 for a more detailed comparison with the *Timaeus* and Cornford's 1935 and 1937 interpretations.

43 οὕτω δὴ τούτων οὐδέ ποτε τῶν αὐτῶν ἑκάστων φανταζομένων, ποῖον αὐτῶν ὡς ὂν ὁτιοῦν τοῦτο καὶ οὐκ ἄλλο παγίως διισχυριζόμενος οὐκ αἰσχυνεῖταί τις ἑαυτόν; οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλ' ἀσφαλέστατα μακρῷ περὶ τούτων τιθεμένους ὧδε λέγειν· ἀεὶ ὃ καθορῶμεν ἄλλοτε ἄλλῃ γιγνόμενον, ὡς πῦρ, μὴ τοῦτο ἀλλὰ τὸ τοιοῦτον ἑκάστοτε προσαγορεύειν πῦρ, μηδὲ ὕδωρ τοῦτο ἀλλὰ τὸ τοιοῦτον ἀεί, μηδὲ ἄλλο ποτὲ μηδὲν ὥς τινα ἔχον βεβαιότητα, ὅσα δεικνύντες τῷ ῥήματι τῷ τόδε καὶ τοῦτο προσχρώμενοι δηλοῦν ἡγούμεθά τι· φεύγει γὰρ οὐχ ὑπομένον τὴν τοῦ τόδε δηλοῦν ἡγούμεθά τι· φεύγει γὰρ οὐχ ὑπομένον τὴν τοῦ τόδε καὶ τοῦτο καὶ τὴν τῷδε καὶ πᾶσαν ὅση μόνιμα ὡς ὄντα αὐτὰ ἐνδείκνυται φάσις. 49c7–e4. Translation Lamb 1925.

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I should like to point to the fact that sensible things are characterized as generated and in permanent movement of translation (πεφορημένον ἀεί; 52a6), which arise in a place and again disappear. I believe these examples, which could be extended, show that the conception here is the same as that which we observed in the *Theaetetus*. Socrates presents later (181b8–d6) on a classification of movement, which is complementary to the analyzed before. He distinguishes two main forms, which correspond to the meaning of the Greek κίνησις: spatial motion and change (ἀλλοίωσιν; 181d2). In the first case, Socrates makes a mayor distinction between (a) motion which remains in the same place (ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ στρέφηται; 181c7) and (b) motion which changes places (ὅταν τι χώραν ἐκ χώρας μεταβάλλῃ; 181c 6–7). The second kind of motion, ἀλλοίωσις, includes all changes produced in one object. A prominent instance of it is becoming old (181d1). It seems as if the notion of movement, which is in the background of this doctrine, were the conception of an orderly movement of the universe. A similar, more detailed and, in some sense complementary classification of movement can be found in the tenth book of the *Laws* (893b1–894b1), when the Athenian guest defends the priority of the soul. Here too there are two kinds of movement, rotational and translational. But now we find an explanation of becoming that is congruous with this doctrine of motion: growing and decay are the product of the collision of things (893e1–894a1).[44] In the *Parmenides* (162b9–163b5) a similar distinction of the kinds of motion appears, even if it is not ordered in the way it is in the other passages, since it is incorporated into the dialectical demonstration of the impossibility of both Being and Not-Being. Motion and translation in space are opposed to change in the object self. From the three passages, we can build a coherent image of Plato's doctrine of motion, which is the basis on which the theory of perception in the *Theatetus* is constructed. A task to be done is to use the latter for a better understanding of Plato's conception of *chora*.

44 For a more detailed analysis of this passage, cf. Lisi 2017.

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Beatriz Bossi

On Socrates' Manipulative Dealing with Theaetetus' First Claim about Knowledge

1

From the very start Socrates wants to know whether Theodorus is an expert to be trusted or a mere flatterer with regard to Theaetetus (for he is said to often give flattering testimonials for people: 145b). The tutor describes Theaetetus a 'remarkable boy amazingly gifted; along with a quickness beyond the capacity of most people, he has an unusual gentle character, and to crown it all, he is as brave a boy as any of his fellows' (144a). Among his intellectual dispositions he is described as quick, acute, keen, retentive, sure, effective, which could prompt him to become very unbalanced, but in fact he has a 'great good temper' that reminds Theodorus of the quiet flow of a stream of oil (144b).

In fact, Socrates makes the progress of the search depend on courage and patience[1] (157d) and Theaetetus will need all the greatness of his soul to overcome the intellectual failures that in a sense, Socrates will endorse to him. Despite the great potential Socrates sees in him, Theaetetus will indeed be said to have proven barren (κενός, 210c2) by the end of the dialogue. Even when the dialogue is assumed to end in *aporia*, the dispositional good qualities Theaetetus is supposed to have gained throughout the search will contribute, in Socrates' eyes, to make the process worth its while. As Socrates assumes that he has refuted him three times, he attempts to comfort him by showing him how much better he will conceive ideas in the future as a result of this inquiry and how gentle, modest and less tiresome his companions will find him, for he will not think that he knows what he does not (210b–c).[2]

In this paper, however, I will attempt to demonstrate firstly that, strictly speaking, Socrates does not seem to refute Theaetetus' first claim about knowledge, but other well-known sophistical doctrines which he does not pick

1 The association of certain character dispositions and research skills seems to fit well in Socrates' identification of knowledge and wisdom at the very start of the discussion (145e). The fact that wisdom is typically assimilated to excellence in many dialogues, may give us a clue that knowledge in the sense of 'wisdom' implies not just theoretical dispositions but also an excellent character.

2 Indeed, Theaetetus will be encouraged to find ways to define the sophist on the following day, guided by the Visitor from Elea.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-006

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from Theaetetus' intellectual womb but from their background. Theaetetus will turn out to be the brilliant boy who, in spite of being aware of this, will agree to play his part full of patience and respect, instead of complaining about Socrates' extraordinary manipulation of his words. And he is likely to do so for he is smart enough to realize that Socrates' examination and refutations are essential to pave the way towards further progress. And secondly, as Theaetetus is described as being brave and modest from the start, I take his virtuous dispositions, rather than as a result of the search, as a necessary precondition of it which is confirmed by Theodorus (161a). In fact, Theaetetus is aware of his limits *from the start* as he claims that he will dare present his suggestions in the confidence that Socrates and Theodorus will put him right if he makes a mistake (146c).

An additional 'advantage' of Theaetetus, in Theodorus' eyes, is that the boy is ugly. As a matter of fact, he claims that the boy looks like Socrates: snub-nosed with eyes that stick out. Socrates asks him to come near: 'Come along Theaetetus, so that I may look for myself what sort of a face I have (πάνυ μὲν οὖν, ὦ Θεαίτητε, ἵνα κἀγὼ ἐμαυτὸν ἀνασκέψωμαι ποῖόν τι ἔχω τὸ πρόσωπον: 144d8–9).

What does this commentary mean? Perhaps Plato is likely to make fun of their similar external ugliness… in order to suggest that they also have similar intellectual and/or moral skills. On second thoughts, however, there could be a deeper meaning hidden in Socrates' commentary. Maybe it is not just the case that Socrates is able to see *his own face* reflected on Theaetetus' visage but his own views projected on the boy's claims as well. For I suspect that both characters will be entangled not only with regard to their respective looks and souls, but also with regard to the *fate* of the poor results of the search.

According to Guthrie,[3] the dialogue is doomed to failure because they expect to define individuals, which cannot be the object of science. However, this view can be questioned because there is evidence that they do know that they should 'collect the items in question under *one term* which would apply to them *all*' (147d9–e1). Is Theaetetus the character that represents nothing other than the incapacity of knowing what knowledge is?[4] I am not quite sure about this perspective because I have noticed some evidence on the contrary. At the beginning of

3 Guthrie 1992, 133.

4 Narcy 2011, 125. Certainly, Socrates suggests that knowledge is thinking (184–185) while Theaetetus, in his second attempt, defines knowledge as true *doxa*, rather than 'true thinking' and perhaps he should have used *dianoia* as it is the technical term to define the operation of the soul that makes use of sensible objects in order to reason about the intelligible ones, according to the *Republic* VI. But even when Theaetetus does not seem to *use* the appropriate word for he claims that the activity of the soul dealing with *ta onta* is called *doxazein* (187a8), he seems to know that knowledge deals with what is one and common and must be proven rigorously.

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the dialogue (147d–148b) Theaetetus offers a good example of the way he is able to search for that one pattern that explains all the cases. This leads us to assume that he can make the difference between useful sensible diagrams on the one hand, and intelligible numbers, powers and roots, on the other hand. More importantly, he is aware of the fact that knowledge deals with universals (as it must explain all the cases without exceptions) and that it must be rigorously proven.

In my view, Theaetetus' incapacity to give birth to a positive outcome seems to be linked to Socrates' abilities to *mistake* his plain answers for other doctrines he deliberately attempts to refute in order to defend a different perspective on being and knowledge, which –paradoxically– turns out to be shared by Theaetetus. Though there is pretense that the chief views Socrates challenges in the first part of the dialogue are beliefs held by Theaetetus, in fact they are not,[5] for Socrates' targets are Protagoras and the Heracliteans.

What I would like to explore in this paper is the reason why Socrates disregards Theaetetus' claim, uses his answers as an excuse to introduce his own goals and only after forty pages, when he is finally ready to examine Theaetetus' first claim, he happens to find out that the boy, who is supposed to have provided the *wrong* definition of knowledge as 'sense perception', 'miraculously' agrees with him about the incapacity of perception to know the features that are *common* to all sensible objects. Therefore, they agree that being and truth are not accessible to the senses in this new scenario, and that the senses cannot provide real knowledge. The operation in charge is described as thinking (*dianoein*: 185a 4–9, b7), discerning (*krinein*: 168b8) and having an opinion (*doxazein*: 187a8). One may wonder why Theaetetus would instantaneously replace his so called 'wrong definition' of knowledge as 'sense-perception', with 'judgment or opinion of the soul' without further argument or objection on his part.

More importantly, how can Socrates completely ignore Theaetetus' knowledge of geometry? I should like to explore the reason why the boy comes to define knowledge as sense-perception in the first place. Theaetetus may have taken geometry as a kind of pattern for every kind of knowledge, he might have imagined that as the geometer can 'see' the intelligible objects he deals with on the diagrams he makes (which he mentions to Socrates while describing his procedure) so does whoever knows something, in the sense that he must have a perception of that 'in this mind' through his senses.

5 Against Brown's claim 1998, 182.

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If this were so, it could be the case that he does not mean that knowledge *is the same as* sense-perception but that knowledge, whatever it means, *implies* perception, in the sense that the knower 'grasps' what he knows.[6] Theaetetus seems to come to his 'definition' from the fact that 'he who knows something perceives what he knows'. If this is so, αἴσθησις in his claim should have a broader meaning than mere 'sense' perception.

If this were the case, Theaetetus would not have miraculously replaced mere 'sense-perception' by 'judgement' but would have been keeping in his mind a broad meaning of αἴσθησις in the first place, that would not necessarily exclude perceiving with the soul the common properties, and would involve being and truth, not just in the sense of factual sense-perception, but in the sense of grasping the nature of what is known. If this interpretation were plausible, the boy would not be proposing a 'second' definition of knowledge as true *doxa* (different and contrary to the first one) after having been formally 'refuted' by Socrates, but would be providing a 'better way of saying' the vague formula, which would specify the role of the soul and would satisfy the two requisites of knowledge about which both Socrates and Theaetetus agree, namely, truth and being. That would fit with the way Theaetetus himself interprets Socrates' observation about the incapacity of mere sense-perception to grasp the commons (184d 6).

2

Let us start by considering what Socrates knows about knowledge.[7] Socrates turns out to be ironical as he sets the subject of the inquiry as a 'small' difficulty (145d6–7). However, he also claims that the problem is to be addressed to people at the top.[8] Socrates demands a unique *simple* answer (146d5; 148d5–7) given in

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6 Commenting on this point Blyth has suggested me that 'perhaps Theaetetus does identify knowledge with what he thinks perception is, because he hasn't yet distinguished between the sensory content of perception and objects of mind, as such; i.e. his view of these together is a blurred whole'.

7 I agree with Narcy 2011, 124–135 that Socrates here does have his own idea about what science is and that it is not different from the one presented in the *Republic*. However, I do not agree with his conclusion that all that Theaetetus knows about an irrational power is just the number of which it is the power. What Theaetetus has managed to discover is how to make an incommensurable power commensurable, by using diagrams of plain figures.

8 In the *Sophist*, when the Visitor from Elea is introduced as a philosopher, Socrates remarks that philosophers look down 'from above' at the lives of those below them (216c–d), so this new

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a short commonplace way (φαύλως καὶ βραχέως 147c3) that would let them know what knowledge *itself* is (146e7–10), so he wants one *single* account for the many branches of knowledge (148d5–7). He gives an example of the type of answer he is looking for: in the question about clay, he says, 'it would presumably be possible to make the simple, commonplace statement that it is earth mixed with liquid' (147c4–6). This means he expects to grasp the components or ingredients of knowledge, as if one could reply: 'knowledge is the infallible mixing of the soul with being'. However, Socrates does have some 'simple' knowledge about knowledge from the start.

In the first place Socrates is aware of the fact that, even when they do not know what knowledge is,[9] time and again both Socrates and Theaetetus use expressions such as 'we are acquainted' or 'we know' and the like, because it is impossible to carry on the discussion if one keeps off these words, as Theaetetus observes (196d–197a). So they have some knowledge of the meaning of the word 'knowledge' in ordinary speech.[10] In fact, Socrates uses the terms 'wisdom' and 'wise' meaningfully as he refers to 'all of the wise men of the past'[11] and he reports that most people take wisdom to be 'true thinking' (170b9).

On the other hand, Socrates' art of helping others give birth is apparently not to be included, strictly speaking, under the label of 'knowledge' for he regards himself as deprived of such knowledge: 'I am not in any sense a wise man (οὐ πάνυ τι σοφός) and cannot claim as the child of my own soul any discovery of the sort' (150c8–d2). This seems to indicate that knowledge as such is not to be taken in a technical productive sense: it is not a mere 'know how'.[12] However, Socrates

character seems to be placed in the right position to give a proper answer to Socrates… the following day.

9 To which Theaetetus replies 'but I do' presumably because a student of geometry has experienced what it is to have real knowledge (196d10).

10 Gonzalez 2007b, 273–293 observes that Socrates and Theaetetus can inquire into what knowledge is only by in some sense already assuming and having what they do not have yet.

11 Including Protagoras (152b; 160d) Heraclitus, Empedocles, Epicharmus, Homer (152e; 181b) Prodicus (151b) and Theaetetus (162c), in the ordinarily sense attributed by the many to certain persons due to the kind of, say, *intellectual activity* they perform, sophists and philosophers included.

12 However, Socrates claims that at operating as a midwife, he can distinguish 'phantoms' from realities, the true from the false, i.e. knowledge from ignorance, which are 'hard to distinguish'. And this is so because he has the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of an error or a fertile truth (150b–c). One may wonder how he can possibly do so without knowing what knowledge is. But he could have an operative knowledge of knowledge that enables him to recognize an authentic piece from a fake one. As

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knows that knowledge is what firmly remains, after being tested, as he is in the position to determine which necessary conditions knowledge should fulfill.

There is another significant passage which gives us two more clues about knowledge. When Theaetetus proposes 'perception' as a first candidate to satisfy the requirements of knowledge, Socrates claims that perception should be 'always of what is, and unerring, as befits knowledge' (152c5–6). Therefore, apparently, commitment to being is enough to rule perception out of the list (because it deals with becoming: 157b5–7) and infallibility is enough to discard opinion.

Briefly, Socrates' preconception of knowledge has the following features: 1) it involves intellectual activity in general terms (and cannot be reduced to a mere operative skill like the one he has); 2. its object is 'being', 3. it cannot admit error but must remain true after being tested.

However, Socrates does not start his examination from this preconception of knowledge in the first place. Instead he submits to analysis 'commonplace' accepted views that seem to have been taken for granted without further examination. Are these so called 'descriptions' of knowledge really picked from Theaetetus' soul? In this paper I will focus on the first one.

3

Theaetetus presents his first proposal about knowledge in this way: 'a man who knows something perceives what he knows, and as it appears at present, knowledge is nothing different from perception': δοκεῖ οὖν μοι ὁ ἐπιστάμενός τι αἰσθάνεσθαι τοῦτο ὃ ἐπίσταται, καὶ ὥς γε νυνὶ φαίνεται, οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη ἢ αἴσθησις (151e1–3).

Naturally one should wonder what it means 'to perceive' in this statement. Is it the case that he who perceives what he knows, has a 'perception' in the sense of having *sense-perception* or in the sense of having a kind of *self-awareness* of his object of knowledge? And when he claims that knowledge is nothing *different from* αἴσθησις, is he implying that knowledge is to be *reduced* to sense perception, as if sense perception were the only possible real knowledge, or is he implying that knowledge consists basically in the awareness of the object known?

Gonzalez 2007b has remarked Socrates masters the central defining power of the soul of stretching-out-towards the truth (186a4), without possessing it, which, he remarks, also makes possible the kind of simultaneous knowing and not-knowing seen at work in Socrates' avowedly circular inquiry. He claims that this knowing is a power we exercise rather than some opinion we possess like a bird in a cage or an imprint on wax.

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In order to answer these questions one should take into account his former procedure of 'collecting powers into one term, which would apply to them all' (147d9–e1). For he is likely to associate the term αἴσθησις with his recent search in order to demonstrate how irrational square roots turn out to be *commensurable* when regarded as sides of geometrical areas that can be 'perceived' in diagrams.[13] This particular perception of numbers on a diagram turned out to be essential to grasp the hidden nature of irrational square roots that become 'visibly rational' when taken as products on the diagram. If this interpretation is right, this particular αἴσθησις works in the service of the intellectual understanding of the nature of irrational numbers.[14]

Theaetetus' geometrical insights cannot be interpreted to be merely subjective or 'relative' to the percipient subject because they give information about numbers and geometrical entities as such. However, Socrates complains that Theaetetus' account of knowledge is 'not an ordinary one' but what Protagoras used to maintain. And as if he were aware of the possible objection to this *extraordinary* assimilation, he adds: 'He said the very same thing, only he put it in rather a different way' (τρόπον δέ τινα ἄλλον εἴρηκε τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα: 152a1–2). But in the light of Theaetetus' brief description related to his recent argument on powers and roots, there is no room to make such an assimilation.[15] For, needless to say,

13 Greek mathematicians did not recognize irrational numbers but treated them as geometrical entities. Here Theaetetus explains that any number produced by the multiplication of two equals is compared to a square in shape and is called 'square' or 'equilateral' number; any number which can only be produced by multiplying together a greater and a less is compared to an oblong figure in shape and is called 'oblong' number. Theaetetus refers that he and his companions defined under the term 'length' any line which produces in square an equilateral number and they defined under the term 'power' any line which produces in square an oblong number. Although it is incommensurable with the former in length, it is commensurable in the plane figures which they respectively have the power to produce (147e5–148b3). Gonzalez 2007b, 273–293 observes that the choice of the example of powers is by no means arbitrary, as he compares it with the case of knowledge which he finds that turns out to be indefinable in itself, and should be understood as a power, and in terms of what it is able to do. Rather than thinking of knowledge as a product we can possess or define, we should take it as a power we exercise.

14 In a sense, the case could be analogous to the diagram made by Socrates on the ground to induce Meno's slave to find twice the area of a square (*Meno* 84b–c).

15 I agree with Burnyeat 2000, 322 that Theaetetus is *made* to accept the theories of Protagoras and Heraclitus, and that Socrates *represents* Theaetetus as relying on Protagoras and Heraclitus to support his definition. He also observes that Theaetetus' first 'hesitant' original proposal, thanks to Socrates' skill as a midwife of ideas, has grown into a whole theory of knowledge and the world (331). Sedley 2004, 36 complains that Socrates does not mention the relatively felicitous kind of case which Theaetetus exemplifies when introducing his art. I should like to explore the way Socrates manipulates Theaetetus' first claim for I suspect that most ideas do not

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Protagorean perception is not at the service of a universal 'scientific' understanding of the nature of things.

After asserting the Protagorean thesis, Socrates does not ask Theaetetus whether he agrees about his opinion that his proposal is *the same* as Protagoras' but instead he simply asks him whether he has read about Protagoras' *dictum*. The skipping from Theaetetus' proposal to a full exploration of the Protagorean thesis seems to satisfy his own wish to demonstrate how *irrational* the consequences that derive from such an approach are. This shows that what Socrates is meant to pick from Theaetetus' womb is not necessarily his,[16] but rather Socrates' own assimilation with something completely different. Theaetetus honors science as he honors geometry and arithmetic. How could the monster of individual relativism have

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come from Theaetetus' womb in the first place but rather from Socrates' inductive mind. Sedley 2004, 38–39 also concedes that Socrates *converts* Theaetetus' definition into the dictum of Protagoras, and explains the premises on which the *conversion* relies, but apparently he does not seem to consider whether that *conversion* is justified in the light of *Theaetetus'premise* and field of knowledge. He believes that Plato makes Socrates bother first to elaborate Theaetetus' definition with the *addition* of Protagorean and Heraclitean strands and to refute them severally before returning to it because 'we are being taken on a guided tour of Socrates' philosophical achievement' which clears 'the ground for Platonic metaphysics by exposing the inherent contradictions of what was in his day the prevailing tradition', namely, the belief in relativity and flux. Thus Plato shows Socrates abandoning 'not just the typically Presocratic empiricist approach to knowledge which Theaetetus' definition echoes' but also instability and relativity (49). Sedley claims that Theaetetus' definition '*is treated* as singling out our sensory experience of the world as the sole route to knowledge' (53). Italics are mine. I agree with him about Socrates' *conversion, contributions and treatment* of Theaetetus' first claim. Blyth has observed that inviting the respondent to agree to additional premises in order to clarify (or refute) the original claim is not unusual in Socratic dialectic and that the interpretation of the original claim is often outrageous (possibly so here), and not sympathetic, though not illegitimate in Plato, since the respondent is present and could always object, and if he doesn't he will eventually be led to see that he needs to be more precise about what he meant, so as to exclude Socrates' interpretation of it. However, in our context, either the boy is not able to distinguish his 'definition' from the doctrines to which Socrates relates it or Plato is willing to let the reader realize about Socrates' strategy without letting Theaetetus complain about it.

16 Ferrari 2013, 32 claims that Theaetetus admits that his definition of knowledge as *aisthesis* can be legitimately identified with Protagoras' doctrine. I cannot find evidence for this statement. On the other hand, I agree with him that the boy, in the third part of the dialogue, provides consistent theoretical solutions that Socrates ignores by appealing to clamorous fallacies.

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emerged from Theaetetus' womb?[17] Socrates' metaphorical expectation of watching his own (ugly) image reflected on Theaetetus' face seems to have parallel powerful effects on the boy's soul.[18]

We all know how the story goes. In order to make the perception of contrary private appearances true to each percipient agent (and equal to knowledge) in a Protagorean sense, Socrates introduces the Heraclitean view according to which 'the things of which we naturally say that they are, are in process of coming to be'. Nothing *is* anything in itself but *becomes* through association as a result of motion. Everything that is interpreted as 'something' is only the result of a relation, and 'things' are just aggregates. This is the view of 'all the wise men of the past', with the exception of Parmenides (152e1–4) who is not ironically called 'wise' but 'reverend and awesome' (183e5–7).[19]

When Socrates asks Theaetetus whether these doctrines look 'pleasant' to him and whether he finds their taste 'agreeable', the boy answers that he does not know, and he adds that he cannot even see what Socrates is getting at, whether the things he says are what he thinks himself or he is just trying him out. Socrates reminds him that he does not know anything about that himself but acts as a midwife to him and for that reason he chants incantations[20] over him and gives him a taste from each of the wise, till he succeeds in assisting him to bring *his* doctrine forth into the light (157c9–d2).[21] Socrates acknowledges here that he is providing contents not from Theaetetus' womb but from the so called 'wise' men and he is likely to refer to their tidbits as mere 'incantations' to give us a clue about the irony of calling them 'wise'. However, it does not seem to me that these

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17 Which takes us to the previous insight that this dialogue is deliberately not the place for good answers but for good questions and refutations… from the start. Or better, the answer about what knowledge is consists in the setting of the endless process of research.

18 In addition, as Socrates' presentation of Protagoras' secret doctrine is just a reconstruction (152c8–11) the reader may have serious grounds to doubt that what is assumed to emerge from Theatetus' womb really belongs to the sophist.

19 Parmenides is said to have a 'wholly noble depth' and Socrates is afraid they 'might not understand even what he says' and still less should they 'attain to his real thought' (183e5–184a5), so, as it happens, he does not dare to be 'ironical' about him, by calling him 'wise'. At the risk of 'making a fool' of himself (153a1–3) Socrates will attempt to refute the 'wise' men.

20 It may be worth noticing that Socrates asks Theaetetus for his opinion on the theses he presents as if they were pieces to be 'liked' or 'disliked' by him here and at 189d. Once Theaetetus concedes he does like one thesis, Socrates proceeds to refute it. The contrast between sympathy for a position and finding reasonable grounds to support it is part of Socrates' strategy to teach the young.

21 σὲ δὲ μαιεύομαι καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα ἐπᾴδω τε καὶ παρατίθημι ἑκάστων τῶν σοφῶν ἀπογεύσασθαι, ἕως ἂν εἰς φῶς τὸ σὸν δόγμα συνεξαγάγω (157c9–d2).

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incantations could really help the boy give birth to his own doctrine at all. On the contrary, in my view, they are an external obstacle to the understanding of his original insight. Alternatively, one could understand them as playing a role in challenging Theaetetus to clarify what he himself meant by what he claimed. Although Socrates will refute a doctrine that he had reconstructed from sources alien to Theaetetus, he pretends the opposite because he wants to engage Theaetetus in the conversation in order to reveal the inconsistencies it implies, with his participation. As Socrates' method requires that the boy should expose his view on the 'wise' doctrine before he proceeds to refute it[22] he does so only after the boy confesses that while *he was listening to Socrates*, it seemed to him an extraordinarily reasonable view and that he felt that *the way Socrates had set out the matter* has got to be accepted (157d10–12).[23] It is worth noticing that Theaetetus is cautious enough to issue his opinion about the specific way Socrates had presented the doctrine, as if he were somehow aware of having been sensitive to Socrates' incantations. In fact, the way Socrates introduced it is really appealing to both ancient and contemporary readers as well.[24]

At summarizing the results of the presentation of the doctrines of the 'wise', Socrates claims that Theaetetus was right to propose that knowledge is nothing different from perception; the doctrine of the flux (held by Homerus, Heraclitus and all their tribe) converges with the *homo mensura* doctrine held by Protagoras, the wisest of all, and with Theaetetus' claim which maintains that, *if this is so*, perception becomes knowledge. Socrates asks Theaetetus whether this is his first-born child and the result of his midwifery. Naturally, Theaetetus replies that that is necessarily so (160d5–e5).[25]

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22 This is Socrates' method throughout the dialogue. At 189d4–5 he expects Theaetetus to agree that false judgment is 'other-judging' and when he does so, at 190d12–e3 Socrates seems to reject this interpretation but he goes back to give it a chance at 191b and ff. It is rejected because thinking that one thing that one knows is another thing the agent knows would mean that the same person must, at one and the same time, both know and not know the same objects (196b8–c2). No relative perspective is taken into account here in a fashion that recalls the absolute exclusive alternatives of the *Euthydemus*.

23 ἐπειδὴ σοῦ ἀκούω οὕτω διεξιόντος, θαυμασίως φαίνεται ὡς ἔχειν λόγον καὶ ὑποληπτέον ᾗπερ διελήλυθας (157d10–12).

24 For how could we not get surprised and pleased to have Newton's view that colors are not in things but are produced on the eye by certain motions (namely, electromagnetic wave lengths) in a text dated in the IV BC?

25 παγκάλως ἄρα σοι εἴρηται ὅτι ἐπιστήμη οὐκ ἄλλο τί ἐστιν ἢ αἴσθησις, καὶ εἰς ταὐτὸν συμπέπτωκεν, κατὰ μὲν Ὅμηρον καὶ Ἡράκλειτον καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον φῦλον οἷον ῥεύματα κινεῖσθαι τὰ πάντα, κατὰ δὲ Πρωταγόραν τὸν σοφώτατον πάντων χρημάτων ἄνθρωπον μέτρον εἶναι, κατὰ δὲ Θεαίτητον τούτων οὕτως ἐχόντων αἴσθησιν ἐπιστήμην γίγνεσθαι. ἦ γάρ, ὦ Θεαίτητε; φῶμεν

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Let me observe that, on the one hand, Socrates on his own has been the one who has reinterpreted both the flow doctrine and the *homo mensura* thesis in order to, presumably, support Theaetetus' claim as he himself has understood it. On the other hand, Theaetetus himself has not derived his claim from these doctrines at all. He has derived his claim from the fact that the one who knows something 'perceives' what he knows, which could be interpreted, in light of his geometrical knowledge, as 'the one who knows something is aware of it'. The fact that the boy accepts Socrates' summary submissively does not preclude this other reading which, in my view, is also deliberately intended by Plato to show the reader how close the sophist and the philosopher are with regard to their procedures, even when their goals are completely opposed.

4

So far in the dialogue, Socrates has not really interrogated Theaetetus about 'his' own view to make it clear. He never attempts to offer a more enlightening interpretation of Theaetetus' claim, related to geometry and science. Apparently Socrates pays no attention to the previous sentence that Theaetetus issues, namely: 'the man who knows something perceives what he knows', which contains the reason for his assertion, as it clearly shows that he is not saying that sense-perception is enough to have knowledge but that knowledge is αἴσθησις of the object of knowledge. And this is most naturally understood as a general statement that, in the case of the geometer, could be exemplified as 'he who knows geometry has αἴσθησις of *what he knows* on the diagrams he makes'.[26]

τοῦτο σὸν μὲν εἶναι οἷον νεογενὲς παιδίον, ἐμὸν δὲ μαίευμα; ἢ πῶς λέγεις; Θεαί. Οὕτως ἀνάγκη, ὦ Σώκρατες (160d5–e5).

26 There are two questions implied, as Blyth observes: a) whether Theaetetus understands what kind of answer Socrates wants (real definition, i.e., an identity statement), and whether Socrates' development of Theaetetus' answer is an attempt to show him what kind of answer he wants, by showing him what happens if he treats Theaetetus' answer as an identity statement. In my view, Theaetetus does not necessarily 'identify' knowledge and perception as being one and the same at the beginning of the dialogue, but claims that the one who knows 'perceives' what he knows, which could be taken as 'is aware of it'. And yet, when Socrates claims: 'the man who sees, we say, has come to know what he sees, as sight, perception and knowledge are agreed to be the same thing' the boy agrees with him (164a5–8). However, Socrates' formula is ambiguous. Theaetetus may agree that sight implies some knowledge of what is seen, which does not mean that knowledge is to be reduced to sight as if they were identical.

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As incredible as it may seem, this simple straightforward interpretation never comes up, though Socrates clearly acknowledges that a geometer could not possibly accept Protagorean plausibility and probability but would require proof and necessity (162e5–163a3).[27]

In support of a more enlightening view of Theaetetus' claim, which could be consistent with his geometrical knowledge, we should observe that αἴσθησις does not necessarily mean 'sense-perception' in all cases. Socrates himself admits that 'for the perceptions we have such names as sight, hearing, smelling, feeling cold and hot, pleasures and pains, desires and fears; and there are others besides, a great number which have names, an infinite number which have not' (156b2–7). In addition, there are at least two examples in the *Platonic Corpus* where the word means something broader, not connected to the sense organs.

One comes in the *Charmides* where Socrates tells the boy that, if moderation is present in him, he has some opinion about it, because it is necessary that if it really resides in him, it provides a sense (αἴσθησις) of its presence by means of which he would form an opinion that he has it and of what kind it is (*Charmides* 158e7–159a3). The perception of moderation cannot be 'sensible' and the connection between 'perception' in this broad sense as a kind of 'grasping' or 'apprehension' through experience and 'opinion' is meaningful to our search here, for Theaetetus clearly proceeds from conceiving knowledge as 'perception' to proposing that it is 'opinion' or 'judgment'. The other example comes in *Republic* (608d3–4) where Socrates asks: 'have you not perceived (ᾔσθησαι) that our soul is immortal and never perishes?' Here again, the perception of the soul as immortal cannot be sensible at all. The verb must mean something like 'to realize'.

Analogously, Theaetetus' procedure from the many to the one, with regard to square and oblong numbers taken as 'lines' of an area, is not, strictly speaking, mere sense perception though the diagrams are to be looked at, but an intellectual strategy to make clear how incommensurable square roots become 'rational' when multiplied by themselves. If this is so, we could assume that, in order to be able to include geometry and arithmetic in the one general class of knowledge

27 It is interesting to notice that in the *Euthydemus* (290b10–c6) Socrates describes geometers, astronomers and calculators as 'hunters' who do not invent their geometric figures but discover those which already exist (and since they have no idea about how to use their prey, they hand over the task of using their discoveries to the dialectician). The hierarchy is similar to the paradigm of the line in the *Republic*. However, in our dialogue, Socrates himself claims that the philosopher, whose mind pursues its winged way, 'in the depths of the earth' does plane geometry, and 'above the heaven' does astronomy, investigating in every respect the entire nature of the whole of each of the things there are, and never condescending to what lies near at hand' (173e5–174a 2).

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that Socrates requires, he must have a broad meaning of 'perception' in mind, such as 'awareness' when he risked saying that 'knowledge is perception'.[28]

In addition, it could be the case that Theaetetus just meant that knowledge implies 'perception' in a general sense, as a step towards intellectual knowledge, without making an absolute identification between both terms. In this regard, there is a passage in which Socrates seems to concede a relation between the basic experiences that give rise to sense-perception and opinion on the one hand, and truth and being on the other hand:

> In many other respects, Theodorus, it could be proved that not every opinion of every person is true, at any rate in matters of that kind; but it is more difficult to prove that opinions *are not* true in regard to the *immediate present experience (or affection) of the individual states which gives rise to perceptions and to the opinions concerning them*. But perhaps I am talking nonsense; for *it may be impossible to convict them at all*, and those who profess that they are perfectly evident and are knowledge *may be saying what really is*. And Theaetetus here was not far from the mark in proposing that perception and knowledge are the same (179c1–d1).[29]

I agree with Sedley[30] that this is the starting point of the criticism of what he calls, following Fine, 'narrow Protagoreanism', for till this point, Theaetetus' definition remains intact or undamaged. But on my interpretation of Theaetetus' claim, it does not need the 'support' of either Protagorean relativism or the flux doctrine.

Theaetetus agrees on the distinction between the proper objects of perception (such as colors and sounds) and the intellectual contents that may be applied

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28 In a sense, Socrates seems to be aware of the abuse he has committed in dealing with Theaetetus' claim the way he did, for when he personifies Protagoras, the sophist complains that Socrates addresses his arguments to a small boy and makes the child's nervousness a weapon against his ideas (168c8–e3).

29 πολλαχῇ, ὦ Θεόδωρε, καὶ ἄλλῃ ἂν τό γε τοιοῦτον ἁλοίη μὴ πᾶσαν παντὸς ἀληθῆ δόξαν εἶναι· περὶ δὲ τὸ παρὸν ἑκάστῳ πάθος, ἐξ ὧν αἱ αἰσθήσεις καὶ αἱ κατὰ ταύτας δόξαι γίγνονται, χαλεπώτερον ἑλεῖν ὡς οὐκ ἀληθεῖς. ἴσως δὲ οὐδὲν λέγω· ἀνάλωτοι γάρ, εἰ ἔτυχον, εἰσίν, καὶ οἱ φάσκοντες αὐτὰς ἐναργεῖς τε εἶναι καὶ ἐπιστήμας τάχα ἂν ὄντα λέγοιεν, καὶ Θεαίτητος ὅδε οὐκ ἀπὸ σκοποῦ εἴρηκεν αἴσθησιν καὶ ἐπιστήμην ταὐτὸν θέμενος (179c1–d1).

30 Sedley 2004, 89–90. In his view, the definition offered by Theaetetus can survive only if perception is 'something so unstable that at every moment it is turning into its own opposite. But that concession renders the definition itself as unstable as the definiens, no more true than false' (96). He finds that the final failure of Theaetetus' definition will rest on the consideration that it has to regard every actual case of perceiving as "one in which the perception has ceased to be a perception before one has finished referring to it as a 'perception'" (97). As this entails the collapse of dialectic, which is centred on the investigation of universal truths (98), 'Theaetetus' definition of knowledge really does undermine itself: it is a definition that presupposes a world in which there can be no definitions' (99).

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to them: ‘What schoolmasters and interpreters tell us about them, we don’t perceive by seeing or hearing’ (163c1–3). In my view, this distinction fits perfectly well in Theaeteus’ proposition for he does not assert that knowledge is perception because when we perceive we know ‘the thing’ we perceive, but because when someone knows something, he ‘perceives’ what he knows (151e1–3). So again, the type of knowledge he is likely to have in mind when he proposes his first formula, namely geometry, is analogous to grammar or language, in the sense that though these disciplines do make use of perceptual resources, their respective contents are not to be identified with them.

5

Sedley observes that after the refutation of broad and narrow Protagoreanism has been completed, ‘it still remains a theoretical possibility that Theaetetus’ definition could be defended on some other basis’, so Socrates has to show that it ‘is inherently faulty, regardless of any particular perceptual theory one might adopt, and this is what he undertakes at 183b3–187a7’.[31] Thirty-two pages below Theaetetus’ first claim about knowledge (at 151e1–3), Socrates seems ready to examine it on its own basis. When he asks the boy what is the minimal thought that he can entertain about a pair of perceptual objects such as a color and a sound, and suggests that they both *are*, the boy agrees immediately (185a8–9). From ‘being’, the class of commons that can be thought about sense-objects extends to ‘likeness and unlikeness’, ‘same and different’, ‘one and many’, ‘odd and even’, and also to values such as ‘fair and foul’. Socrates claims that it is not possible to apprehend what sounds and colors have in common through the senses (185b7–9). But he wants Theaetetus to confirm this. So Socrates asks Theaetetus:

> *Through what* does that power operate, which reveals to you what is common to all things and in particular to those which you express by the words ‘is’ and ‘is not’ and those about which our questions were just now? What kind of instruments will you assign for all these, through which what is *percipient* in us could *perceive* each of these things? (185c4–8).[32]

31 Sedley 2004, 105.
32 ἡ δὲ δὴ διὰ τίνος δύναμις τό τ’ ἐπὶ πᾶσι κοινὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τούτοις δηλοῖ σοι, ᾧ τὸ “ἔστιν” ἐπονομάζεις καὶ τὸ “οὐκ ἔστι” καὶ ἃ νυνδὴ ἠρωτῶμεν περὶ αὐτῶν; τούτοις πᾶσι ποῖα ἀποδώσεις ὄργανα δι’ ὧν αἰσθάνεται ἡμῶν τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ἕκαστα;

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It seems that Socrates puts his question in terms of 'perception', not because he thought that what is common could be 'perceived' at all (or 'perceived through the senses') but because he is challenging Theaetetus to find a way to defend his view that knowledge is perception. On the other hand, Theaetetus also uses the verb αἰσθάνομαι in the sense of 'grasping' or 'apprehending' the commons with the soul when he interprets that what Socrates wants to know is 'through what bodily instruments we perceive [all these commons] with the soul': διὰ τίνος ποτὲ τῶν τοῦ σώματος τῇ ψυχῇ αἰσθανόμεθα (185d 2–3). Now, *his* particular use of the verb may indicate, at first sight, that Theaetetus did not necessarily mean mere 'sense-perception' (in the ordinary sense) when he claimed that knowledge is αἴσθησις in his first formula. But when Socrates confirms Theaetetus that he is following him 'exceedingly well' and that 'these are just the things' he is asking (185d4–5), the boy answers that he does not know what to say, but that it does not seem to him that for these things there is any special bodily instrument at all, but that 'in investigating the common features of everything the soul functions *through itself*' (185d6–e2).

At this point Socrates comments that Theaetetus 'is beautiful and not ugly' as Theodorus would have it, for the one 'who speaks beautifully is beautiful and good' (185e3–5). Indeed, once they have distinguished the properties that are 'perceived by the soul through the senses' from those that 'the soul grasps through itself', they agree that 'knowledge is to be found, not in the experiences or affections, but in process of reasoning about them, for it is here, seemingly, not in the experiences, that it is possible to grasp being and truth' (186d2–5)[33] which are the two main requisites for knowledge that Socrates had set at the start.

This way, they conclude that mere sense-perception has no share in the grasping of truth, since it has none in the grasping of being, and thus it cannot be regarded as knowledge (184c–186e). And it seems to them that this conclusion contradicts Theaetetus' claim and that he has been refuted.[34]

However, one should wonder whether this is really so. The alternative reading that I propose assumes that Socrates mistook Theaeteus' first proposal, identified it with Protagoras' doctrine and appealed to the Heracliteans to make relativism possible, in order to have the chance to discuss these two main doctrines and refute them both, which is likely to be his main goal in the first place. It took Socrates forty long pages to do so, from the point in which Theaetetus introduced his claim, till he finally came to interrogate Theaetetus properly. And when he

33 ἐν μὲν ἄρα τοῖς παθήμασιν οὐκ ἔνι ἐπιστήμη, ἐν δὲ τῷ περὶ ἐκείνων συλλογισμῷ· οὐσίας γὰρ καὶ ἀληθείας ἐνταῦθα μέν, ὡς ἔοικε, δυνατὸν ἅψασθαι, ἐκεῖ δὲ ἀδύνατον.
34 Cooper (2000, 369) admits that this refutation is brief and cryptic.

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did so, Socrates happened to discover that the boy is smart enough to immediately agree with him that the common attributes are grasped with the soul through itself and not through sense-perception, which is enough to conclude that knowledge, strictly speaking, is not sense-perception. But the question is, was that Theaetetus' meaning in the first place?

Let us go back to examine the process of Theaetetus' so called 'refutation' in detail. When Socrates asks Theaetetus whether a man sees *with* his eyes and hears *with* his ears, Theaetetus agrees. Socrates takes pains to be kind to him in correcting *his way of speaking*:

> Now as a rule it is no sign of ill-breeding to be easy in the use of language and take no particular care in one's choice of words; it is rather the opposite that gives a man away. But such exactness is sometimes necessary; and it is necessary here for example, to fasten upon something in your answer that is not correct. Think now. Is it more correct to say that the eyes are that *with* which we see, or that *through* which we see? Do we hear *with the* ears or *through* the ears? (184c1–7).[35]

Theaetetus agrees at once, and when Socrates concludes that we perceive *through* the senses '*with* the soul' to which all perceptions converge, Theaetetus immediately agrees again (184d1–6). The fact that Theaetetus is ready to regard the common notions as grasped by the soul through itself (185d7–e2) shows that such a student of geometry would not confuse the diagrams he can see, with the perfect beings he thinks about, though he might make use of diagrams to grasp the nature of the intelligible beings more easily, even when Socrates was the one who had made him reflect on these distinctions.

Therefore, when Theaetetus claims that 'the one who knows perceives what he knows', I suggest, he does not necessarily imply that knowledge should be reduced to sense-perception or that it necessarily entails sense-perception as an auxiliary step in the process but he is likely to be claiming that knowledge is a certain 'perception' of the object of knowledge, in the sense that the one who knows 'grasps' or 'apprehends' what he knows. This broad sense of his claim neither implies a relativistic perspective that would deny the sciences their truth value nor should need support from a doctrine that is supposed to reduce being

35 The respective objects of thought and perception appear split into two categories in the *Sophist* (249 a) when the Stranger claims that, according to the Friends of the Forms, we have access to becoming with the body through perception and access to *ousia* with the soul through reasoning. Both ambits remain separate. However, when being is regarded as the capacity to act or being acted upon, even in the slightest sense, and the soul is introduced as a moving subject, the Stranger attempts to force the Friends of the Forms to include 'movement' in the realm of being and find a unique account for both ambits.

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to becoming. Why would Theaetetus be inclined to any of these doctrines when he deals with perfect stable beings such as numbers, lines and planes that can be intellectually known with precision? And when he comes to be cross-examined he is ready to relate knowledge to truth and being, in the same way as he is used to associate geometry to universal proof (and not mere plausibility).

On the contrary, if Theaetetus had really defended the view that knowledge is nothing but *sense*-perception, he should have immediately objected to Socrates' distinctions. But as a matter of fact, Socrates comments that the boy has saved him 'a vast amount of talk' for it seems to him that 'the soul examines some things through its own resources, but others through the body's powers'. And he adds that that was what he himself thought but wanted the boy to think it too[36] and Theaetetus replies: 'Well, it does seem to me to be so' (185e5–186a1).

How could Theaetetus *not* have thought so from the start? Could he have imagined that incommensurable powers, for instance, are learnt by sense-perception? Indeed, he learnt about them from Theodorus and then he himself found a general strategy to make them commensurable on the diagram. The fact that Theaetetus immediately concedes that being, identity, difference, number and the like do not come through the senses but that that 'in investigating the common features of everything the soul operates *through itself*' means that he has not discovered so at this stage of the dialogue. What Theaetetus realizes now is that αἴσθησις is not the proper word to mean 'the grasping' of what is known.[37] As sense-perception and the grasping of being and truth are not the same, they cannot either share the same name or be equally identified with knowledge (186d7–e12).

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There is still the question about what kind of relation Socrates assumes between the acts of sense-perception, which come through the senses and are unified by

36 Sedley 2004, 109 remarks that 'Socrates permits himself to reveal his own hand here, despite his avowed intellectual barrenness' and he believes that 'Socrates' eagerness to assert it as his own view is more pronounced than any other element of assertiveness he shows in the dialogue. It can be read as Plato's way of highlighting a pivotal Socratic insight'.
37 However, as Blyth indicates, when it comes at the end to the question of how we know the principles by which we make the judgements in which knowledge is meant to consist (208c–10a), it seems we must already have an awareness of them for which (non-sensory) *aisthesis* is the best term so far used in the dialogue.

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a single soul (184d1–5) and the apprehension of the common properties. While the former are natural from birth and common to all animals, the latter are performed by humans. In his next move Socrates seems to slide from the ‘perceiving soul’, so to speak, to a thinking power. Is he suggesting that the perceiving soul is the same as the soul with which we ‘think’ (185a4–9; 185b7), ‘discern’ (186b8) or ‘judge’ (187a8)? This is a question that has caused much controversy. For, in the first place, Socrates is not really interested in defining what type of faculty or power he refers to, as he declares:

> It would be a very strange thing, boy, if there were a number of perceptions sitting inside us as if we were wooden horses, and there were not some single *form, soul or whatever one ought to call it*, to which all these converge, something with which, through those [organs] if they were instruments, we perceive all that is perceptible (184d1–5).[38]

As Socrates seems to move, inadvertently, to a different function of the soul, namely, ‘thinking’, most authors tend to interpret the former in connection with the second one. To make matters more difficult, Socrates seems to attribute to perception some knowledge about the fact that the perceived things ‘are’, while on the other hand, he denies perception any role in connection with ‘being’ in order to ‘refute’ the claim that ‘perception’ is the same as knowledge.

Cooper[39] observes that αἴσθησις in these pages can refer either to a power of the body or to an action of the mind, and that is it awkward to say that the *mind* sees, hears and so on (184c) while locating the power of hearing, sight, etc. (185a2; 185c1–2) in the body. If the mind sees and hears, he writes, the mind is the possessor of the power of sight and hearing, and ‘it is the mind that does the knowing’. But, he adds: ‘if this is going to be his argument, Plato will only be denying that knowledge lies in the sensory powers of the body; he will *not* be saying that *perceptual acts of the mind* are themselves *not acts of Knowledge’*. However, Cooper thinks that ‘in the end it is reasonably clear that Plato means to *reject even the claim that perceptual acts of the mind are acts of knowledge*’ and he concludes: “Plato does not seem to have made a clean decision whether by ‘perception’ he means mere sensory awareness which does not involve any application of concepts to the data of sense, or sensory awareness plus the restricted

38 δεινὸν γάρ που, ὦ παῖ, εἰ πολλαί τινες ἐν ἡμῖν ὥσπερ ἐν δουρείοις ἵπποις αἰσθήσεις ἐγκάθηνται, ἀλλὰ μὴ εἰς μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν, εἴτε ψυχὴν εἴτε ὅτι δεῖ καλεῖν, πάντα ταῦτα συντείνει, ᾗ διὰ τούτων οἷον ὀργάνων αἰσθανόμεθα ὅσα αἰσθητά (184d1–5).
39 Cooper 2000, 361.

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use of concepts which is involved in labelling the colors, sounds, etc. presented in sensation with their names 'red', 'hard', 'sweet', 'loud', and so on".[40]

In my view, it is clear in the text that the 'power' of the organs consists in the capacity of being affected and not in the faculty of perception, which belongs to the 'soul'. Though Socrates does not pay attention to the name of the 'form' to which the sense-affections or impressions converge, he does not mention 'the mind' here. As perception is the reception of sense data, there is some information conveyed to the soul and, in this sense, sense-perception is somehow a kind of knowledge in the sense of 179c1–d1 (but of course it is not the type of knowledge Socrates is looking for). Plato does not speak of 'labelling with names' or of 'applying concepts' as acts that are *parts of the process of perception*, because perception of the impressions which reach, through the body, to the soul is something we humans naturally do from birth and share with animals (186b11–c2). The immediate perception of, say, hardness, is different from the judgment: 'this is hard'. Cooper talks of 'perceptual thought' and of the 'labelling function' which would 'amount to using certain concepts, even minimal perceptual concepts'[41] but there is nothing in the text to allow the use of such expressions here.

The objective of Socrates here (184–186) is precisely to distinguish sense-perception from thought, even when both functions are endorsed to the soul. Dixsaut[42] has analyzed these pages critically to save Plato from Cartesian, Leibnizian or Kantian interpretations. If the 'rational' soul were the one that perceives (which is the view she endorses in Brisson), how can we account for the irrational animals' sense perception? If the function of the soul were just to translate the affections upon the body, which are assumed not to be perceived by the body yet, into conscious sensations of one and the same subject (which seems to her Burnyeat's interpretation), this would mean that the body does not sense. Plato neither says that when the affections of the body reach the soul they become conscious nor conceives our body as a 'wooden horse' that collects dead 'sitting perceptions'(184d2). From other dialogues, she recalls, we know that every part of the body is full of life and soul, and that it is the soul which makes the body alive and at the same time, able to sense.

I agree with Dixsaut that when the soul takes part in the sensing it is not to be identified with either a rational soul, strictly speaking, or a substantial subject.

40 Cooper 2000, 364.

41 Cooper 2000, 371.

42 Dixsaut 2002. She mentions Cooper (in n. 26) but does not focus her analysis on his interpretation.

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Sense-perception is natural and immediate, and thus, all our sensations are immediately *qualified* as cold, hot, pleasant, painful, white or hard: 'the hardness of what is hard and the softness of what is soft is perceived through touch' (186b2–4).

In addition, Socrates claims:

> But as for calculations (*analogismata) about these things* with regard to *being* and benefit, it is with difficulty and over a long time and through a great deal of effort and education that they become available to those to whom they do become available (186c 2–5).

Sedley observes[43] that the use of the noun *analogismata* could suggest a reference to the work of the expert, and not the ordinary ability to 'entertain everyday propositional thoughts', which would indicate that the 'being' which is among the objects of these calculations ought to be that kind of reality that only philosophers can grasp. However, as the calculations are said to be 'about these things', namely, about sense-contents, Sedley concludes that Socrates cannot himself fully have this rather Platonic concept of being, but as he 'started out invoking a low-level concept of being', these calculations do not import any kind of being over and above that expressed by ordinary uses of the copula. Socrates concludes that knowledge is to be found, not in the experiences or impressions (*pathemata*)[44] but in the process of reasoning about them, for it is here, seemingly, that it is possible to grasp being and truth (186d2–5).[45]

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43 Sedley 2004, 110–112.

44 In describing the case of those whose wax is 'deep and abundant, smooth and of the proper consistency' Socrates claims that when the things that come through the senses are imprinted upon this heart of the soul, the signs that are made in it are lasting, clear and deep, so men learn easily, remember what they learn and judge truly (or have true opinions) for they do not interchange the imprints of their perceptions, but assign them to their respective molds which are called the 'things that are' and these men are called 'wise': σαφῆ γὰρ καὶ ἐν εὐρυχωρίᾳ ὄντα ταχὺ διανέμουσιν ἐπὶ τὰ αὑτῶν ἕκαστα ἐκμαγεῖα, ἃ δὴ ὄντα καλεῖται, καὶ σοφοὶ δὴ οὗτοι καλοῦνται (194d5–7). True opinion is presented as the result of the capacity of distinguishing properly among the clear sense impressions on the memory so as to assign them to their respective molds or patterns. These are likely to be understood in connection with the commons that the rational soul applies to the contents of perception kept in the memory. On the other hand, the Stranger of Elea differentiates the operations of the soul as follows: 'So since there is true and false speech, and of the processes just mentioned, thinking appeared to be the soul's conversation with itself, belief, the conclusion of thinking, and what we call 'appearing' the blending of perception and belief, it follows that since these are all the same kind of thing as speech, some of them must sometimes be false' (*Sophist*, 264b).

45 This characterization of knowing has been related to that implied by Socrates' midwifery: knowledge of what is and what is true is engendered from *within* the soul; it is *itself through itself*

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Sedley finds the same interpretative dilemma about 'being' to be faced about the meaning of 'knowledge' and 'truth'.[46] Is it really the case that sense-perception has no share in the grasping of being? If 'being' is understood as one of the common notions grasped with the soul through itself, obviously that is not 'perceived through the senses', while if 'being' refers to the fact that something particular 'is', then perceiving any one thing is perceiving something which is, as Socrates himself claims (188e8–189a 4). So sense-perception provides some information with regard to the things which are, which Socrates does not seem to take as untrue in the passage quoted above (179c1–d1).

Socrates concludes this section saying: 'Nevertheless, we have at least progressed so far as not to seek knowledge in perception at all, but in whatever *you call* the thing which the soul has when, all by itself, it is busying itself over the things-which-are' (187a3–6). Now Theaetetus will call this activity 'judging' or 'having an opinion' (*doxazein*) (187a7–8).

Sedley[47] wonders whether it is about the objects of the senses or about the commons (which are regarded as beings at 186b6–9). His answer is that Socrates leaves open this question and in doing so, he is allowing that knowledge need not be of empirical objects and may be of the commons.

On the other hand, how could Socrates have assimilated Theaetetus' claim to Protagoras' doctrine which clearly implies *judgments* about the wind being cold or hot, on the assumption that in Theaetetus' claim 'perception' merely means 'being affected through the senses'?

It seems to me that Socrates should be bound to interpret Theaetetus' accessions here, not as if he had really changed his mind, but as a process of specification of the meaning of the term αἴσθησις which will take them to conclude that, even when understood as an operation of unification of the sense-impressions to

(αὐτὴ δι' αὑτῆς, 185e1; αὐτὴ καθ' αὑτήν, 186a4; 187a5) that the soul examines (ἐπισκοπεῖν, 185e2), attempts to judge or discriminate (κρίνειν πειρᾶται, 186b8–9) and deals with (πραγματεύηται, 187a5) being and the good, among other commons (τὰ κοινά, 185e1). Gonzalez 2007b, 273–93 insists that the relation between the soul and the commons is not that of *having an opinion* about them nor that of *knowing* them in the sense of possessing them, but 'exercising itself through itself' means *coming into contact with being and truth* through *examining*, discriminating and *dealing* with them. He emphasizes that the soul puts itself into contact with being and truth by striving (ἐπορέγεσθαι, 186a4) after them.

46 Sedley 2004, 112. As it is well known, he solves it by dividing the labor between Socrates and Plato: the former, having a weaker sense of these terms, investigates 'everyday cognition'; the latter, interested in a strong sense of them, would take 'knowledge' as a grasp of the ultimate reality of things which, in his eyes, can be found only at the level of Forms.

47 Sedley 2004, 114–115.

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be attributed to the soul, perception cannot be identified with knowledge because knowledge must *unerringly* assert *being*, and though perception could qualify the wind as 'cold', it does not either articulate the *judgement* 'this wind is cold'[48] or do so unerringly. Once the meaning of αἴσθησις is restricted to the unification of the sense-impressions by the soul, and judgement about them by appealing to the commons (whether they are just a priori predicates or concepts) is distinguished from it, it turns out that it is false that knowledge is the same as sense-perception.

But is it necessarily false that knowledge implies the 'perception' of the object of knowledge, taken αἴσθησις in a broad sense, as intellectual grasping?[49] This is what Theaetetus seems to have meant when he concluded that 'knowledge is αἴσθησις' from the previous premise that 'the knower perceives what he knows'. Obviously, this specification would not be enough to qualify αἴσθησις as a candidate for 'unerring' knowledge, strictly speaking, and that is why, in my view, Theaetetus agrees so easily with Socrates about distinguishing between the soul, which perceives, thinks and judges on the one hand,[50] and the senses as sources of affections or impressions, on the other hand.

48 To put it in Frede's terms: 'we perceive the color red but do not, strictly speaking, perceive that A is red' 1999, 382, quoted by Ferrari 2013, 89. See also Sedley 2004 107, n. 29.

49 Blyth has suggested that perhaps the reason why Plato spends so much time on a 'red herring' concept of *aisthesis* (such as the Protagorean-Heraclitean one) is precisely that he wants to suggest that the other sense (awareness/intuitive consciousness) is in the end required to make sense of how we know the principles.

50 Narcy 2011, 126–9 has observed that *dianoeisthai* clearly appears as the alternative to *aisthanesthai* as Socrates orientates Theaetetus towards a conception of knowledge opposed to the one defended earlier. In spite of Socrates' enthusiasm, when the boy reports to the soul the knowledge of *ta koina*, Theaetetus replaces perception with *doxa* instead of with *dianoia* and Socrates does not correct him because, according to Narcy, the new epistemology of our dialogue is the conception of *dianoia* as judgment in the sense of an attempt to judge (186b) due to the fact that knowledge implies the possibility of error. Now if *dianoia* can err then it seems it can be defined somehow as *doxa*. But knowledge cannot err. And so it could not be identified with either. Alternatively, Gonzalez 2007b, 273–293 finds that *doxa* is different from thinking in the sense that it is explicitly identified here with what concludes the soul's dialogue with itself (190a2–4); he observes that the soul has a δόξα, opines or judges (δοξάζειν), only when it is no longer hesitating (μὴ διστάζῃ) and says the same (τὸ αὐτο ἤδη φῇ), only when it comes at something definite (ὁρίσασα), either slowly or quickly (ὀξύτερον ἐπᾴξασα). He understands that in the definition of knowledge as true judgment, the power of examining and striving for being and truth by means of engaging in dialogue with itself is lost from view. And yet, he remarks, this is precisely the power that makes possible the inquiry carried out in the dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus, which rather than arriving at anything definite, formulates beliefs only to bring them into question.

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In conclusion, I hope I have been able to show that there is enough evidence in the dialogue to allow an alternative interpretation of Theaetetus' first attempt to say what knowledge is, which should not be necessarily assimilated to a relativistic flux doctrine of 'sense-perception'. If his brief vague claim could be taken as saying just that knowledge implies grasping the object of knowledge, in general terms, and when it comes to the examination of this clause, he is ready to agree that it is the soul that 'perceives', in conjunction with the information that comes to it through the senses, and also deals with the 'commons' through itself, then, rather than being *refuted* by Socrates to that extent, we could claim that Theaetetus has been helped by Socrates to clarify the meaning of his first formula. Indeed, after having used Theaetetus' claim as an excuse to proceed to the refutation Socrates intended in the first place, when he finally seems ready to consider the boy's claim as such, he takes pains to help him clarify his meaning.[51]

If this analysis is right, even when Socrates has proven to be aware of exaggerating the difficulties and of abusing the boy's capacity to solve them, he turns out to be really tricky at dealing with Theaetetus' claims about knowledge. One could think, however, that there is nobility in Socrates' aim of resisting a wrong tradition that is likely to be circulating around the boys, though, it seems, he does not find it inconvenient to use any means at hand to do so. Theaetetus claims that Socrates has made him say 'far more than ever' was in him (210b6–7).

And one might wonder, if the boy was already smart, gentle and aware of his ignorance from the very beginning, why does Socrates say that if he remains barren, his companions will find him 'gentler' and 'less tiresome' for he will be 'modest' and 'not think he knows what he does not'[52] (210b11–c4)? Indeed, Theaetetus has been trained in the process of learning that many theses, which he had enthusiastically 'liked' at first, due to the effects of Socrates' incantations, must be rejected after Socrates' arguments prove them to be wrong. This way, he has been vaccinated against appealing views that do not resist examination. That is likely

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51 The paradox is that Socrates rejects Theaetetus' identification of knowledge with opinion, by appealing to the example of the trial, because opinion is founded on mere hearsay, without the testimony of the *eye-witness* (201a–c). How could eye-witness be the essential variable that makes opinion acceptable knowledge, after perception has been rejected as candidate for knowledge?

52 Gonzalez 2007b, 273–293 observes that Socrates and Theaetetus are both empty and full, for they can distinguish what is false from what is true and because they know what they know and what they do not know.

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to be the reason why Socrates hopes that in the future he 'will succeed in conceiving better theories as the result of this inquiry' (210c1–2). If in the meantime Socrates had had to use sophistical resources in order to provoke him, that is a price Plato seems ready to pay.[53]

53 I am deeply grateful to Dougal Blyth for his interesting comments on this paper.

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Franco Trabattoni

Peritrope Once Again

1 The Self-refutation Argument (*peritrope*) and Related Problems

According to a widespread opinion, in order to counter the 'Protagorean' doctrine, Plato regarded the argument according to which it is a self-contradictory position (the so-called *peritrope*) as crucial. As those who argue that all opinions are true must also consider true the opinion according to which it is not true that all opinions are true, Protagoras is ultimately admitting that his own thesis is false (171a). However, as critics have long noted, this argument entails a subtle logical fallacy. Protagoras' thesis does not claim that all opinions are true in absolute terms, but rather that all opinions are true for the subjects who uphold them. Consequently, Protagoras' thesis does not force him to admit that an opinion contradicting his own is true in general, but only to admit that it is true for those who uphold it. Therefore, Protagoras could certainly claim that while his opinion is true for him, the opinion which contradicts it is true for those who endorse it, so that the opinion of others would no longer have the power to disprove his own. The problem, however, is that, in the passage in which he proves the self-contradictoriness of Protagoras' position (171a), Plato is able to carry out his refutation successfully only because he omits so-called 'qualifiers', which is to say additions clarifying that according to Protagoras a given opinion is only true for those who uphold it. Hence, instead of having Protagoras admit that the opinion contrary to his own is only true for those who uphold it, by omitting qualifiers, Socrates has him admit this in an absolute sense, in such a way that Protagoras is forced to admit that his own thesis is false (insofar as the one contradicting it is true) not just for those who believe it to be false, but in general (i.e. for him too).

Rivers of ink have been poured on this matter.[1] On the one hand, some scholars have argued that Plato here makes a serious logical mistake, although they then disagree as to the reasons why (either he failed to notice the mistake, or he had some other aim in mind). On the other hand, some scholars have sought to save the Platonic argument somehow (for example, by trying to find a reason why

1 For a succinct "prehistory" of the problem, Burnyeat 1976b, 174. n. 4, Bostock 1998, 89–90.

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Protagoras either does not need any "qualifiers" or cannot apply them to his thesis).[2] In my view, all these attempts are misleading, for two reasons. The first, more general reason is that almost all scholars who have taken part in the debate assume that Plato takes this argument seriously, and therefore regards it as crucial in order to refute Protagoras' position (whereas, as I will endeavour to show later on, there is strong evidence to the contrary). The second, more specific reason is that almost all scholars set out from the assumption that according to Protagoras his own thesis has the same characteristics as the opinions to which he is referring,[3] meaning that it is only and invariably only true for those who uphold it. But in actual fact Protagoras — that is, the Protagoras portrayed in the *Theaetetus* — never claims that his thesis is true *for him*. On the contrary, from various passages it may be inferred that he presented his thesis as true *simpliciter*: this is the case in the passage enunciating it for the first time (152a2–4), as well as in the one in which Socrates brings up the thesis in order to launch his 'dialectical' refutation (170a3–5). Particularly significant is what we read in the so-called 'Apology of Protagoras'. Here too, first of all, Socrates has Protagoras state that his thesis is true in a general and absolute sense (166d1–2),[4] with an explicit reference to the revealing title of his book (*Truth*). But this is not all: as several scholars have noted,[5] in the 'Apology' Protagoras is credited with objectivistic theses that hardly fit with the picture of a complete relativist (or indeed, as Waterlow would

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2 Castagnoli 2004, 4 has usefully brought together critics' positions into four categories: 1) the text presents an either voluntary or involuntary logical fallacy (Grote 1875, Kerferd 1949, Vlastos 1956, Runciman 1962, Sayre 1969); 2) there is a logical fallacy, yet the argument still poses some problems for Protagoras, only not that of self-refutation (Lee 1973, McDowell 1973, Guthrie 1978, Newman 1982, Waterfield 1987, Bostock 1988, Polansky 1992, Chappell 1995, Bailey 1997, McCabe 2000); 3) there is no logical fallacy; even if the reader adds the required qualifiers, the thesis is still self-refuting (Burnyeat 1976b, Denyer 1991, Gottlieb 1994, Emilsson 1994; to which we might add Polansky 1992, 131); 4) there is no logical fallacy, because Protagoras' thesis does not require any qualifiers (Arthur 1982, Ketchum 1992, Fine 1998a and 1998b). Castagnoli then adds a list of interpretations which in his view do not fall within any of these categories: Cornford 1935, Tigner 1971, Waterlow 1977, Haden 1984, White 1989, Cooper 1990, Narcy 1994, Bemelmans 2002, and Long 2004. Obviously, I cannot discuss all these positions here, so I will only provide a few references that I deem important.

3 Some doubts on this purely theoretical point are raised by Newman 1982, 50. See also Bostock 1998, 90, who adumbrates the contrary hypothesis, but then lets it drop.

4 See Castagnoli 2004, 18. See also Tigner 1971, 369; McDowell 1973, 171; Arthur 1982, 335–336; Ketchum 1992, 95–96.

5 See Long 2004, 28–33.

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have it,[6] with that of Protagoras as the denier of the principle of non-contradiction and the target of Book IV of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*).[7] As especially noted by A. Long,[8] this is illustrated by the accusation that Socrates is behaving like a sophist, instead of resorting to demonstrations based on necessity (162e5–6), and by Protagoras' willingness to be refuted (166c3–4) and questioned (167d6-8).[9] All this, of course, implies that the Protagoras portrayed in the *Theaetetus*, while being by and large a relativist, staunchly upheld at least his own thesis, meaning the truth of relativism itself: for otherwise what would be the point of talking about truth, refutation and demonstration?[10] Based on what has been noted so

6 Waterlow 1977, 25–27.

7 As noted by Erginel 2009, 24, it is true that Protagoras never states that his relativistic position is the reason why he considers himself wise. But this does not seem important, nor does the fact that the truth of his thesis, when understood in an absolute sense, also entails the truth of all its specifications (31). Protagoras is capable of doing what he does, and hence of showing himself superior to others in wisdom, precisely because he sets out from the assumption that everything is relative, and behaves consequently, by gladly stressing the truth of any thesis, depending on the circumstances. By contrast, other people — those who are not wise — claim that certain things are absolutely true, and hence in debates are ready to show themselves superior to others, no matter what the context in which they find themselves operating.

8 Long 2004, 26–27.

9 Again with reference to the 'Apology of Protagoras', I believe that the argument put forward in McCoy 2005, esp. 10–12 is untenable. McCoy exploits the pragmatic argument presented by Socrates in this section of the text (i.e. that Protagoras subordinates the true to the expedient) in order to make the sophist's view immune from refutation: the scholar argues that Protagoras could defend himself by claiming that he only accepts the authority of the expedient and not that of the true. Indeed, in the 'Apology of Protagoras' he states that he can procure the expedient while ignoring the true, not that his thesis is more expedient (hence, not more true) than that of his opponents. On the contrary, precisely in order to weaken the truth of opinions, and hence to confirm his pragmatic criterion, Protagoras needs to state that his thesis is true: it is true that every opinion is relative and it is true that opinions are judged on the basis not of their degree of truth, but of their degree of expediency. However, this difference aside, my own interpretation converges with McCoy's as regards a truly crucial point. It is true that Plato is presenting Protagoras' position and that of Socrates/Theaetetus as essentially incommensurable; but this is true not because Protagoras does not acknowledge the notion of truth, but rather because what are being compared here are two absolute truths that lack any common ground.

10 Contrary to what Long 2004, 33 suggests, it does not seem plausible to me that this mingling of Protagorean and Socratic elements in the 'Apology' is meant to imply — to the benefit of the young Theaetetus — that Protagoras could only defend his position by becoming a Socratic. Had this been Plato's aim, he would have stated it dialectically, by having the reader understand that the 'emptiness' of Protagoras' position perfectly coincides with the 'fullness' of Socrates' position; certainly, he would not have gratuitously attributing contradictory ideas to Protagoras the very moment in which the need to refute his thesis in the most effective and objective possible way required that it be represented as faithfully as possible.

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far, then, it may be assumed that in his treatise Protagoras sought to argue along the following lines: 'to those who pursue absolute truth, meaning a truth that is valid always and for everyone, I say that the only absolute truth — and you try to refute me, if I'm wrong — is the one that states that all opinions are relative'. Therefore, Protagoras' position does not express a kind of absolute relativism, which obviously would be self-contradictory, but rather a clear distinction between what is absolutely true (Protagoras' own thesis) and what is always merely relative (opinions).[11] But if this is the case, i.e. if there exists a thesis which is absolutely true, then it is not true that subjects live in utterly separate and isolated worlds (solipsism),[12] because they could at least share the same universal awareness that everything is relative.

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11 The possibility of interpreting the text in this sense, which I am here suggesting as a key to interpret this section of the dialogue, has largely been ignored by scholars, or only mentioned without addressing the question of whether Protagoras' thesis, understood in absolute terms, is itself an opinion or not. See e.g. Burnyeat 1976b, 179; Waterlow 1977, 21, where it is nonetheless stated that this would be the most obvious way of interpreting Protagoras' position; Fine 1998b, 143; Silverman 2000, 150 (presenting a hypothesis expressed by Long *per verbis*); and Lee 2005, 56. The most detailed discussion of this possibility is found in Erginel 2009, where it is defined as limited relativism (QR). Erginel acknowledges that the existence of non-relativists is not in itself a refutation of relativism (29). However, he believes that if the thesis of the non-relativist consists in denying precisely Protagoras' thesis (i.e. a so-called 'second-order' thesis), a serious inconsistency would emerge on the basis of QR: if only according to a different notion of truth, both Protagoras' thesis and the opposite one, which Protagoras must recognise to be true, would be simultaneously true and not true (30). But, in fact, nothing of the sort obtains, because QR does not imply that all theses are true in a qualified sense and that only one is absolutely true. Rather, it entails that all first-order theses are true in a limited way, whereas of the two second-order theses one is true in an absolute sense and the other (the opposite one) false in an absolute sense. It is also worth mentioning the extreme thesis put forward by E.P. Arthur 1982 in a short article: the only non-trivial way to understand Protagoras' thesis is to conclude that all theses are absolutely true, from which Socrates' refutation follows, since Protagoras' thesis consists precisely in admitting that the world is contradictory. However, despite the indirect confirmation that might be provided by Aristotle's anti-Protagorean polemic in Book 4 of *Metaphysics*, this thesis truly seems too extreme (and difficult to accept for the historical Protagoras, as he is known to us).

12 See Ketchum 1992. According to this scholar, Plato presents Protagoras' argument in two different ways: as a form of solipsism (which is the least interesting in Ketchum's view) or as a form of relativism (81). The lack of qualifiers, whenever it occurs, is not a problem, therefore, because it is inherent to the solipsistic version of Protagoras' argument, which admits the absolute truth of private experiences (96). In reality, this distinction between relativism and solipsism (which according to Ketchum are refuted, respectively, in 170e7–171a5 and 171a6–c2 – see 104, n. 40) is nowhere to be found in the text, but springs from the aforementioned fallacy of regarding Protagoras' thesis as an opinion akin to those to which it refers. Hence, it must be the one or the

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2 Private Worlds?

The analogy between relativism and the fact of 'living in a private world' was first introduced by Burnyeat in his authoritative and influential studies.[13] But as has clearly been shown by Bostock, Fine and Castagnoli,[14] among others, this is a misleading analogy. The reason which Burnyeat adduces to show that Socrates' argument works even if we add qualifiers where they are missing (in his view they are simply implicit)[15] is that if Protagoras acknowledges the existence of a denier of his theory, X, then this X has the effect of invalidating the thesis by his very existence, insofar as 'in the case of X', which is to say 'in the world of X', Protagoras' doctrine is not valid.[16] But, as rightly noted by Castagnoli,[17] it is one thing to say 'for X' (as in Protagoras' thesis), quite another to say 'in the case of X' (or 'in the world of X'): in admitting that his thesis 'is false for X', Protagoras is not admitting that X is a case that disproves his thesis,[18] but only that for X an opinion that is the opposite of his own is true. The misleading nature of the metaphor of private worlds is clearly revealed by the fact that the transition from an ineffective relative formulation ('it is X's opinion') to a powerful absolute assertion ('in the case of X') is made possible by the fact that 'in the case of X' is equivalent to 'in the world of X', and — as Bostock has noted —[19] 'the world of X' is not at all relative, but absolute.[20]

I would argue that the same error has also been made by Denyer and Sedley.[21] To buttress Burnyeat's thesis, Sedley first of all attempts to find in the text a way of showing that Protagoras himself accepts the existence of deniers of his theory.[22]

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other: either all opinions, including Protagoras' one, are private, and hence unconditionally true in this dimension (solipsism), or they are simply relative, meaning that every opinion, including Protagoras', will be equally true and false (96–101). See also the objections to Ketchum in Castagnoli 2004, 12.

13 See also Emilsson 1994, 137.

14 Bostock 1988, 91; Fine 1998bis, 150–159; Castagnoli 2004, 17.

15 Thus also Emilsson 2004, 238.

16 A similar thesis is to be found in Polansky 1992, 131.

17 Castagnoli 2004, 16–17; but see, before him, Fine 1998bis, 149, and later — among others — Wedin 2005, 175–78, and Erginel 2009, 28–29, 33.

18 Or, according to the perspicuous formulation by Fine 1998bis, 61, that the opinion denying his thesis is exempt from the rule it enunciates, by virtue of this denial.

19 Bostock 1988, 91.

20 See also Chappell 2005, 113–144.

21 Denyer 1991, 99–100 (but see the criticism in Chappell 2005, 114); Sedley 2004, 49.

22 Sedley reads (with b) τῷ Πρωταγόρα instead of ὦ Πρωταγόρα at line 170b2. I have disputed this reading in Trabattoni 2016, 109–110.

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Having done so, Sedley explains the absolute (rather than qualified) character of Socrates' argument as follows. In admitting the existence of deniers of his thesis, Protagoras is acknowledging that in his world, where everyone speaks the truth, there are false opinions; according to Sedley, it would make no sense to add a qualifier, by stating that in Protagoras' world there are false opinions *in other people's world*.[23] Certainly, this would be absurd; but if we do away with the useless and harmful metaphor of private worlds, and re-establish the genuinely Protagorean way of understanding qualifiers, the absurd sentence '*in the world of* Protagoras there exist false opinions *in other people's world*' turns into one that makes perfect sense: '*for* Protagoras there exist false opinions *for other people*'.

It is interesting to show why the image of private worlds was introduced. The starting idea is that, for purely logical reasons (since the text does not state this), Protagoras must necessarily believe that his own thesis is subject to the rules which it applies to opinion. But if the whole matter is presented in such terms, then Protagoras' thesis becomes subjective, whereas the self-refutation argument only works if it is possible to show that there is at least one aspect which makes this an objective thesis (hence the various attempts made by Burnyeat, Denyer, Sedley, etc.). This error leads to the false problem of understanding why Protagoras does not add qualifiers to his "opinion" (excluding the obvious answer that according to Protagoras this thesis is not actually an opinion). Therefore, it is argued, again erroneously, that we must take the qualifiers to be implicit, even where none are to be found. But here, unsurprisingly, another false problem arises: a Protagoras who diligently applies qualifiers whenever necessary, in accordance with the *desiderata* of some of his more pedantic commentators, risks being a Protagoras who is impeccable on the logical level yet rather weak on the philosophical one: if Protagoras only sought to state not that every opinion is also true in relation to the person upholding it, but merely that someone who upholds an opinion to be true believes it to be such, his thesis would boil down to a tautology. Hence the hypothesis of private worlds: 'for Protagoras' becomes 'in relation to Protagoras', and thus 'in the world of Protagoras'.[24]

Particularly significant is the ambiguousness of the position endorsed by Burnyeat, who wishes to uphold both the 'realist' interpretation of Protagoras' doctrine, so as not to reduce his argument to a trivial tautology,[25] and the rela-

23 Sedley 2004, 59.

24 See Emilsson 1994, 140, drawing upon Burnyeat 1976, 180–182; see also, with similar observations, McDowell 1973, 71; Long 2004, 24–25.

25 Burnyeat 1976bis, 180.

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tivism implicit in the need to supply qualifiers. As sharply noted by Fine,[26] the result is that even the notion of a private world is split into an objective meaning, possibly connected to the Heraclitean flux theory, and a relative meaning, which only applies to private beliefs. Such difficulties stem from the fact that the suspicion of Protagoras' thesis being trivial is unfounded. No doubt, if Protagoras simply wished to claim that the sentence 'p is true for A' only means that 'A believes that p', the triviality would be evident. But if Protagoras instead sought to claim that *every* opinion is such only for the subject, then his argument would not be a trivial one at all. To put it with Fine,[27] the relativism of truth does not only, and trivially, suggest that 'being true for P' means 'being believed by P'; rather, it also suggests that there are no absolute truths.[28] But if this is so, we must also grant (and this is the price to be paid in order to save this position from triviality and tautology) that the thesis according to which every opinion is subjective is understood by Protagoras as being true in absolute terms, and therefore that it is not an opinion. Conversely, the attempt to show that Protagoras' thesis retains its philosophical value even if it is itself an opinion, i.e. even it must be in any case be taken to imply some qualifiers, gives rise to some useless bubbles (such as the metaphor of private worlds), which sooner or later are destined to burst without leaving a trace.

3 Private Worlds and Qualifiers

One drastic way of eliminating the problem of qualifiers from the very root has been suggested by Waterlow.[29] According to this scholar, either Protagoras' thesis is reduced to a 'triviality', whereby every truth is such for someone, or it presents a 'de facto' form of realism,[30] which makes qualifiers superfluous: every position is true not 'for someone' (i.e. subjectively) but 'in relation to someone', because there exists at least one fact that makes it such (as, for instance, in the case of sensation, which Waterlow tends to assimilate to that of opinion). This is an interesting suggestion, because it supports Protagoras' position with an objective element capable of freeing it from trivial subjectivism, without thereby

26 Fine 1998bis, 153 ff.
27 Fine 1994, 140; 1998bis, 143.
28 See Lee 1999, 55 and Lee 2000, 8: the thesis according to which 'being' and 'being for someone' coincide must be understood as bi-conditional.
29 Waterlow 1977.
30 See Silverman 2000, 125 and n. 17.

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raising the kind of difficulties inherent in the idea of private worlds: there are no private worlds within which truth and falsehood are objective, but there is only one world in which different facts make corresponding opinions true or false, and these opinions still remain relative because they may contradict one another. An interpretation of this sort has been extensively and authoritatively developed by Fine, who has connected her explanation of the self-refutation argument with her 'infallibilist' (and non-relativist) interpretation of Protagoras' doctrine.[31] Precisely because, in her view, all opinions are simply true according to Protagoras, Fine is able to account in rather straightforward terms for certain widely debated problems: why the large number of people who disagree with Protagoras constitutes a problem for him, why it is fatal for Protagoras to grant the truthfulness of the opinion that denies his own, why at some point in the text we do not find any qualifiers, etc. As the scholar maintains, it is also true that those arguments which seem weak against relativism prove victorious against infallibilism.

However, this victory is of little account. And the reasons for this are given by Fine herself. First of all, Fine is forced to assign qualifiers — even where they are indeed to be found — very limited significance, which makes them quite irrelevant to the argument. Secondly, and most importantly, if infallibilism were not supported by the flux theory, it would be difficult to uphold, not least because it would risk violating the principle of non-contradiction.[32] Therefore, as Fine herself acknowledges,[33] it really seems too strange that, in developing the self-refutation argument, Plato makes no reference to the flux theory, which he would appear to have previously expounded as his natural safeguard (Plato refutes the flux theory separately a few pages later). But if this point, which ultimately forms an integral part of 'Protagoras' doctrine' (= P), is not addressed, then — as already noted — Plato's refutation becomes largely irrelevant, since infallibilism, when taken in itself without the support of Heraclitean ontology (H), refutes itself without any need for subtle arguments. All this suggests that, against Fine, we should restore the opposite sequence: if H is to support P, understood as I (= infallibilism), yet Plato does not mention H when refuting P, then P must be understood as R (= relativism) and not as I. Still, things are somewhat more complicated than this. The flux theory (H), in its most radical version, is certainly envisaged as a support for P/R. However, P does not entail only a relativism of sensation (what Fine calls *Narrower Relativism*), but also a general relativism of opinions (*Broader Relativism*), which is ultimately the one involved in the self-refutation argument;

31 Fine 1988; see Trabattoni 2018, L–LIV.
32 See Fine 1998, 188, in turn quoting Burnyeat.
33 Fine 1998, 201–202.

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and the reason why in this section Plato does not bring H into play is that H constitutes a justification for NR, not BR (the flux theory can explain why the same wind seems both warm and cold, not why two people have a different opinion on the nature of justice).

4 Protagoras' Thesis and 'Qualifiers'

Against the solution I have just put forward, it might be objected that it does not matter what Protagoras says or does not say about his thesis; what matters is that this thesis has all the appearance of an opinion and that, therefore, whether Protagoras likes it or not, it is subject to those rules concerning opinions that he himself has enunciated. Hence, in claiming that his opinion is true in an absolute sense, Protagoras contradicts himself. But this is not really a pertinent objection, because an argument based on self-refutation only works if one's opponent grants all the premises that apply.

In this regard, it is important to note that the condition in question had been explicitly enunciated by Socrates precisely when he was about to introduce the *peritrope* (169d–e). The argument just presented — Socrates explains — was weakened by the fact that it was based on a premise attributed to Protagoras (i.e. that there are men who are more or less wise) without any certainty that he actually accepted it. Socrates adds that in order for the refutation to prove more effective, it would be more correct to quote Protagoras' own words. What follows is a succinct formulation of Protagoras' thesis, which is not only presented by Socrates as *logos* rather than *doxa*, but — as I have already repeatedly noted — is not even accompanied by any qualifiers. It is difficult to avoid the impression that Plato is seeking here to offer the reader a decisive criterion for assessing the argument which he is about to expound. In other words, what the reader must ask himself is whether it is possible to show that in the *peritrope* argument, unlike in the one previously presented, Protagoras accepts all the premises attributed to him — especially the premise that his own *logos* too is a *doxa*. But the text provides no evidence to substantiate this claim.[34] The premise in question can neither be inferred from what Protagoras says about his thesis (to which — as repeatedly noted — he adds no qualifiers), nor from the way in which he describes

34 Moreover, as compellingly noted by Dorter 1990, 353, if Protagoras were to admit that his theses are opinions like all others, and hence that they only hold for him, this would hardly be compatible with his choice to teach them.

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opinions (i.e. by stating that they are relatively true, whereas his thesis is presented as being true in absolute terms). If the self-refutation argument is fallacious, then, this is not due to the fact that Plato reported Protagoras' thesis by incorrectly omitting qualifiers (as most scholars believe). As we have seen above, this omission is actually perfectly consistent (it depends on the intention to distinguish between opinions, which are always true only for someone, and Protagoras' thesis, which is instead true in absolute terms). But this is precisely what makes Socrates' argument a fallacious one, since Protagoras does not grant that an unqualified thesis constitutes an opinion.

This is the reason why I cannot accept even the ingenious suggestion put forward by Castagnoli 2004.[35] According to Castagnoli, the opinion of Protagoras' opponents does not only suggest that the sophist's thesis is false: an integral part of this opinion is the idea that Protagoras' thesis is false in absolute terms. If, therefore, Protagoras were to counter that this opinion is true only for his opponents, the effect would not be the 'normal' one (given his relativism) of making this opinion relative (as with opinions which do not include an absolute qualification as an integral part), but rather to deny it in absolute terms. Protagoras' opinion, in other words, would suggest that an opinion which presents itself as absolute is absolutely false; hence, it would contradict his thesis according to which no opinion is absolutely false, since all are relatively true. In my view, this argument does not work, because it implies that differences in terms of qualifications (for me, for everyone, for someone) are an integral part of an opinion, when in fact what Protagoras means is the exact opposite: to say that all opinions are true for someone is precisely to say that qualifiers are not relevant in order to grasp the distinctive character of given opinions. By following and partly modifying a suggestion made by Emilsson,[36] largely in agreement with Berelmans,[37] Castagnoli appears to maintain that the 'opinions' of Protagoras and his opponents are asymmetrical:[38] whereas the latter are justified in expressing their opinion in an absolute form, Protagoras is forced to accept their arguments, without being able to resort to any qualifiers, since in order to effectively counter his opponents, Protagoras too ought to express an absolute opinion, which would contradict his basic thesis.

35 Castagnoli 2004. See also Castagnoli 2010.

36 Emilsson 1994; see Castagnoli 2004, 18–19.

37 Bemelmans 2002; see Castagnoli 2004, 25, n. 8.

38 See Emilsson 1994, 141–142.

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One key passage for this reading is 171b1–5, which the aforementioned scholars[39] interpret as follows. The exchange between Theaetetus and Socrates implies, as a matter of fact, that Protagoras accused his opponents of not speaking the truth with regard to a certain thing, and that they refused to admit this. Now, Emilsson and Castagnoli ask: are we to understand that Protagoras *simply* declared the opinion of those who denied his own thesis to be false? Both scholars give a negative answer:[40] for otherwise Protagoras would be contradicting his thesis, according to which there are no absolutely true or absolutely false opinions. Therefore, the two scholars conclude that the Protagorean objection implicit in the text consists in his attempt to defend himself by adding some qualifiers: what Protagoras' opponents do not accept, in other words, is that their own opinion (contradictory to Protagoras') is true *for them* (and hence that Protagoras' opinion is false *for them*).

This strikes me as a rather misleading reading of the text, reflecting a strictly (and ineffectively) 'logicist' general approach. First of all, the two scholars take it for granted that the absence/presence of qualifiers creates a logical problem of which Plato must have been aware;[41] secondly, again on the basis of purely logical considerations, rigid conditions are set with regard to what the text could or could not imply: because 'this' is logically impossible (it would be a 'disastrous admission' according to Castagnoli),[42] then it must necessarily be 'that'. But actually, according to the most obvious and straightforward reading of the text, it is clear that what Protagoras' opponents staunchly uphold, refusing to admit that they might be wrong, is the truthfulness of their thesis — this being the object of Protagoras' implicit accusation. Likewise, and symmetrically, in the following lines Protagoras himself declares that his own thesis is simply true. Indeed, it is difficult to understand why the parallel theses of Protagoras' opponents (i.e. it is not true that all opinions are true) and of Protagoras himself (i.e. it is true that all opinions are true) ought to be true, one in an absolute sense and the other in a relative sense, when Protagoras too presents his thesis as absolute. Berelams acknowledges this in relation to the whole section of the text.[43] However, it may also be inferred specifically from lines 171b4–8, which suggest, if nothing else,

39 Emilsson 1994, 140–142; Castagnoli 2004, 18, and Bemelmans 81–82.
40 Emilsson 1994, 140–141; Castagnoli 2004, 16.
41 See Emilsson 1994, 136.
42 Castagnoli 2004, 16.
43 Bemelmans 2002, 79.

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that the two theses are considered absolutely valid by both parties (i.e. Protagoras and his opponents).[44]

It is possible to reach the correct solution to the problem by arguing that — as I have endeavoured to show — Protagoras does not present his thesis as a relative opinion, which is precisely why he does not apply any qualifiers to it. As far as the passage under scrutiny is concerned, it is an integral part of a textual sequence intended to illustrate the complete asymmetry between Protagoras' position and that of his opponents: a) Protagoras must also grant the truthfulness of the opinion contradictory to his own (171a8–9); b) therefore, he must grant that his own opinion is false (171b1–2). However, this would not prove anything at all, if Protagoras' opponents too were to grant the same thing (for in this case we would have a lack of distinction between truth and falsehood, which would essentially amount to Protagoras' victory). Yet (c = 171b4) Protagoras' opponents grant nothing of the sort — and rightly so, because (d = 171b6–7) Protagoras himself admits that their doctrine is true. Hence, Protagoras (e, = 171b9–c3) must grant that his own opinion is false, whereas that of his opponents is true.

5 Protagoras' Thesis

The possibility of understanding Protagoras' position as I have suggested is confirmed by the existence — both in general and, more particularly, in the Greek philosophical tradition running from Parmenides to Plato — of an 'ontic' meaning of the notions of 'truth' and 'opinion'. According to this meaning, truth is not a variable of opinion, along with falsehood; on the contrary, truth and opinion are two different ways of understanding things, determined by the nature of the object to which they refer: the 'true', in the sense of what is fixed, stable and always self-identical, is the object of truth; the 'opinable', in the sense of what is transient, changing and relative, is the object of opinion. In this respect, insofar as truth is not opinable, an opinion that grasps the truth is no opinion at all.

On the other side, opinion (*doxa*) does not mean here a judgement that can indifferently be 'true' or 'false'; but it means the mobile and unreliable cognitive state that is the opposite of the immobile and reliable cognitive state provided by Truth (*aletheia*). In other words, the background of Protagoras theory is a curious

44 If I am not mistaken, it seems to me that also the solution proposed by Denyer 1991 (who does not go much beyond the mere observation that the universal character of the contrary opinion prevents Protagoras from defending his own thesis with qualifiers, 100) is a simplified version of the one I have been discussing.

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and quite ironical revival of the eleatic opposition between *doxa* and *aletheia*, still operating in the main physical fragment of the Abderite (may be not a coincidence) Democritus: all is by convention but atoms and void. Protagoras' thesis should be understood exactly according to the 'all...but' Eleatic formula: all the statements are equally true and false, except the statement that affirms it.[45]

Regrettably, the fact that most scholars have chosen to focus on the logical argument, regarding it as crucial for an interpretation of Plato's attack on Protagoras, has contributed to obscuring the true nature of the problem. First of all, it may be noted that the logical argument is presented in the text as a second proof — in addition to what has already been stated. Since Protagoras is practically alone in upholding his thesis against everyone else, it may be inferred that this thesis is infinitely more false than true, according to the exact proportion between the people who endorse it and those who reject it. In principle, this would not be a decisive point, for in extreme cases it may be possible — assuming there is such a thing as the truth — that one person is right and everyone else is wrong. But in Protagoras' universe there is no way of telling who is right and who is wrong: while speaking of truth and arguing that his thesis is true, Protagoras announces a 'truth' (everything is opinion, which is to say relative, except my own thesis) that in principle makes it impossible to defend or attack the truth or falsehood of any thesis, starting from his own.[46] What remains to be invoked, then, against or in support of any given thesis? Appearance, as such, has two external points of reference: on the one hand, the subjects to whom appearance appears; on the other, the reality in which appearance is appearance. But if this second point of reference disappears, the only criterion that can help distinguish between two appearances is the former, that of the subjects; and this criterion suggests that Protagoras is wrong as many times as the countless opponents of his

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45 Cfr. G. Leopardi, Zibaldone 452: 'Non v'è quasi altra verità assoluta se non che Tutto è relativo'.

46 See Runciman 1962, 16; Lee 1973, 242 ff.; Chappell 2005, 114–115. Lee's position is particularly interesting. In the key passage, Socrates consciously leaves qualifiers out, for ironic purposes, to show that it must be one or the other: either Protagoras' thesis affirms something philosophically interesting, namely that relativism is true in absolute terms, in which case his theory refutes itself; or Protagoras is presenting his thesis in a qualified way, in which case he is not saying anything worth discussing, but only presenting his own very personal position. I believe that this second horn of the dilemma is the crucial one: whether he adds qualifiers or not, Protagoras cannot claim to be doing anything more than expressing his own opinion, which in one case (with qualifiers) is explicitly subjective, and in the other (without qualifiers) is still unjustifiable. See also Waterlow 1977, 35–36: Protagoras' position is structurally incapable of putting up any resistance.

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thesis, and only right once (170e–171a).[47] For a professional figure who made a living for himself by trying to gain public consensus through persuasion, this in itself constitutes a serious cause of embarrassment.[48]

Since, clearly, this is more a rhetorical than logical-demonstrative argument,[49] terminological subtleties and dialectical virtuosity have no place in it. However, Socrates does not stop at this conclusion, but shores up his argument through a proof bound to achieve a striking effect, insofar as it seems to refute Protagoras' thesis in an economic, elegant and decisive manner. This essentially logical proof requires Protagoras to grant all the premises necessary for the refutation. One of such premises, as we have seen, is that Protagoras agree to include his own thesis (and the converse one of his opponents), among the 'opinions' which it mentions in its formulation (in other words, the sophist must acknowledge that it is a self-referential thesis). As we have seen, the portrayal of

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47 See Newman 1982, 49. Newman wonders why Protagoras ought to admit that his opinion, as a minority opinion, is less true that the majority opinion upheld by his opponents. The answer, I would contend, is that Protagoras' thesis rules out the possibility of formally distinguishing between truth and falsehood, yet without eliminating the distinction between truth and falsehood as such; therefore, the burden of marking this difference must necessarily fall on the quantitative criterion. Based on what has just been argued, I find the way in which Ketchum 1992 presents the qualitative criterion unacceptable (see esp. 101). In his view, Protagoras' relativistic theory implies a redefinition of the concept of truth, according to which there is no such thing as absolute truth or falsehood (whatever the meaning of 'x is y *for* p'); and the refutation must take this into account. Therefore, Plato cannot show, without a *petitio principii*, that Protagoras' thesis is false based on the ordinary notions of truth and falsehood. This is where the quantitative criterion comes into play: the fact that 'man is not a measure more than he is a measure' (100–101) is enough to refute Protagoras. In actual fact, there is nothing in the text that would allow us to credit Protagoras with a reform of the traditional notion of truth, either by analogy with modern three-valued logic systems or on the basis of the thesis according to which nothing is true (92). As we have seen, Protagoras does not challenge the traditional notion of truth, but introduces some distinctive ways of applying it: we have opinions, which are always true (or false) for someone; and then we have meta-opinions (Protagoras' thesis and that of his opponents), which are true or false in absolute terms. Nor must Protagoras fear that, in accepting the traditional notion of truth, he will run the risk of self-refutation: if his is the only non-relative truth, there are no premises on which to base a refutation (and this has nothing to do with solipsism). See Denyer 1991, 98–99; Polansky 1992, 130. In my view, someone who takes this argument too far is Giannopoulou 2013, 89, according to whom Protagoras' doctrine is disproved by the fact that no one at all endorses it, given that Protagoras himself is dead.

48 Things would be even worse if, as suggested by Chappell 2001, 112, 'Protagoras' relativism [constituted] the theory whose practical application is Athenian democracy': when simply put to votes, Protagoras' doctrine fails.

49 Strictly speaking, as shown by Keeling 2015, 68, those who believe that truth is only determined by individual judgements should not worry at all about what others think.

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Protagoras provided in the *Theaetetus* makes any such acknowledgement very unlikely, if not impossible, since he presents his thesis as a simple and far from relative truth. Therefore, the argument attributes this acknowledgement to Protagoras underhandedly, so to speak, by repeatedly employing the expressions 'to opine' and 'opinion' in relation to the sophist's thesis and that of his opponents (170a7, d8–9, e5, 171a9, b6, b11), and by exploiting the natural rather than technical use of language: whatever could these theses be, if not opinions?

Particularly revealing, in this respect, is what Socrates says in lines 171b7–8. Here he has Protagoras acknowledge (based on what he has written, Socrates points out) that he believes a certain "opinion" (that of his opponents) to be unconditionally true (for no qualifiers are added). Now, the Protagoras of the dialogue could never admit anything of this sort. It must be either one or the other: if he believes that a thesis is absolutely true, then it is no longer an opinion; but if it is an opinion, then it is only true for those who endorse it. If Protagoras' thesis is true for him but also in absolute terms, then his opponents' thesis must be true for them but also false in absolute terms. But this shows that neither thesis is an opinion, since according to Protagoras an opinion is always only true relatively to the subjects who uphold it: it cannot become more true (i.e. true in an absolute sense) or more false (i.e. false in an absolute sense). Socrates' logical argument only works because this dilemma (i.e. whether Socrates' thesis and that of his opponents are also opinions or not) is never raised; hence, the idea that, against all appearances, Protagoras must choose the affirmative option is asserted underhandedly. I believe that the doubts that Socrates voices shortly afterwards with regard to the real effectiveness of the arguments put forward (171c10 ff.) derive precisely from this: what Protagoras might say, were he to suddenly rise from the dead, would be more or less the same thing he said when Socrates brought him back to life with his 'Apology', namely that he has laid down in writing that his own thesis is absolutely true (as Socrates himself has him state at 166d1), and hence that his opponents' thesis is absolutely false; therefore, his thesis entails no contradiction.[50]

50 Something along these lines is also argued by Bemelmans 2002, 83–84; I only wish to note that, contrary to what he suggests, Protagoras cannot simply add the qualifiers that Socrates has left out (so as to say that his opponents' thesis is only true for them): if he wishes to prove wise, as the text states, and argue that his truth possesses an absolute character, he must also claim, first of all, that his opponents' thesis, while true for them, is false in absolute terms and, secondly, that neither thesis (his own or that of his opponents) is an opinion. With this, the infinite regress envisaged by Bemelmans (82 and 84) no longer holds, and the logical argument loses its immediate efficacy.

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6 Did Plato Consider *peritrope* to Be Truly Decisive?

I find it revealing that the logical argument is described using an adjective (*kompsotaton*) which often carries a negative meaning in Plato. Actually, it is not uncommon for the latter to make almost sophistic use, so to speak, of arguments that are not logically flawless but which will elicit immediate consensus thanks to the striking contrasts they draw. And I believe that the section of the *Theaetetus* we are dealing with is precisely a case of this sort. Besides, the logical snare,[51] assuming that it works, would not seem to have any decisive influence on Protagoras' behaviour and its practical consequences: regardless of whether there is a contradiction here or not, what is there to prevent Protagoras from in any case believing that he is wiser than all others, and his paying pupils from acknowledging this authority of his?[52] At the risk of overgeneralising, perhaps, we might add that the philosophical problems raised by Plato are too important and too difficult to be solved in this way. After all, we might ask ourselves: if it were true that the logical argument is the decisive passage, why does the refutation of Protagoras not stop here, instead of running on for many more pages (up to 187b)? One might respond: then what is the purpose of the logical argument within the overall economy of the refutation of Protagoras? One first partial answer would be to recall the rhetorical effect I have just discussed. But, obviously, this is more than just that. Even if the only effect of the logical argument were to emphasise that Protagoras cannot regard his own thesis as an opinion like all others (lest he contradict himself), this would be quite enough to put him in a tight spot: for Protagoras would have to stress this distinction without having any means to defend it. What arguments could Protagoras adduce to show that his thesis, which in all respects seems like one opinion among others, is not an 'opinion' but a 'truth' (or, indeed, the only absolute 'truth')?

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51 As McCoy 2005, 38 compellingly puts it: 'Plato does not have a theory of formal logic, but even if one were available to him, it would not suffice for the purposes on this discussion in the *Theaetetus*'. McCoy broadens the field of enquiry to the setting of the dialogue, the profile of its characters (particularly emphasising the fact that Socrates tailors his speech to Theaetetus), their pre-understanding (or even prejudices), the essentially individual nature of Socratic reasoning in Plato, and the irreducible function of persuasion. This is an important hermeneutical step, which I fully endorse and have repeatedly emphasised myself (starting with Trabattoni 1994). However, it does not change the fact that Plato's arguments are intended to be exemplary, and hence that they combine the particular and the universal (see Trabattoni 2017).
52 See Newman 1982, 47–48.

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In sum, in my opinion Plato didn't pretend that the *peritrope* is the refutation of Protagoras. Rather, through this argument he aims at confronting Protagoras with a serious dilemma. When Protagoras says that *doxai* are all we have, he must choose between including his own thesis into the 'genus' *doxa* or not. In the first case, he cannot avoid self-refutation; in the second case, he cannot maintain that all we have are *doxai*.

This takes us back to the only true reason why, according to Plato, Protagoras' position is untenable. Experience shows us that the vast majority of people does not share Protagoras' opinion. Yet this is not a merely formal or statistical majority. If no one except Protagoras is a Protagorean, it is practically certain that the reasons for this depend on the nature of reality, and hence on the way in which human beings experience it. Human experience shows that there are some very good reasons to deny the truth of relativism, without it being possible to adduce any decisive proof. The *Theaetetus* invites readers to embark on this ascent from experience to its conditions of possibility. And what does experience tell us about the relativistic hypothesis? How do passengers in a storm-tossed ship or sick people behave? Do they believe that their opinion on what to do is equivalent to (i.e. equally true as) that of the helmsman or doctor? Is it not the case, rather, that they entrust themselves to such people, in the belief that these experts' opinions are more true than their own? And what does a city do when it establishes some laws? Does it not believe that they will be valid for a long time? Does this not show that the city believes there to be opinions which are more stable than others, and which possess a degree of validity that transcends the constant changeability of things?[53]

It may be objected that these arguments prove nothing on the strictly logical level — and it would be a reasonable objection.[54] But logic, as we have seen, is ineffective against Protagoras. Conversely, the arguments just mentioned at least pose some problems for the Protagorean position. Is there any way at all in which, for example, the two statements 'paracetamol brings your fever down' and 'coffee brings your fever down' can both be true? Naturally, the terrain on which the battle over relativism is fought is a far vaguer one, so one might argue that these are not very pertinent cases. However, as the case of the city shows, it would seem as though the acknowledgement that there is something at least relatively stable, general, uniform etc. (which is more than enough to refute Protagoras' relativism), also concerns the world of men, of their values, and of their institutions. Sceptics and relativists throughout all ages — from the ancient Academics to

53 See Bostock 1998, 94.
54 Burnyeat 1976b, 179.

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Hume and Wittgenstein — have nonetheless had to acknowledge the relative uniformity and stability of nature as a matter of fact, and thus justify it somehow within their parameters: for while it is true that we can do many different things, we cannot do everything, because not everything 'works'. And the idea that it is possible to discover which things work and which don't, i.e. which are useful and which aren't, without there being any sort of criterion, even a rough one, to distinguish truth and falsehood, seems odd to say the least.

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Marcelo D. Boeri

Platonic Epistemology and the Internalist-Externalist Debate

1 Introduction: The *Theaetetus* as an 'Epistemological' Dialogue

It is tempting to suggest that Plato's *Theaetetus* is the founding text for epistemology as an autonomous domain of philosophical inquiry.[1] Indeed, it provides several remarkable discussions about issues that have become classical themes in the epistemological explorations (within and beyond Greek philosophy). If the *Theaetetus* is to be claimed as the work to take epistemology as an autonomous domain of philosophical investigation, this assertion should be nuanced. In fact, it is arguable that Plato's epistemology cannot be understood independently of other disciplines (such as metaphysics and philosophy of language, for example) to which we also tend to give certain autonomy. Even accepting that the *Theaetetus* deals with issues that go beyond epistemology, there has been a patent tendency in the literature to consider this dialogue as a work fundamentally epistemological;[2] to be sure, the *Theaetetus* explores the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge, tries to determine what knowledge is and (probably following and developing the project of the *Meno*)[3] how it differs from, and is more valuable than, true opinion (thus significantly advancing the problem of the *value* of knowledge, an issue that has recently moved to center stage in contemporary epistemological investigations).[4]

Now if epistemology can be characterized as the theory of knowledge and its justification, and if it is certain that (as I intend to argue) the Platonic remarks against the perceptual definition of knowledge go beyond what usually is taken to be epistemology in the sense of the discipline that is concerned with the sources of knowledge, its necessary and sufficient conditions, when one is justified in claiming to know something, etc., Plato's epistemology in *Theaetetus* does

1 This chapter is a partial result of the Fondecyt Project 1150067 (Chile).

2 Polansky 1992, 11–15. Sedley 2004, 18. Ferrari 2011, 10–11.

3 On this see Kahn 2013, 48.

4 Haddock, Millar, Pritchard 2009, 1–2; 14–15; Goldman and Olsson 2009, esp. 21–23. Weiner 2009.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-008

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not look very epistemological from a contemporary perspective.[5] However several arguments provided by the character Socrates in the *Theaetetus* are aimed at showing that knowledge cannot be perception (αἴσθησις) and at highlighting the necessity proceeding to the level of (true) belief/opinion (δόξα), and even to true belief/opinion plus a *logos*. Although all these definitions of ἐπιστήμη are systematically demolished, Plato (through his spokesman Socrates) continues to think that, even in the rejected definitions, there are some ingredients that are significant in the pursuit for knowledge. For instance, knowledge is not perception, but perception, Plato appears to contend, is a necessary condition for opinion (see *Tht*. 161d3–4). Thus, given that opinion seems to be a decisive ingredient of knowledge (otherwise it would not be possible to think of knowledge in propositional terms) and that opinion somehow stems from perception,[6] there is a way in which one should assume that perception is involved in knowledge. Some scholars have argued against the possibility that Plato is willing to endorse the view that there is propositional knowledge; Gerson, for example, notes the contrast between knowledge and belief (as argued by Plato in *Resp*. 5), and claims that such contrast suggests that knowledge is non-representational, but belief (δόξα) involves some kind of representation. As long as propositions represent facts or states of affairs and knowledge is non-representational, then knowledge is non-propositional.[7] Now the thesis that ἐπιστήμη and δόξα are mutually exclusive does not appear manifestly in the *Tht*. where, on the contrary, Plato regards

5 Even though Plato is taken to be a forerunner for the view that knowledge is a justified true belief (*Tht*. 201c8–d1), this definition of knowledge is widely accepted in contemporary epistemology (i.e. if one has a true belief, and such belief is justified, then that belief counts as knowledge; otherwise, it does not). See Davidson 1986, 308, and 2004, 4. Cf. also Fumerton 2002, 206–207, who notes that one should distinguish beliefs about experience (that are justified by the very experience, like in the belief that I am in pain, which is justified by the pain itself) from beliefs of facts, which cannot be justified by perceptual experience. Plato apparently does not make explicitly this distinction, but he arguably should have presupposed it. On this issue see Reeve 1989, 43; Benson 2000, 15. Plato (sadly for many people) also demolishes the definition of knowledge as true belief plus *logos*; a Platonic scholar might argue that it is always hard to know if by *logos* Plato is saying exactly the same thing as 'justification', such as this word is used in contemporary epistemology. However, in so far as in contemporary philosophy it is assumed that an epistemic justification is the reason (or line of reasoning) which warrants the veracity of one's belief or assertion, it seems that Plato is not too far from what contemporary philosophers suppose about this matter. Plato defines knowledge as 'true *doxa* plus a *logos*' in other dialogues, too (*Men.* 98a2; *Prt.* 336b9–c1-2; *Phd.* 76b5–6; 97d–99d2; *Smp.* 202a5–9; *Resp.* 534b3–7). In the *Ti.* 51e5, a dialogue that is supposed to be later than *Theaetetus*, that characterization of ἐπιστήμη reappears.

6 This is almost explicitly said in the text (*Tht*. 179c2–4).

7 See Gerson (2003), 37; 160–161.

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true δόξα and true δόξα plus a λόγος as two plausible definitions of ἐπιστήμη (202c7–8). It is true that these definitions are turned down, but it is arguable that they contain some valuable ingredients that, within the dialogue, are sound in the continuous pursuit of knowledge. In fact, it seems reasonable that, whatever knowledge may finally be, it must be true and since for Plato the primary *locus* of the truth (propositionally, not ontologically understood) is λόγος (*Sph.* 263a-d), and λόγος is tantamount to δόξα, it does follow that knowledge somehow should be related to δόξα.

The view that perception is involved in knowledge is quite clear in the *Phaedo*: we do not get the knowledge of the Equal Itself from seeing sticks or stones that are equal, and despite the Equal Itself and perceptible things that are equal are different, it is from the equal things that one has conceived of and grasped the knowledge of the Equal Itself (*Phd.* 74c7–9). This being so, perceptual items seem to 'trigger', as it were, our recollection of Forms. But the relevance of perception is not less important in the *Theaetetus*,[8] where it is particularly emphasized that sense perception is the way through which human beings come into contact with the external world from the very moment they are born, thus suggesting that αἴσθησις is the first source of knowledge (sensible knowledge) and that human beings perceive all those affective states that, through the body,

8 Where the presence of Forms is at least debatable; for a defense of the view that regards 'the commons' not to be Forms, see the balanced discussion by Ferrari (2002), 160–164. At *Tht.* 185a–e common features oppose to the proper ones, that is, the perceptible contents which are specific to a sense organ (see *Tht.* 185d9–e2: ὄργανον ἴδιον ... αὐτὴ δι' αὑτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ κοινά ... ἐπισκοπεῖν). Thus what Plato must be pointing out is that there is a set of predicates (being, same, other, like, unlike, honorable, dishonorable, good, bad) to which we have access independently of our sense organs, i.e., properties that are not accessible through the body (see Sedley [2004] 106–107; Ferrari [2011] 82–84; Kahn [2013] 63–64). There are several passages in the *Tht.* where Plato appears to refer to the transcendent Forms (although those passages do not refer to the 'commons'); the allusion to 'paradigms' (παραδείγματα) in 176e3 has been seen as an unequivocal reference to the Forms (McDowell [1996] 176). As is well-known, 'paradigm' is a term frequently employed by Plato to refer to the transcendent Forms (*Resp.* 472c–e; 484c; 500e; *Ti.* 27d5–29d3). However, as suggested by Sedley, in the context of the *Tht.* it is clear that Plato is not interested in introducing the doctrine of Forms, but in emphasizing his faith in the absolute goodness of god (Sedley [2004] 79). At any rate, that Plato is *not* alluding to the Forms throughout the *Tht.* is inconclusive; there are some passages where Forms appear to be 'encapsulated', as it were; see, for example, 176a8–b1, where the 'two world metaphysics' is implicitly suggested. The wording 'from here to there' also evokes the famous allegory of the cave (cf. *Resp.* 514a–521b and Sedley [2004] 76–77). On this intricate issue see Casertano (2002), 101–102, n.27, who definitely considers the κοινά to be Forms. Against this view, see Ferrari (2002) and Kahn (2013), 63–64.

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reach the soul (*Tht*. 186b11–c2). If this is so, sense perception should play a relevant role in knowledge; besides, the epistemological arguments supplied in the *Tht*. when exploring what knowledge is (and when focusing on the three main definitions of knowledge that, at any rate, are turned down) show that Plato was certainly interested in debating the matter of knowledge (which in a sense is a truism) and thereby good reasons exist for stating that the core of the dialogue is epistemological in character. But it is Plato himself who extends this 'theoretical' discussion to the relevance that it has at the practical domain.

The aim of this paper is twofold: first, I argue a rather limited point, according to which Plato does not limit his view about what knowledge is to the theoretical sphere, but also takes into account the way in which a description of what knowledge is would work in the practical domain, consequently suggesting that both the theoretical and practical consideration of what knowledge is should be in tune. In addition to other arguments against the perceptual view of knowledge, Plato attacks such a view highlighting the damaging practical implications that the stance that knowledge is sense perception would have in politics and in general in our practical life. Thus not only had Plato not lost interest in issues of ethics and politics in his later years,[9] he was also concerned with stressing the connections between the theoretical and practical realms, thus indicating that the theoretical discussion of knowledge cannot be conceptualized, so to speak, independently of what it means (or the effect it can produce) at the practical level. Second, I would also like to suggest that Plato was aware of the so-called debate about the first and the third person authority in knowledge (such as that distinction, *mutatis mutandis*, is dealt with in contemporary epistemological discussions).[10] Indeed, 'first and third person authority' is not Plato's terminology; I do not mean to suggest that Plato already clearly envisaged or put forward the problem in terms of what in contemporary epistemology is presented as the internalism-externalism debate.[11] My suggestion is more modest: Plato noted (and to some

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9 As observed by Kahn 2013, xv.

10 It is true that, as indicated by Gerson, Plato's account of personhood is not easily represented in the way in which the contemporary approaches consider what a person is. However, as recognized by Gerson himself, 'Plato addresses most of these issues, albeit usually in an oblique fashion' (see Gerson 2003, 5; 37–38).

11 In contemporary epistemology the issue discussed under these labels sometimes makes reference to two approaches that appear to describe two rival theories with regard to the issue of authority in knowledge. Sometimes the contemporary debate over internalism and externalism concerns the formulation of the justification or warrant condition in an account of knowledge: while the internalist requires that, for a belief to meet this condition, all of the necessary elements must be cognitively accessible to the believer, the externalist claims that at least some

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extent apparently endorsed) the view that no one can know better than oneself what oneself is perceptually experiencing when oneself is experiencing it (*Tht.* 160c4–9, briefly discussed below). If this is right, Plato, even rejecting the thesis that knowledge is perception, somehow favors Protagoras' relativist view (every *doxa* is true *for* the person whose *doxa* it is) and, at this specific point, the *homo mensura* thesis understood in this way seems to contain a bulk of truth.[12] Of course, this is highly controversial since the passages where these views are included are supposed to be Protagoras' epistemological theory, not Plato's. This is also disputed, though, because what we actually have in the *Theaetetus* is not what Protagoras really said about knowledge, but what Plato makes him say about it. One can always resort to expressions such as 'Plato argues against Protagoras that', but, as Plato himself indicates (*Tht.* 152a6: οὕτω πως λέγει),[13] what he is doing is to interpret the *homo mensura* thesis that he ascribes to Protagoras, and while developing his interpretation of him, Plato presents what can be taken to be his own 'theory of perception' and the role perception plays in knowledge.

2 Plato's Empiricist Epistemology, the Apprehension of the Evaluative Concepts, and the Authority of Experts

The first and most extensive part of the *Theaetetus* (151e–187a) is devoted to the discussion of the definition of knowledge as sense perception. The fact that Plato

such elements do not need to be accessible to the believer (and eventually cannot be accessible to the believer). Externalists are mainly concerned with accounting for knowledge; but they also consider that they should provide an account of epistemic justification, since justification, they argue, is what should be added to true belief in order to have knowledge. By contrast, internalists are mainly concerned with explaining a sense of justification that captures what is involved in having beliefs that are 'internally' defensible (for details on this issue see Foley 2002, 180), which means that the internalist assumes that he/she is able to provide an explanation of his/her own belief that is internally defensible.

12 The Protagorean thesis, as observed by Burnyeat 2012a, 5; 2012b, 27 and Bostock 2005, 108, can be read either as 'all judgments whatever are true' (the strong reading) or as 'all judgments of perception are true *for* the one who is experiencing a particular sense perception' (the weak reading that implies that the measure doctrine is false for Protagoras' opponents but not for Protagoras himself; Burnyeat 2012b, 29).

13 And as usually happens, 'to ascribe him a position is to run into controversy' (Burnyeat 1990, 37).

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dedicates so much space to this first view is probably indicative of his interest in neutralizing the perceptual stance from the very beginning of the debate (implicitly suggesting from the start that one should come out of the perceptual domain in order to advance in the pursuit of knowledge). At the same time his concern in this view also evidences the relevance that perception has in knowledge. Even before the first definition of knowledge as perception we learn that the subject that will be discussed is knowledge (*Tht*. 145e–146a; 146c); but the dialogue is not limited to elucidating the nature of ἐπιστήμη in purely definitional terms. In the *Theaetetus* both the figure of Socrates and the question-answer method of investigation (the feature that characterizes the so-called 'dialogues of definition') reappear. Besides, we meet Socrates again as the main interlocutor; these characteristic features of the *Theaetetus*, which bring it closer to the early dialogues of Plato,[14] somehow show why this could not be a text in which Plato has proposed establishing in a positive way what knowledge is. Even though none of the three definitions of ἐπιστήμη turns out to be a proper response to the question 'what is ἐπιστήμη?', that does not mean that the whole dialogue has been pointless. Having acquired the conviction that one should not believe what one actually does not know, is not a minor achievement; on the contrary, this is one of the major accomplishments of *Theaetetus*.[15] If that is a real accomplishment (as apparently it is), it permits one to doubt about oneself, and especially about what one thinks to know (thus removing one's own epistemic arrogance). Additionally, one might think that Plato is implicating that, if ἐπιστήμη could be defined, it would become a doctrinal object of inquiry, which is the same thing as saying that knowledge does not require further investigation. Yet that sounds strongly anti-Platonic, for not only has Plato pointed out to us that philosophical beliefs can be modified by

14 Among other Socratic features in the *Theaetetus* one might list the following: the aporetic ending of the dialogue (an open ending that I don't take to be a 'failure'), the question 'what is knowledge?' (which will govern all the rest of the discussion and that will never be properly answered), Socrates' avowed ignorance (*Tht*. 157c–d; 210c), his emphasis on the requirement of coherence (154d–e; 200d), the idea that refutation constitutes a form of self-examination (155a; 181c; 187c), and the vivid description of Socrates as he who encourages the art of bringing to birth people's thoughts (148e–151d).

15 At *Tht*. 166b–c and 210b–c it is 'socratically' suggested that the final result of the discussion was to achieve a better dispositional state, such state being not to think that one knows what one actually does not know (this is explicitly acknowledged by Theaetetus when he says that, thanks to Socrates' dialectic, he was able to say more than he had in himself; 210b6–7). See also Pl. *Sph*. 230c–d, where it is stated that the soul will have no benefit from what is learned unless the person has eliminated the opinions that are impediments to what is learned, and such a person is 'purified, believing he/she knows just what he/she does know and nothing else' (this is 'the best and most moderate of states').

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argument, he also maintains that in order to modify our beliefs by argument we first need to transform the state of our own soul (so one can be able to understand the strength of someone else's argument when another person is presenting a reasonable objection to one's own view).

Now even though the *Theaetetus* has a very 'Socratic flavor', there is mention neither of the recollection nor of the method of hypothesis (such as those striking accounts related to the knowledge appear in the epistemological passages of the *Meno* and of the *Phaedo*).[16] But this is easily explained in the context since the *Theaetetus* looks like a dialogue where metaphysical concerns were eliminated[17] and Plato seems to be examining what happens when one builds up a theory of knowledge from an empiricist perspective. Although it is debatable whether there are Forms in the *Theaetetus*,[18] it is pretty clear why Plato does not talk about recollection in this dialogue: if the empiricist view is reasonable (at least *ex hypothesi*), it appears that innatism cannot be endorsed.[19] However, innatism does not constitute a serious objection to the empiricist view (hypothetically) supported by Plato in the *Theaetetus*; in fact, one could think about a capacity innatism (understood in terms of 'innate dispositions' to form certain kind of notions). If one accepts that in the *Theaetetus* Plato is exploring (not necessarily supporting) the possibility of an empiricist epistemology, one should expect the process of concept formation to be explained as a result of sense experience, i.e. a concept in one's mind is the consequence of having perceived a material object endowed

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16 In addition to the Plato contending that Forms are already present in our souls before our perceptual experience, there is an 'empiricist Plato', i.e. the Plato of the *Theaetetus* who argues that our soul (or as he puts it, 'the molded lump of wax in our souls') is empty, and it is a sort of *tabula rasa* on which our experience writes (*Tht*. 197e2–3).

17 Kahn 2013, 47–50; 53; 86.

18 I tend to think that Forms are not present in the *Theaetetus* (or their presence is mitigated). Even if one accepts that in the *Theaetetus* Plato revises the epistemology of the *Republic* and that the *Ti.* (which, like the *Republic*, entails that the objects of knowledge are Forms) must be dated earlier than the *Theaetetus* — as suggested by Bostock 2005, 1–31; 146–155, I would not consider that this is a serious impediment for continuing to treat the *Republic* as the 'typically Platonic' epistemological model. One might consider that in the *Theaetetus* Plato proposes a thought experiment that depicts how the things would go without assuming Forms as the ultimate, infallible criteria and as the proper objects of knowledge (if this is so and the *Timaeus* is later that the *Theaetetus*, Plato did not abandon the 'theory' of Forms). The result is the perplexing end of the dialogue.

19 This did not prevent from making an innatist reading of the *Theaetetus* in the Antiquity (see the Anonymous commentator on the *Theaetetus* as discussed by Sedley 1993, especially 126–132).

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with perceptible qualities. Unfortunately, even though it is clear that Plato suggests that practical notions such as just and unjust cannot be attained through perception (this showing once more that knowledge is not perception), he does not provide an account about the way in which those practical notions are formed. However, if when one is a little child one's soul is a sort of blank slate ready for writing upon, one should suppose that the process of concept formation should be explained as a result of sense experience.

The view that our soul is empty at the very beginning of our lives is introduced when Socrates invites Theaetetus to consider, *for the sake of argument* (λόγου ἕνεκα; *Tht.* 191c8),[20] the soul as if it were a wax block. This model is presented as a new argumentative strategy in order to attempt to account for false opinion; the crucial role is played by the combination of memory and perception: in fact, error will be explained when the current perception and memory are related to each other. Thus the knowledge one has of something can be explained when one remembers it, i.e. when one previously has a mark or an imprint of such something in one's soul (one's soul being an imprint-receiving piece of wax which is able to receive the impressions one is experiencing), and when such imprint coincides with perception. Perception turns out to be a process that imprints on the soul the marks, and such marks or signals produced by our impressions represent memory, 'the mother of the Muses' (*Tht.* 191d). At this point false opinion can be explained when a new perception is made to coincide with a wrong mark, such as when the knowing subject sees an unknown person and changes what he/she is seeing for a known person, person of which he/she already had a mark in his/her wax block, and hence he/she remembers him or her. As it can be noted, this is just an *error of recognition*, such as the one who puts his shoes on the wrong foot (*Tht.* 191d). The wrong identification occurs because the current perception does not fit into the right imprint; we record in the wax block (i.e. in our soul) all what we want to remember when imprinting it on the block. It is important to recall that what we record in the wax block can be either something empiric (such as what we have seen or heard) or non-empiric (such as those things we have conceived or thought; see 191d5: ἴδωμεν ἢ ἀκούσωμεν ἢ αὐτοὶ ἐννοήσωμεν). The traces or marks recorded in the block can be identified with memories and pieces of knowledge and the value of such traces varies according to the quantity and the quality (191d; 194c–195a). The possibility of error is also

20 The restriction 'for the sake of argument' seems to suggest that Plato is not willing to support the empiricist approach, but attempting to exploit it within his thought experiment (in case that the *Theaetetus* in fact is a thought experiment and the 'true' Platonic epistemology is the model that favors the presence of Forms as the real objects of knowledge).

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explained due to the quality of the wax, although the excessive distance with regard to the perceived object is mentioned as cause of mistakes as well (191b; 193c). This is Plato's example: I know Socrates; but I see someone else whom I don't know, some distance away, and think that person is Socrates, whom I know. In accordance with the wax block model, this occurs because my remembered images of Socrates are too inaccurate and that is why confusion is produced. Thus, false opinion is the wrong combination of what one knows, what one remembers, and what one perceives (*Tht.* 192a–194b). In sum, what Plato wants to emphasize by making use of the wax block model is that in the case of things we do not know and have never perceived, there is no error or false opinion (this way showing how relevant perception is so as to explain the error of recognition). According to his argument, it is in the domain of what we both 'know' and 'perceive' that opinion turns about and vacillates, coming to be false as well as true: true when it brings together the proper stamps 'directly and in straight lines'. By contrast, opinion comes to be false when it does so obliquely and crosswise. All this discussion shows why, in the framework of his 'empiricist version of the origin of knowledge', Plato can say that the 'receptacle' (i.e. our soul) is empty when we are children.[21]

This argument about the error of recognition shows again that, even though knowledge is not perception without qualification, perception is a very relevant ingredient as a necessary condition for opinion. Nevertheless, as suggested above, the perceptual view involves harmful consequences that go beyond what is true or false at the theoretical level; it is true that, as argued by Plato himself in his refutation of the first definition of knowledge (186c–e), *episteme* cannot be perception because knowing something requires grasping the οὐσία and the

21 The explicative scope of the wax block model is limited since it is not able to explain error when memory and perception are not at stake (see *Tht.* 195c-e). It is the case of the confusion existent between the number 11 and 12 in the addition '7+5=11'; the wax block model is finally rejected because it only limits itself to false opinions about objects of perception, and Socrates notes that it is necessary to account for conceptual error, such as '7+5=11'. Read this way, this argument can be taken to be another reason against the perceptual view of knowledge. On this see Burnyeat 1990, 120; Sedley 2004, 138–139 argues that the wax model fails insofar as it is not able to explain a mistake when perception is not involved (this is the view I follow here). On his part, Aronadio 2016, 214–215 (in part following Narcy 2013, 120) states that the problem with the wax model is that it has a 'structural limit' which goes 'beyond the simple extension of its explicative capacity'. According to him, the wax model furnishes an account of cognitive processes based on the wrong assumption that such processes are developed from the relation between perception and memory. Aronadio's point (as far as I can see) is that the contents of perception are not the object of a simple mirroring of sensory data, but that, thanks to their preservation in memory, the soul already operates at the pre-judicative level of the identification of τὰ κοινά.

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truth, but perception cannot do that. This allows Plato to proceed to the discussion of knowledge in the domain of *doxa* ('opinion' or 'judgment'), what the soul does when 'it is busying itself, by itself, about the things which are' (*Tht*. 187a5–6; transl. Levett). Several pages before the rebuttal based on the fact that perception by itself does not grasp being nor can it grasp truth (a view that evokes *Phd*. 65b–c), Plato shifts the bulk of the debate to focus on the practical implications that the definition that knowledge is perception would have in politics and in our practical life in general. If items such as justice and injustice, honorable and dishonorable, good and bad, etc., do not have *by nature a being* (φύσει … οὐσία) of their own (*Tht*. 172b4–5) and there is no certainty about what justice or injustice is, what seems to be to a community becomes true at the time when it seems so and for as long as it seems so (*Th*. 172a1–b5).[22] In these kinds of cases nobody, neither an individual nor a political community, is wiser than any other. In Plato's view this is the same as arguing that evaluative concepts lack the stability that one, even from a common-sense viewpoint, would demand of a particular action in order to label it as being *strictly* 'just', 'good' or 'honorable'. The point seems to be that for *A* (*A* being a kind of action, such as 'a just action') to be 'strictly' just, *A* should be just invariably and in all the cases (i.e. for something to be *strictly*[23] *A* is for it to be *intrinsically*, and hence in all the cases and circumstances *A*).[24] Thus those concepts must have *by nature* a being of their own; if not,

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22 Most of these concepts (with the exception of just and unjust) are listed among the 'commons' (τὰ κοινά; *Tht*. 185c9–10; 185e1; 186a8) and are examined by the soul in its own right without the concurrence of the senses; in the context it is clear that Socrates' purpose is to make Theaetetus admit that the soul does not need the senses to examine 'the commons'. The soul has two ways of doing its examination (either through a corporeal power or by itself; 185a-e), and when its examination is carried out through a bodily power, it will not be able to perceive qualities common to two sensations that come from two different sensory organs. By contrast, when the soul examines what examines by itself (τὰ μὲν αὐτὴ δι' αὑτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ ἐπισκοπεῖν; 185e6–7), the properties that it apprehends are common to all perceptible objects (185c–186a). Although it captures such common properties through a sense (such as touch; 186b3), what it perceives is not something sensible in the strict sense, since it perceives *through touch* 'the hardness of what is hard and the softness of what is soft' (186b2–4; it's a way of saying that the body is the instrument of the soul. See *Phd*. 79c3). Both hardness and softness are common to all sensations of hardness or softness, but neither hardness nor softness are hard or soft in a strictly perceptible way.

23 In Plato's jargon 'by nature' (φύσει; *Tht*. 172b4).

24 This is, in a manner, endorsed by the Forms which guarantee that being really *F* is the notion of being *F* in a way that does not depend on one's viewpoint and the specific circumstances in which the object at stake is. The problem in the *Theaetetus* is that, as indicated above, the presence of Forms is at least debatable; however, the same line of argument is provided by Plato at *Cra*. 386b–d (where certainly there are Forms), when Socrates attacks the conventionalist view

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it will be impossible to determine what really is honorable or dishonorable, just or unjust, pious or impious. If so, the thesis that knowledge is perception (such perception being what appears to each person) might lead a ruler to decide what is just and unjust in terms of what merely appears to him/her to be so, that is, in terms of a purely psychological criterion. Moreover, if evaluative notions cannot be cognized (or, said more broadly, cannot be apprehended) through the senses, this argument turns out to be also helpful to prove that even the relativist reading of the Protagorean view is turned down.[25]

At this point it may be interesting to recall that Plato is entirely aware of the difference between descriptive and evaluative concepts: at *Phaedrus* 263a6–10 he states that when someone says the word 'iron' or 'silver' everyone has the same thing in mind, but when one says 'just' or 'good' everyone disagrees, not only with one another but also with oneself. In the framework of the *Theaetetus* what this shows is that those sorts of items cannot be distinguished through merely perceptual criteria, especially when those criteria are closely associated to one's appearance of what something is. In my view, Plato's position not only emphasizes that items such as justice or injustice have their own being — a being which is (or should be?) independent of the individual appearance —, but also points out that the fact that we are unable to grasp cognitively what is just or unjust through perception does not necessarily mean that it is impossible to know items of such a kind. What this actually proves is that those sorts of items cannot be cognized through perception, and one of the teachings of Plato's rejection of the first definition of *episteme* is that what one should endeavour to do is to mitigate (albeit not necessarily to remove as it is impossible to eliminate the sensitive components of our nature) the influence of perceptual factors when attempting to capture the being of evaluative items.[26]

Now if the being of items such as just or unjust cannot be grasped trough perception, the argument furnished in *Tht*. 186c–e shows why the perceptual thesis should be abandoned and the debate must proceed to the level of opinion. As

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by objecting to the Protagorean tenet (he uses a similar argument there when stating that the being of things cannot be private to each one, but things have their stability in their own right; 385e–386a). For a complete discussion of this topic see Adalier 2001, 2–4; 21–22; 34–35, who favors the view of Cornford (regarding the presence of Forms in the *Theaetetus*) and shows the difficulties of explaining certain forms of knowledge (such as grammar or arithmetic) without the presence of Forms.

25 See above, n. 11.

26 Interestingly, Kahn observes that in depriving the sensory experience (πάθημα) of any conceptual content, Plato opens a window for a radical attack against empiricist epistemology (Kahn 2013, 65). But Plato avoids doing this task in the *Theaetetus*.

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just pointed out, Plato also can be suggesting that the fact that we cannot know what is just or unjust through sense perception does not necessarily mean that it is not possible to know that kind of notions. It only means that, even when sense perception plays a decisive role in knowledge (when what one is trying to do is to know something belonging to the sensible domain), the knowledge of those evaluative items does not require the presence of perception. Moreover, one might speculate that Plato, insofar as he maintains that moral judgements are objects of knowledge (and thereby such judgements make statements capable of truth or falsehood), is the most remote antecedent of a 'cognitivist' position; in fact, he explicitly does state that whenever one thinks that something is dishonorable (αἰσχρόν) instead of honorable (καλόν), then one is really opining or judging falsehoods (ἀληθῶς δοξάζει ψευδῆ; *Tht*. 189c5–7), which implies that it is likely to say that something in fact is honorable or just. The core of the passage, I think, is that when someone says that something that is honorable is dishonorable or that something that is dishonorable is honorable, one is making a false judgment because the being of something cannot be identical to the being of its opposite.[27] If it were, there would not be two different things but only one thing; besides, inasmuch as Plato rejects the thesis that identifies the individual being of something with the individual appearance, he clearly points out that if someone says '*A* is good' and another says '*A* is bad', (*A* being the same action), only one of the two must be formulating a true judgment, not both. This kind of argument proves, once more, that knowledge cannot be perception (*Tht*. 151e1–3), since perception is 'appearance', that is, what appears to be so for someone (φαντασία, φαίνεται; 152b11–c1). It is another way to assert that one's perceptual appearances cannot be a proper criterion for knowing what a practical notion is and for showing that such kind of notions cannot be captured through perception.

27 Besides, this coincides with the way in which Plato characterizes what is true and false: a statement that says of the things that are that they are, is true; by contrast, a statement that says of the things that are that they are not, is false (Pl. *Cra*. 385b7–8, *Sph*. 263b4–9; see also Arist. *Met*. 1011b26–28). Famously in the *Sph*. the example of true statement (*logos*) ('Theaetetus is seated') is the one saying (of the thing to which it refers) what it is *as it is*; the false statement ('Theaetetus, with whom I am now conversing, flies'; *Sph*. 263a2–9) says things different from what they are (i.e. it says what is not as if it were). According to Kahn, even though it is possible to construe the clause in this way (i.e. 'it [a statement] says about you the things-that-are as they are', such construal would be unsatisfactory, given the parallel ὡς ὄντα in the formula for falsehood at *Sph*. 263b9, d2. Kahn proposes to read ὡς in a declarative sense: 'that it is'. However, if 'being seated' or 'flying' describe predicates which refer to a state of a person, the modal value of ὡς seems to be the correct one. For a similar reading of this clause see Fronterotta 2013, 208–209.

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Plato believes, though, that there must be a criterion to correctly distinguish what is just from what is not (of course, 'just', 'honourable', 'good', etc. are typical examples of Platonic Forms — see *Phd.* 65d; 75c-d; *Resp.* 475e; 476a–b; 479a; *Prm.* 130b–e —, in a dialogue where the presence of Forms is at least debatable). That he is speaking in terms of 'criterion' is pretty clear in the text, where Plato provides his interpretation of Protagoras by saying that what appears to each person, is so *for* each person (*Tht.* 152a6–8).[28] If this is so, no one is in falsehood, since what appears to me, is so *for me*, and what appears to you, is so *for you*, too, regardless of the fact that my appearance and yours are in conflict with regard to the same thing.[29] This is supposed to be Protagoras' relativist *and* subjectivist view,[30] or rather Plato's version of what he takes to be Protagoras' stance, which, according to Socrates' approach in the dialogue, involves an extremely subtle

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28 It should be noted that, when discussing Protagoras' view, Plato is cautious enough to underline that each person is a criterion for himself/herself of items such as 'cold', 'not cold', 'slightly cold', 'very cold' (152b), 'white', 'heavy', 'light' or anything of that sort (178b4–5). He clearly is privileging sensible qualities (and different intensities of those qualities), as is required by the perceptual view of knowledge. However, as already indicated, it is Plato himself who stresses that the scope of the dictum 'as things appear, so they are' can be extended beyond the perceptible domain (172a1–b5; 178a5–10).

29 Plato links the perceptual thesis with Protagoras' epistemology (*Tht.* 152a6–b3), and proceeds to ascribe to Protagoras 'a secret doctrine' (152c) which, actually, is a version of the view that everything is changing all the time, an approach usually associated to Heraclitus by Plato (Pl. *Tht.* 152e; *Cra.* 402a8–10; 411b–c). Burnyeat 1990, 39 asserts that 'the *real* Protagoras didn't hold the subjectivist thesis' (my italics), since 'he was a relativist who maintained that every judgement is true *for* (or in relation to) the person whose judgement it is'. His point is that, although the *homo mensura* thesis introduces a form of relativism, Protagoras' relativism cannot be the 'crude relativism' that assumes that Protagoras is defending a subjectivist rather than a relativist thesis. If the Protagorean view were a 'subjectivist thesis', Protagoras would be fully endorsing the stance that every judgment is true *absolutely*, not merely true *for* the person whose judgment it is (regardless of the fact that what appears to me is opposed to what appears to you and the object that yields those appearances — the wind — is the same object). Protagoras' stance, Burnyeat contends, does not violate the law of non-contradiction by relativizing perceptible properties to each perceiver; Burnyeat, 2012a, 4–5, and 2012c, 283–285. Interestingly, Fine notes that if Protagoras is an infallibilist (as she thinks he is), it is clear why he welcomes a Heracleitean ontology: if everything is changing all the time, conflicting appearances can be *absolutely* true without contradiction (see her 2003, 190). Although I find Burnyeat's view quite convincing, Fine's remarks at times are persuasive, too. Perhaps a reasonable way out is to follow Burnyeat 2102a, 5 n. 3, and to think that, when ascribing both infallibilism and relativism to Protagoras, Aristotle and Sextus Empiricus were right (of course, an additional problem is to determine whether they really ascribe to Protagoras both infallibilism and relativism).

30 See the previous note; against the perceptual relativism (ascribed by Burnyeat to Protagoras) Fine has defended an infallibilist reading (see her 1996, 106; 2003, 186–190).

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consequence (κομψότατον, *Tht.* 171a6) that finally weakens it: if Protagoras acknowledges that what everyone believes is in fact the case, he is acknowledging that the belief (οἴησις) of those who have an opposing belief to his own belief — the people who believe that Protagoras' belief is false — is true. Thus, if Protagoras acknowledges that the beliefs of those who consider that he is in falsehood are true, he should recognize that his own belief is false. Consequently, given that the others do not recognize that their beliefs are false and Protagoras does recognize that *all* opinions are true — including, of course, those beliefs opposed to his own opinion —, he should recognize that his thesis that each one is the measure of all things cannot be true, neither for anyone else nor for Protagoras himself (*Tht.* 171a6–c7).[31]

But the character Socrates, unlike Protagoras, thinks that some people are wiser (or rather 'more competent': σοφώτερος) than others (179b), and through the example of the doctor (and other experts; *Tht.* 178b–179b), Plato attempts to show the weakness of the Protagorean tenet by pointing out what can be considered to be a sort of performative contradiction: if the view that man is the measure of all things is true, it must follow that each one *in himself/herself* will be the criterion of each thing (τὸ κριτήριον *ἐν αὑτῷ*), since one believes that things are such as one is experiencing them (οἷα πάσχει) and hence one believes that they are true *for* oneself (ἀληθῆ τε οἴεται *αὑτῷ*; *Tht.* 178b5–7).[32] But if this is the case, each person will have in himself/herself the criterion of what *will happen* (τῶν μελλόντων ἔσεσθαι; 178b8–c1). However, the criterion of a layman cannot have the same value as the expert's criterion (in Plato's example, the doctor; one might guess that the implicit suggestion is that if one is ill, one does call a doctor, not

31 The interpretation that Protagoras' thesis is self-refuting goes back to Sextus Empiricus (*M.* 7.389–390), although, as suggested by Burnyeat, the subjectivist thesis probably was not held by the "real" Protagoras (Burnyeat 1990, 28–31; Burnyeat 2012a, 5–7, and above n. 28).

32 The word κριτήριον can be rendered in different but related ways: 'authority' (McDowell 1996, *ad loc.*); 'criterion' (Levett 1990, *ad loc.*); 'misura per giudicare' (Valgimili 1999, *ad loc.*); 'yardstick' (Chappell 2005, *ad loc.*); 'criterio' (Ferrari 2011 *ad loc.*). The example of the doctor and the layperson suggests that 'authority' may be the best interpretation for κριτήριον, but 'criterion' also can be a good choice, since the expertise of the doctor shows that his criterion for deciding that the statement 'this person *will have* fever tomorrow' is more reliable than that of the layperson. The other examples provided by Plato (that of the wine-grower, the musician, and the cook) are in line with the physician's example in the sense that their predictions, albeit not necessary, are more reliable.

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someone who knows nothing about medicine).[33] From this it follows that it is not true (at least not necessarily) that each one is a correct criterion, but some people are more competent than others (179b), which also implies that the expert's judgments *regarding the future* — if indeed such a person is in possession of a real expertise, i.e. if such a person is a real expert —, are likely to be true and those of the layman, on the other hand, are likely to be false. Thus the Protagorean dictum by itself implies that Protagoras himself must admit that some people are wiser than others and thereby this implies a distinction both in knowledge and in truth (171b–c).

The question here could be why a relativist and subjective criterion could not be reliable, and a reasonable answer probably is that first-person attributions often are merely based on no evidence at all. However, a person never loses his/her especial claim to be right.[34]

3 Internalism and Externalism in Plato. Concluding Remarks

If what I suggest is reasonable, one could think that the Protagorean thesis is grounded on the assumption that what the person senses or feels is unquestionable (at least for the individual at stake when he/she is feeling or perceiving what he/she is perceiving), and that Protagoras' approach, as interpreted by Plato, seems to favor the first person view in knowledge, i.e. the idea that one's mind has a privileged access to its mental states (a philosophical debate that in the last century most likely is related to the work of G. Ryle).[35]

This is an approach, I claim, that goes back to Plato, who in a memorable passage of the *Theaetetus* (160c4–9), when discussing Protagoras' stance, argues thus: (i) what acts upon me (τὸ ἐμὲ ποιοῦν; a sweet object, for example) is for me and not for anyone else (in fact, it is I who perceives, feels or is affected by such

33 Aristotle cites this argument with approval to show, like Plato, that everything that appears can *not* be true and that, therefore, the mere (and subjective) appearance is not a reliable criterion (see *Met.* 1011a17–34; cf. also 1010b11–14, where Aristotle cites Plato's example of the doctor to show that he has more authority than the layman: ἡ [*sc.* δόξα] τοῦ ἀγνοοῦντος).

34 On this see Davidson 2001a, 4–6. Davidson's remark that a person continues to claim that he/she is right, even though his or her claim is challenged or overturned, is reminiscent of the Platonic view that nobody is willing to believe that what he/she believes is false (see below n. 42).

35 Ryle 2009, 137.

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an object, so nobody else can experience the sensations or affections I am experiencing). (ii) If this is so, my sense perception is true for me insofar as it is *always* of my own being (i.e. of myself; τῆς γὰρ ἐμῆς οὐσίας ἀεί ἐστιν). Thus (iii), in accordance with Protagoras, I am the judge of the things which are for me, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not.[36] In the *Theaetetus* this is presented as Protagoras' view about knowledge; at this point my hunch is that, even when noticing the difficulties of the Protagorean argument, Plato finds some appealing aspects in the perceptual thesis that, in any case, he finally rejects. This is the way in which Socrates elaborates the conceptual framework that makes possible the assumingly Protagorean reasoning that each individual is the judge of the things which are for him/her, that they are, and of things which are not, that they are not (160c).

In order to explain this Socrates argues in this way: (i) there is a infinite number of active and passive factors; (ii) when one thing mixes at one moment with one thing and at a different moment with another, it will not produce the same effect each time but different effects. (iii) If this is applied to us, one could realize that, for example, 'Socrates ill' and 'Socrates well' are different states of the same entity (Socrates), and, according to (ii) when anyone of the active factors finds Socrates in health, it will be dealing with "one Socrates" and when it finds him ill, with 'a different Socrates'. Now, if Socrates drinks wine when he is healthy, the wine *appears* (φαίνεται) *to him* pleasant and sweet (159c11–12; after all, what is active and what is passive, 'moving simultaneously', produce both sweetness and perception), but when the same active factor (e.g. wine) finds Socrates ill, he is not exactly the same person. Thus, both Socrates (ill) and the draft of wine generate different things: a perception of bitterness on the tongue and bitterness coming to be and moving with regard to the wine. But the wine, Plato underlines, is not 'bitterness', but 'bitter', and the person is not 'perception', but 'percipient' (οὐκ αἴσθησιν ἀλλ' αἰσθανόμενον; 159e4–5). (iv) Hence the subject will never become *thus* percipient of anything else, since a perception of something else is another perception, and makes another and a changed percipient. But what acts upon the subject, when meeting with another person, cannot yield the same effect since such effect depends both on the active factor (the wine) and on the state

36 As already pointed out above, according to some interpretations (even those coming from Antiquity), this is supposed to be Protagoras' relativistic *and* subjectivist view (for Protagoras' stance understood as a perceptual relativism, see n. 28 above, Burnyeat 1990, 11–17 and 2012a, 4; for Protagoras' thesis as a form of infallibilism cf. Fine 1996 and 2003). An important aspect of the *homo mensura* view is the meaning of ἄνθρωπος in it (*Tht*. 152a3); I do not intend to engage in that discussion here (for details see Polansky 1992, 79–81; Chapell 2005, 57–59; Ferrari 2011, 39–46, and more recently Gavray 2013, 26–30 and T. Robinson 2013, 6–8).

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in which the person is (healthy or ill). (v) The following step of the argument underlines that perception is an 'intentional item', i.e. when the subject *S* becomes percipient, he/she becomes percipient of something (160a–b), and when the perceived object becomes sweet or bitter, it must become so *for somebody*. Then both what perceives and what is perceived 'are or become for each other, for our being is by necessity tied to a partner' (160b6–7). So, whatever it is that we are or what we come into being, we (as percipients) are in a reciprocal relation to the perceived object. Therefore, it cannot be said that something is or comes into being in itself and by itself.

The reason a Platonic knower has for thinking that there is an extra-mental object (the wine) having such and such properties (sweetness, bitterness) is that the person at stake is having a perceptive experience of such sort, but this can take place because there is a mutual relation between the perceptible and the perceiver. Let me explain myself better: when a person comes to be perceiving, such a person necessarily comes to be perceiving something (and this is so because it is not possible to be perceiving and at the same time to perceive nothing). As indicated above, whenever a determined item comes to be sweet or bitter, it necessarily comes to be so *for someone* (*Tht*. 160b1–3). The knower or perceiver and the known and the perceived are, respectively, related to each other, 'since necessity ties our being together.' Hence if one says that something *is* or *comes into being*, one must say that it is or comes into being for someone, or of something, or in relation to something. Thus, whenever there is perception, there is a perceived object, and if perception is of something and the properties attributed to that something are for someone, it follows that a particular state of perception can be really ascribed to a percipient only with regard to a particular object. Similarly, a particular quality can be really attributed to an object only with regard to a particular percipient, i.e. there would be individual instances of perception and individual qualitative instances, since it would not be possible to perceive a different thing in the same way in which a particular object is perceived at a determined moment. It would not be possible to perceive the same thing in the same way at different moments, either. And this is so because, according to the view of the permanent flux, *both* the object and the subject are permanently changing (*Tht*. 154a).[37] The perceived object and the perceiving subject are what they are

37 This can be the way in which Plato conflates his ontology of the 'middle' dialogues (*aistheta* are subject to a continuous change, *eide* are not subject to change) and Heraclitus' doctrine of the permanent flux as applied to the relation between the perceiver (who is in different affective states, for example, when he/she is ill or healthy, at t^1 or $t^2...t^n$) and the perceived object (which is also changing all the time).

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and come into being what they come into being when they are in reciprocal relation; that is, they cannot be what they are or come into being what they come into being independently of what happens to the other term of the relation. That is why 'we are tied to each other': whatever it is that we are or what we come into being, we are in a reciprocal relation. We are not what we are in relation to some external thing to this relation or by ourselves in a manner that is separate from that relation. Therefore, it cannot be said that something is or comes into being in itself and by itself: if something is or comes into being, it is for someone, of something, and in relation to something.

All of this, in some manner, explains once more why each person is the best authority on which he/she is currently experiencing when undergoing a perception of the appropriate sort. To be sure, all this refined analysis of perception can be understood as Plato's reading of the *homo mensura* thesis, such as that thesis is attributed to Protagoras earlier at *Tht*. 152a (and later at 160d, and again at 161e when, in reformulating Protagoras' *dictum*, Plato says that 'each one is the measure of his/her own wisdom'). But of course we have the right to suspect that this discussion about the relation among what is perceived, what perceives and the result of this (i.e. perception) is a fine elaboration of Plato, who even rejecting the strong view that knowledge is perception, must continue to accept that perception plays a relevant role in the account of how a human being 'enters' into the world, deals with the perceptible things (that is, certain extra-mental objects, i.e. items different from his/her private mental states), and conceptualizes such perceptible things through language in order to distinguish a perceptible particular thing from a kind of thing.

Now even though Plato is not willing to identify knowledge with perception, he takes seriously the role that αἴσθησις has in knowledge. One could invoke at least two reasons for this: (1) Plato emphasizes the fact that both human beings and beasts are naturally able to perceive, as soon as they are born, all those affective states that through the body reach the soul.[38] Later (in the case of humans) calculations (ἀναλογίσματα), regarding their being and their benefits, come with some difficulty (μόγις) requiring some time through effort and an educative process (*Tht*. 186b11–c5). Thus, the first contact humans have with the world is through sense perception, so it must have some relevance in the cognitive formation of a human being insofar as perception contributes to the formation and

38 This is an idea developed at length in the *Phlb*. 33d–35d, where Plato attempts to explain memory as a preservation of perception (perception being an affective experience — πάθημα — that has penetrated both the body and the soul). On this detail allow me to refer to Boeri 2018, 159–161.

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development of one's rationality. (2) Second, in the *Tht.* 201a, after the long digression on false opinion, the proper refutation of the view that knowledge is true opinion starts. Socrates argues that rhetoric shows that knowledge cannot be true opinion because, even though rhetoricians do not teach, they persuade and make people think what they want (the upshot of teaching is knowledge, that of persuasion is mere opinion). So, when a jury is persuaded of some matter, which only an eyewitness could know, it comes to its decision upon hearsay, forming this way a true opinion. This means that the jury has decided the case based on a true belief but without knowledge (201b–c), but the jury could not have done that if true opinion were the same thing as knowledge; the argument shows that the jurymen were *persuaded* of the "correct" verdict but *do not know* it is correct. However, the implication here seems to be that what happened at the scene of the crime can only be known by an eyewitness.[39] For example, if just an eyewitness can 'know' determined facts, it should be understood that knowledge of a robbery entails the direct testimony of the senses. By contrast, the right opinion of a jury is an indirect knowledge; this being so, perception (i.e. one's own perception), after all, although it cannot be identified with knowledge, has a certain authority and to some extent seems to play a role in knowledge. And this is so because the testimony of an eyewitness turns out to be crucial for the jury's decision as long as it is what prompts the decision or what makes the jury reach a verdict on a specific criminal act.

But one may suspect that there is a problem here: first, after the battery of arguments provided by Socrates in the first part of the dialogue, my guess is that nobody would be willing to assume that Plato does endorse the view that perception is knowledge, not even an 'indirect or weak knowledge.' Nowadays an eyewitness (or at best several eyewitnesses) continues to be relevant to judge a case based on testimony. But sense perception is not a reliable source of knowledge for Plato[40] (in addition to the fact that he has rebutted the stronger thesis that 'knowledge *is* perception'). Moreover, let us suppose that what a person saw was correct in terms of 'perceptual evidence': Mary actually saw Peter breaking the window of the jewelry store and taking the jewels that were displayed there. However, Peter may not have done that to steal the jewels, but rather to save an employee of the jewelry store that was trapped by a fire inside. From Mary's perspective (i.e. from the place Mary is looking at Peter while he is smashing the jewelry's window), she could only see that a person (Peter) was smashing a window and

39 On this detail cf. Burnyeat 1990, 124 and Ioppolo 1999, LVI–LVIII.

40 One of the arguments against the perceptual view is that the senses can be wrong and are able to disturb the mind and cause perceptual delusions (*Tht.* 157e).

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taking a few items that she thought were jewels. While seeing this, Mary assumed that Peter was stealing the jewelry; however, one should say that what Mary really saw was someone smashing a window and taking some objects. She did not see a robbery. If Mary had paid attention to what Michael said (whose viewing angle was different and, in addition to seeing that Peter broke the window and took the jewels, also saw how Peter saved someone from the fire), she would not have concluded that, since Peter broke the window and took some objects (probably jewels that eventually were an impediment to saving the person trapped in the fire), Peter stole the jewels.

I am aware that the jury passage in Plato's *Theaetetus* is highly controversial;[41] my discussion of the passage is rather modest and it intends to emphasize that if one reads this and another sections of the text as the exercise of philosophical research Plato carries out in his examination of knowledge, one might suspect that he supports the view that first-person introspective reports are relevant due to their privileged status. But Plato also notices the limitations of the first-person perspective in knowledge: my suggestion at this point is that someone else's sight is crucial to the way in which, according to Plato, a person cognitively tackles the knowledge of the world. In his view, introspection (understood as the support he apparently confers to the first-person view) does not warrant real knowledge (or does not do that in all the cases). As noted above, in the case of knowledge of evaluative concepts, first-person privileged access can be seen as an ingredient that limits the effort for establishing what justice is as a notion entailing certain impartiality and a correct assessment of the concrete situations capable of surpassing a private and subjective criterion. If this is so, even though Plato seems to recognize the authority of the first person in knowledge — especially when the matter is focused on what is going on in the person himself/herself in terms of his/her private mental states particularly related to the affections a subject is experiencing — the first-person authority cannot be a reliable criterion for establishing what is the case beyond the private mental states. In the *Tht*., when discussing the first definition of knowledge as perception, Plato just concentrates on the first-person authority and shows why the person who is undergoing what he/she is experiencing has a complete authority on his/her sense experience (*Tht*. 160c4–9). In contemporary terms, this coincides with the internalist view, which defends first-person authority and contends that each person knows what he/she thinks without having to appeal to a knowledge that

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41 Burnyeat 1990, 124–127; (Burnyeat's interpretation is critically examined by Trabattoni 2016, ch. 3); Aronadio 2016, 229–232.

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justifies what he/she 'knows.' In this way, one knows what is in one's own mind in a manner that nobody else can know.[42]

But even within the *Theaetetus* (where Plato seems, in a way, to favor an internalist perspective when discussing the Protagorean tenet) it is obvious that he was aware of the limitations of one's own perspective when stating what the case is: one believes what one does believe because one believes it to be true (in fact, nobody admits that his own belief is false; *Tht*. 171a6–7; b1–5, and especially 200a3), but one's belief *can* be false.[43] This, if taken as an implicit objection to the first-person authority in knowledge, matches with the externalist view that maintains that the contents of one's propositional attitudes (such as beliefs) are partially determined by factors of which the person having such beliefs may not be aware and which cannot be reconciled with first-person authority.

Maybe the fact that the people usually are not able to notice and properly handle their own (unconscious) biases regarding what is true lead Plato to consider that this seriously restricts first-person authority from dealing with things beyond the domain of an individual's own mental states. So despite one having authority over one's own private mental states (one's own beliefs, sensations, and so on), they are not enough to affirm that which is effectively the case with regard to what is different from one's own affective states. Furthermore, in the framework of his rejection of the perceptual view Plato also makes it clear that the limitations of the first-person approach must be linked to the perceptual definition of knowledge. Thus, such limitations to some extent point out why the first-person view should be overcome or at least *complemented* by the third-person perspective, this third person being the person who examines or objects to one's beliefs. As recognized by some epistemologists nowadays, there are probably reasons to endorse both the first and third person perspectives, depending on the emphasis one wants to underline.[44] If one's aim is to evaluate truth from the perspective of evidence accessible to the believer, one should endorse internalism. By contrast, if what one has is the epistemic sub-goal of evaluating truth

42 Davidson 2001b, 197.

43 This important observation is present everywhere in Plato; see *Alc. I* 113b8–11; 117b–118a; *Chrm.* 166d–167a; *Sph.* 228c–d. See also the remarkable passage of *Phlb.* 48e where Plato provides examples of people who falsely believe to know themselves and unavoidably fall into self-deception (on self-deception in Plato, see also *Cra*. 428d and *Resp*. 426d4–6).

44 Although Bonjour 2002, 259–260 claims that both the internalist and externalist approaches are legitimate and that 'there is no compelling reason why one has to be chosen in preference to the other', he recognizes that, even being 'reconciliatory', he would like to insist that there is a clear way in which an internalist approach continues to have 'one fundamental kind of priority for epistemology as a whole'.

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from the standpoint of cognitively relevant processes that may be inaccessible to a believer, one should support externalism.[45]

At this point it would be helpful to briefly turn to *Alcibiades I*, a dialogue whose Platonic authorship has been disputed.[46] This dialogue adumbrates the view that first-person authority, albeit crucial in certain respects, is not enough in order to establish what it is the case with regard to the things that are different from one's psychological states. The Socrates of the *Alcibiades I* is focused on self-knowledge and states that the better example we have for understanding the meaning of the injunction "know thyself" is that of sight (132d2–3). If the inscription advised our eye as if it were a human being and said to it "see yourself", the injunction would be advising that our eye look at something in which it could see itself (132d7–8). The artifacts in which one can see and reflect oneself are mirrors, but also the other's eyes, as the other's eyes can work as mirrors: when one looks at someone else's eye, his/her face appears in it, like in a mirror. This is the pupil, which works as a sort of image (a 'miniature') of the person who is looking (133a2–3). Then an eye — in contemplating another eye and looking at that which is the best part of it, the part with which it can see (i.e. the pupil) — could see itself. Thus, when one sees someone else and looks at what is the best in this someone else, one could see oneself and hence know oneself. The interesting remark that this account makes is that one cannot see himself unless it be through someone else's sight (*Alc. I* 133b7–10).

Now one might object that Plato's Socrates is the champion of first-person authority inasmuch as he usually declares to be aware that he is not wise at all, and that he is aware that he knows nothing (Pl. *Ap.* 21b4–5; 22c9–d1). But since Socrates finally seems to know something (i.e. that he knows nothing), and his knowledge allows him to examine other people's (putative) knowledge, one should assume that his cognitive superiority is based on third-person authority viewpoint. In fact, at *Ap.* 21c Socrates claims that poets, because of the knowledge they have, thought themselves to be very wise people in other respects too, which

45 I am aware that there are different varieties of internalism and externalism. My description of those approaches is crude and very general, but it is helpful for the sake of my purposes in this paper. Some varieties of internalism are discussed by Goldman 2002, 3–23, who also provides a sustained critique of it.

46 Some scholars forcefully challenge its authenticity, notably Smith 2004 and, more recently, Renaud & Tarrant 2015, 38; 46; 267, even though they declare that they intend 'to explore the hypothesis that the dialogue may be interpreted along the same lines as any other dialogue of Plato' (5). Others tend to take *Alc. I* to be authentic (Annas 1983, 114–115; Pradeau 2000, 20–29; Denyer 2001, 14–26). Gerson 2003, 14, n.1 is more cautious and prefers not to take a strong position on the authenticity, although he tends to *accept* its authenticity.

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they were not. So, Socrates' advantage over them was the same he had over the politicians: he does not know, but he does not believe to know either. This is the perspective a person can have when the first-person point of view is overcome, and self-deception is removed (or at least vigorously weakened). This argument actually depicts one of the central tenets of Plato's *Apology* when he describes what the tradition took to be Socrates' *docta ignorantia*. But, as pointed out above, in the *Theaetetus* Plato was aware of the limitations of one's own perspective when establishing what the case is (171a6–7; b1–5; 200a3). The problem, in fact, is that one's belief can be false, so the challenge should be how to find a reliable criterion for determining if one's belief is true.

I hope that the above discussion has shown that, although Plato's *Theaetetus* is an 'epistemological' dialogue, the epistemology developed therein includes topics that nowadays are not considered to be really epistemological. This, though, does not undermine the Platonic epistemological project, but does present a wider notion of what knowledge is. Knowledge, Plato apparently contends, must mean that the cognition of both perceptible and non-perceptible things[47] should be considered (in the *Theaetetus* he seems to support the view that knowledge of the sensible domain is possible,[48] a tenet that should be contrasted with *Resp.* 477a3–5; 529b7–c1, where the possibility of knowledge of the sensible domain is explicitly precluded). If these non-perceptible items (that should be encompassed in the definition of what knowledge is) are evaluative concepts such as "just" and 'beautiful', Plato's epistemology in the *Theaetetus* goes beyond the theoretical realm of discussion dealing with descriptive items. I also hope that I have been persuasive enough and provided some reasons to show that, even though Plato does not speak of 'first and third person standpoint" in knowledge, he might have had in mind both the advantages and disadvantages of emphasizing one of those viewpoints in examining self-knowledge and the knowledge of the other things (including the other selves).

47 These non-perceptible things are significantly represented by evaluative concepts in the *Theaetetus*.

48 If one agrees with Burnyeat 1990, 52–53, who seems to favor 'Reading B' (which, to some extent, entails an acceptance that, *ex hypothesi*, Plato is suggesting that there can be knowledge of the sensible domain).

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Xavier Ibáñez-Puig
‘We Are What We Eat’. The *Theaetetus* as a Philosophy of Education

1 A Tasting Menu

Upon Theaetetus’ proposal that knowledge is perception, Socrates examines what this statement might mean with him. As the subsequent characterization of perception is puzzling, Socrates asks the boy:

> Do these doctrines seem pleasant to you, Theaetetus, and do you find their taste agreeable (καὶ γεύοιο ἂν αὐτῶν ὡς ἀρεσκόντων)? (157c1–2)

And since Theaetetus doubts whether Socrates defends the doctrine that he has just expounded sincerely or wants to put him to the test, Socrates adds:

> You forget, my friend, that I myself know nothing about such things, and claim none of them as mine, but am incapable of bearing them and am merely acting as a midwife to you, and for that reason am uttering incantations and giving you a taste of each of the wisdoms:[1] καὶ παρατίθημι ἑκάστων τῶν σοφῶν ἀπογεύσασθαι (157c5–d1).

Twice, Socrates compares the doctrines considered throughout the conversation to delicacies that he gives his young interlocutor to try. The chefs, whose dishes he serves to the hard-working boy one after another, are undoubtedly the most renowned, with Protagoras as a true ‘Ferran Adrià’ at the peak of his wisdom.

Needless to say, in his usual diet Theaetetus often consumes nutrients provided by Theodorus’ teaching, although he also seems to have tried creations by the eristic cooks every now and again, among the many other *delicacies of the soul* that the *Theaetetus* as a whole, serves up to us in a sophisticated tasting menu.

The alternatives that Socrates presents to provoke Theaetetus’ reflection are part of the method that Socrates uses to refute them, in order to place the young on the right track. The fact that he appeals to his interlocutor’s ‘taste’ rather than to his intellectual powers to judge properly, together with his calling them

1 I am aware of the fact that the expression is often translated as ‘the wise men’.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-009

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'encantantions' clearly indicates, at least to the reader of the *Gorgias*,[2] that Socrates is in his ironic mood at considering first impressions and (irrational) inclinations.

2 A Varied Menu at Wisdom's Table

From the passage just quoted, it is immediately understood that, at least in this context of the *Theaetetus*, there does not seem to be *wisdom*, in the singular, but *wisdoms*, (as I take it, instead of 'wise men') in the plural. It is no hard task to make a list of all the characters that receive the title of 'wise' in the dialogue. Let us quote the passages in which the description is explicit, where it is always Socrates speaking:

1. On midwives: 'Well, have you noticed this also about them, that they are the most skilful of matchmakers, since they are very wise (ὡς πάσσοφοι οὖσαι) in knowing what union of man and woman will produce the best possible children?' (149d5–6). Regarding his own skill as a midwife of souls: 'I have handed over many of them to Prodicus, and many to other wise and inspired men (ὧν πολλοὺς μὲν δὴ ἐξέδωκα προδίκῳ, πολλοὺς δὲ ἄλλοις σοφοῖς τε καὶ θεσπεσίοις ἀνδράσι).' (151b3–4)
2. Regarding the conception of reality as an everlasting flow:

   > And on this subject all the wise men, except Parmenides, may be marshalled in one line (καὶ περὶ τούτου πάντες ἑξῆς οἱ σοφοὶ πλὴν Παρμενίδου συμφερέσθων) — Protagoras and Heraclitus and Empedocles — and the chief poets in the two kinds of poetry, Epicharmus, in comedy, and in tragedy, Homer.' (152e1–4).

3. On Protagoras: 'while we were honouring him like a god for his wisdom (ἐπὶ σοφίᾳ), he was after all no better in intellect (εἰς φρόνησιν) (...) than a tadpole' (161c6–d1), since tadpoles are also endowed with senses and, according to Protagoras, these are infallible; an argument that also applies to the 'pig,

2 As it is well known, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates regards cooking not as an art but just as a certain 'experience at bringing about gratification and pleasure' (462e–463a). The problem is that cooking 'has slipped into the guise of doctoring, and passes itself off as knowing the best foods for the body'. If there were a contest between a cook and a doctor the latter would die of starvation (464e). Socrates declares this is 'shameful' for it 'makes guesses about what is pleasant in the absence of what is best', and has no speech to give about the nature of the things it makes use of, and cannot state the cause of any of them (465a).

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a dog-faced baboon or some still stranger creature of those that have sensations'. (161c4)

4. On Theaetetus: 'So I must attack the wise Theaetetus (ἐπὶ τὸν σοφὸν Θεαίτητον) again.' (162c1)
5. On the eristic: 'He would have charged down upon hearing and smelling and such senses, and would have argued persistently and unceasingly until you were filled with admiration of his greatly desired wisdom (τὴν πολυάρατον σοφίαν) and were taken in his toils.' (165d3–e2)
6. About 'those who have knocked about in courts and the like from their youth up': 'but they think they have become clever and wise (δεινοί τε καὶ σοφοὶ).' (173b2)
7. Finally, about the profession that refutes the identification of knowledge in itself with true opinion: 'The profession of those who are greatest in wisdom (ἡ τῶν μεγίστων εἰς σοφίαν), who are called orators and lawyers.' (201a6)

The list of characters that are *explicitly* qualified, thus, as 'wise' includes all the following names: midwives, Prodicus, Parmenides, Protagoras, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Epicharmus, Homer, the gods, pigs, tadpoles, dog-faced baboons or some still stranger creatures of those that have sensations, Theaetetus, the eristic, those who have knocked about in courts and the like from their youth up, orators and lawyers.

It is obvious that the context in which some of these statements appear makes it clear that the label is ironic. And yet, it is still true that Theaetetus has, not a single example, but a plurality of different cases before his eyes, when, at the beginning of the dialogue, he sets out to investigate what true knowledge and genuine wisdom might be alongside Socrates.

Incidentally, we would gain nothing privileging a model of wise man over others *from the outset*, because in doing so we would give our answer in advance instead of leaving – as the art of the midwife demands – that it be the boy himself who, with hard work, should shed some understanding on the matter.

So, when at the beginning of the dialogue, we begin to investigate who we should grant the title of 'wise' to — whether it be the sophist or the mathematician, the poet or the speaker, etc. — the investigation is confronted at its starting point with certain confusion, because what is said with respect to knowledge and wisdom seems like a motley set of divergent stances to the inexperienced eye.

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3 Two (or Maybe Three) 'Philosophers'

It is therefore tempting to suppose that, in the face of such an entanglement of wisdoms, and given that Socrates recognizes himself precisely as being sterile in wisdom (ἄγονός εἰμι σοφίας, 150c3), only he should appear on the scene as a legitimate candidate to occupy the position of philosopher. However, and against such temptation, philosophy is not one singular figure in the *Theaetetus* either.

In fact, as with "wisdom", the word "philosophy" also appears in the plural in the dialogue. In the passage in question, Socrates points out the following observation to Theodorus:

> And that makes me think, my friend, as I have often done before, how natural it is that those who have spent a long time in philosophies[3] (οἱ ἐν ταῖς φιλοσοφίαις πολὺν χρόνον διατρίψαντες) appear ridiculous when they enter the courts of law as speakers.' (172c3–5)

This passage sounds even more significant when we realize that Theodorus is not referred to as wise once throughout the whole dialogue, while on the other hand, he is *explicitly* considered a philosopher.

It is Socrates himself who recognizes Theodorus as being one of those who forms such part of the band of genuine philosophers; a recognition with which Theodorus, incidentally, identifies himself with pleasure. The passage where this occurs is at the centre of the dialogue. After characterizing those who frequent the courts, Socrates asks Theodorus if he wishes they proceed to 'describe those who belong to our band' (173b3), to which Theodorus answers affirmatively, and adds: 'I like your saying that we who belong to this band (ἡμεῖς οἱ ἐν τῷ τοιῷδε χορεύοντες) are not servants of our arguments.' (173c1) To which Socrates replies: 'Very well, that is quite appropriate, since it is your wish; and let us speak of the leaders (περὶ τῶν κορυφαίων); for why should anyone talk about the inferior philosophers (φαύλως διατρίβοντας ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ)?' (173c5–6).

What follows in the text is the so-called 'digression of the philosopher', which tells of a philosopher who, just like Thales as he appears in the eyes of a young Thracian servant girl (174a4–b1), deals with Heaven and Earth but knows nothing about men's struggles for social reputation, status and pleasures.

In this context, it is therefore obvious, that we have not one but two models of philosophers in play:

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3 I take the phrase literarily, though it could be understood as referring to those who spend a long time on 'philosophical studies' (Cornford 1935, *ad locum*) or 'pursuits' (McDowell 1973, *ad locum*).

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1. Thales and Theodorus deal with Heaven and Earth but know nothing of men’s ordinary worries;
2. Socrates deals with men but, according to the *Apology*, knows nothing of Heaven and Earth.

Theodorus, who is Protagoras’ friend, seems to be quite afraid of offending him and not really ready to seek the truth, while Socrates, who regards himself as one of those simple (φαῦλοι) philosophers,[4] seems to satisfy his own description of the philosopher at disdaining ordinary human affairs,[5] and at focusing on the universal, as he inquires and exerts himself to find out what a human being is and what his proper nature is (174b).

Can one of the two models alone suffice itself to educate boys like Theaetetus properly?

In fact, since the two appear in a text written by Plato, there may be a third possibility, *a third philosophy* that dialectically subsumes the other two. For, are not Theodorus and Socrates two ways of thought that must be simultaneously overcome and integrated into a superior vision of knowledge and wisdom? Is not Plato himself, then, the philosopher who gives us a third model, one that integrates Thales’ manner of philosophising and Socrates’ manner of philosophising into one higher entity? Dialectics is supposed to be universal in its content and in

4 The term φαῦλος is used twelve times in all the dialogue and almost always indicates that the others (Protagoras’ theory implicit in Theaetetus’ definition of knowledge as perception, the theory of Heracliteans and the battle between the Heracliteans and the Parmenidians) are not simple (φαῦλοι) while Socrates is so. Indeed: (1) at 151e1. Socrates observes that the definition of knowledge as perception is ‘not a base (φαῦλον) doctrine’ because it is the same that Protagoras said; (2) at 152d2, Socrates prepares to outline another important doctrine (οὐ φαῦλον λόγον) — namely the Heraclitean doctrine; (3) at 179d5, and confirmed by Theodorus at 179d6, Socrates observes that the battle between Heracliteans and the Parmenidians is not insignificant (οὐ φαύλη); (4) at 181b1–4 and referring to this battle, Socrates proposes that if neither side is eventually able to speak with measure (μέτριον) then both he and Theodorus – comparatively simpler ones (φαύλους ὄντας) — would make fools of themselves if they purported to have said something better; and (5) at 197a3, Socrates says that if he were a naysayer (ἀντιλογικός), he would give up the inquiry but that as they are simple (ἐσμεν φαῦλοι) he will persist in his attempt to define knowledge. (1), (2) and (3) demonstrate that the important doctrines are those of the others, while (4) and (5) show that Socrates always philosophises ‘in a simple manner (φαύλως)’ (173c6).

5 See 174b4–6: ‘For really such a man pays no attention to his next door neighbour; he is not only ignorant of what he is doing, but he hardly knows whether he is a human being or some other kind of creature.’

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its method. The philosopher's mind flies in all directions (πανταχῇ πέτεται) below the earth and above the sky; he investigates every nature thoroughly of everything that is, each in its entirety, never lowering itself to anything close at hand καὶ πᾶσαν πάντῃ φύσιν ἐρευνωμένη τῶν ὄντων ἑκάστου ὅλου, εἰς τῶν ἐγγὺς οὐδὲν αὑτὴν συγκαθιεῖσα (173e–174a).

Let's leave this question for the moment and go back to Socrates. Too simple (φαῦλος) to profess any wisdom, he himself has comically suggested that his role is that of the dietician who gives Theaetetus dishes that the different cooks of wisdom have elaborated to be tasted. Plato gives us a clue to determine the nutritional value of each of these dishes for the soul of the young, by suggesting (1) that the wise resemble their doctrines and (2) that the disciples resemble their teachers. The result being that everyone becomes what his soul consumes or — if you'll allow me the naturist joke — that we are what we eat.

4 The Wise Resemble their Doctrines

To begin observing this phenomenon, let's consider the materialists, the Heracliteans and the Parmenideans.

4.1 The Hard Resistant Rude Materialists

Let's start with the materialists. When he sets out to clarify some of the consequences that follow on from Protagoras' thought, Socrates begins by warning Theaetetus against the materialist interpretation of perception with these words:

> Look round and see that none of the uninitiated is listening. The uninitiated are those who think nothing is except what they can grasp firmly with their hands, and so deny the existence of actions and processes and all that is invisible. (155 e3–5)

To which Theaetetus replies: 'Truly, Socrates, those you speak of are very hard (σκληρούς) and resistant (ἀντιτύπους).' (155e6–156a1)

And Socrates agrees, adding that, 'they are very rude (ἄμουσοι).' (156a2)

So that,

1. The materialist doctrine maintains that only that which we can grasp with our hands exists, i.e. the corporeal, the hard and resistant; and
2. Materialistic thinkers turn out to be like the reality as they conceive it; namely: rude, hard and resistant.

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4.2 The Hyperactive Heracliteans

Later on, Socrates alludes to the battle of great proportions that has taken place on the question of mobility or immobility of the real. Theodorus grants Socrates the benefit of examining it, with this portrait of the Heracliteans:

> Certainly we must [examine Heraclitus' doctrines]. For it is no more possible, Socrates, to discuss these doctrines of Heraclitus (or, as you say, of Homer or even earlier sages) with the Ephesians themselves — those, at least, who profess to be familiar with them — than with madmen. For they are, literally, in perpetual motion; but as for keeping to an argument or a question and quietly answering and asking in turn, their power of doing that is less than nothing; or rather the words 'nothing at all' fail to express the absence from these fellows of even the slightest particle of rest. But if you ask one of them a question, he pulls out puzzling little phrases, like arrows from a quiver, and shoots them off; and if you try to get hold of an explanation of what he has said, you will be struck with another phrase of novel and distorted wording, and you never make any progress whatsoever with any of them, nor do they themselves with one another, for that matter, but they take very good care to allow nothing to be settled either in an argument or in their own souls, thinking, I suppose, that this is being stationary; but they wage bitter war against the stationary, and, so far as they can, they banish it altogether. (179e2–180b3)

According to this,
1. Heraclitus' doctrine maintains that everything moves in all the senses of the word 'movement'.
2. And the Heracliteans fight determinedly (πάνυ πολεμοῦσιν) to be pure movement themselves. They constantly break the conversation's development (ἐπὶ λόγῳ) with enigmatic aphorisms; they completely reject a fixed meaning of words; their speech does not follow any fixed course nor does it lead us anywhere, but it is lost in an aimless, restless, pure flow of reason; and, in short, they and their discourses are similar to reality as they conceive it, because they fight incessantly so that there is nothing stable in either their speeches or in their souls.

4.3 Noble Parmenides

Finally, the reference to the Parmenideans is very brief: upon concluding the examination of the flow's supporters, Socrates, despite Theodorus' encouragement to examine Parmenides and his doctrine as well, refuses to carry out this examination with the following arguments:

> Because I have a reverential fear of examining in a flippant manner Melissus and the others who teach that the universe is one and motionless, and because I reverence still more one

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> man, Parmenides. Parmenides seems to me to be, in Homer's words, 'one to be venerated' and also 'awful' ('αἰδοῖός τέ μοι' εἶναι ἅμα 'δεινός τε). For I met him when I was very young and he was very old, and he appeared to me to possess an absolutely noble depth of mind (παντάπασι γενναῖον) (183e3–184a1).

The transition from the plural ('Melissus and the others who teach that the universe is one and motionless') to the singular ('Parmenides, one') seems comically meaningful. In a sense it also may seem 'comic' that there should be 'many' 'moving' for the thesis about the 'immobile' 'One'.

Parmenides is 'one to be venerated and also awful'. It is at the beginning of *Odyssey* VIII that Homer tells us how the goddess Athena modifies Ulysses' aspect so that he appears as 'one to be venerated and also awful' in the eyes of the Phaeacians (verse 22). Since Ulysses is not really 'one to be venerated and also awful', but only seems so, perhaps the comparison that Socrates makes of him with Parmenides is somewhat ironic. In any case, how does Parmenides appear in Socrates' eyes?

Absolutely noble throughout, presented as an ecstatic and unique figure, worthy of admiration, Parmenides seems to be regarded as someone similar to the doctrine he defends:

1. According to Parmenides, only Being exists, and is therefore round, immobile, finished, perfect, and noble from beginning to end.
2. According to Socrates, Parmenides also seems to be noble, apparently to the point that he refuses to say anything about him (is it so because we would risk succumbing to the movement of words and betraying the truth of this unique sage who can only be welcomed in a silent vision full of respect and fear?). In any case, Socrates says that he is afraid that they may not understand his words and what they mean (184a).

4.4 The Wise Men and their Doctrines

The three examples that we have just considered allow us, therefore, to establish that the *Theaetetus* as a whole seems to suggest, not without a certain amount of humour, the following: *those who profess a doctrine tend to resemble, in a sense, the doctrine they profess or provoke reactions that are somehow connected to them. The Heracliteans become maniac and Parmenides is not to be discussed (wandering mortals with their resounding ears and tongues know nothing).*

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5 The Disciples Are like their (Wise) Teachers

Now, perhaps it is generally true that everyone who professes a doctrine teaches it and, therefore, has disciples. Regarding this point, the *Theaetetus* also seems to suggest, again with a good dose of humour, that just as wise men resemble reality as they conceive it, *their disciples*, in turn, *resemble them*. Let's consider the different cases the dialogue presents.

5.1 The Twisted Fraudulent Ones

There are young people who have had the courts as teachers. Of them Socrates says that to him they seem, 'when compared with those who have been brought up in philosophy and similar pursuits, to be as slaves in breeding compared with freemen' (172c7–d1). Socrates describes the effect that life in the courts has on the souls of those who have grown up frequenting them, in the following terms:

> They have been deprived of growth and straightforwardness and independence by the slavery they have endured from their youth up, for this forces them to do crooked acts by putting a great burden of fears and dangers upon theirs souls while these are still tender; and since they cannot bear this burden with uprightness and truth, they turn forthwith to deceit and to requiting wrong with wrong, so that they become greatly bent and stunted. Consequently, they pass from youth to manhood with no soundness of mind in them, but they think they have become clever and wise. (172e5–173b2)

Such young people are educated, therefore, by the tortuous practices to which they devote themselves, and this also causes their souls to twist: their bent and stunted souls make them take for wise and upright what is truly distorted and petty.

5.2 The Docile Geometers

At the polar opposite of the Heracliteans, unable to follow an argument, Theaetetus appears docile and obedient to Socrates, despite his initial reluctance to converse with him. Theodorus himself laments the untamed Heracliteans' manic excesses, and — whether out of contempt or cowardice — he seems reluctant to intervene in the conversation at all times. Thus, restraint and unwillingness to expose themselves in dialectical battles seem to be traits shared by the master and his disciple.

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In truth, this impression is confirmed by Socrates himself when, at the beginning of the *Sophist*, he says that all the disciples of Theodorus are, without exception, similar in their docile and kind character. In effect, when the Eleatic Stranger demands an interlocutor that is tractable and gives no trouble, Socrates declares: 'Well, you may choose whomever you please of those present; they will respond pleasantly (πρᾴως) to you.' (217d3–4)

Those who are present, leaving aside Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger, are Theodorus and his disciples. Socrates invites the Stranger to converse with Theaetetus; perhaps to see if the educational action he exercised on the boy the day before (in the conversation developed in the *Theaetetus*) has yielded any fruit. Be that as it may, the opening scene of the *Theaetetus*, in which, thirty years later, Euclides and Terpsion recall the present conversation, reveals to us that Theaetetus, now an adult, is not at all docile in the sense of a coward, for witnesses claim that his behaviour in battle was brave (142b6–7). In addition, we learn (at 185e) that he is also 'beautiful' in the sense of 'smart', and 'good', for, Socrates argues, if he speaks beautifully, he must be beautiful and good. The boy relieves his interlocutor from a long discussion as he thinks that the soul views some things by itself directly, and others through the bodily faculties.

Could these conversations with Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger have had anything to do with the formation of his character? It seems like a good question to consider the trilogy formed by the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist* and *The Statesman*. In the end, Socrates' refuting work on him is supposed to contribute to make him more agreeable and careful.

5.3 The Materialists

The materialists' case presents a difficulty that we will see repeated in the Heracliteans and the Parmenideans. The thing seems simple: as they are all hard and resistant, it may seem obvious that those who are their disciples will resemble their teachers. But it is not necessarily so. In the *Symposium* and in the *Alcibiades*, Plato strives to show that Socrates is not responsible for Alcibiades' character and behaviour. On the other hand, Plato's best disciple (Aristotle) did not accept his most relevant doctrine. Perhaps the truth is that mediocre teachers, in general terms, make mediocre disciples, while good teachers do not necessarily produce good students.

In any case, here lies an irresolvable paradox: since the materialist sages 'deny the existence of actions and processes and all that is invisible' (155e4–5), it

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is evident that their doctrine cannot explain the existence of teachers and disciples, because it is unable to give any explanation whatsoever for the invisible *action* of teaching and the invisible *process* of learning.

5.4 The Heracliteans

With regard to the Heracliteans, Socrates comments on the portrait Theodorus paints of them, in these words:

> Perhaps, Theodorus, you have seen the men when they are fighting, but have not been with them when they are at peace; for they are no friends of yours; but I fancy they utter such peaceful doctrines at leisure to those pupils whom they wish to make like themselves (βούλωνται ὁμοίους αὑτοῖς ποιῆσαι). (180b4–6)

Theodorus’ answer is meaningful:

> What pupils, my good man? Such people do not become pupils of one another, but they grow up of themselves (αὐτόματοι), each one getting his inspiration from any chance source, and each thinks the other knows nothing. (180b7–c2)

Here is the same paradox that we found in the materialists: according to Socrates, teachers strive to make their disciples resemble them; but according to their own doctrine, the Heracliteans cannot have disciples, because a disciple in some way preserves the teachings of the master, and yet the Heraclitean doctrine denies that anything could be preserved. Perhaps for this reason Socrates has said that they present two faces, one, when they fight, another, when they ‘are at peace’ and converse with their own kind.

So, what is interesting about their case is the following: (1) although apparently the Heracliteans would like to make their disciples resemble their teachers, (2) the truth is that according to the Heraclitian doctrine there can be no teachers and disciples.

5.5 The Parmenideans (and the Megarics)

Should the Parmenideans, then, have a better understanding of themselves as teachers? As we have already observed, the brief passage where they appear (183e3–184a1) is solemn and full of a reverential respect for their wisdom. And, nevertheless, the aforementioned transition of the plural (the most recent Parmenideans) to the singular (the old father Parmenides) makes us suspicious of such solemnity, which sounds more like a Socratic joke and Platonic irony.

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Indeed, one could wonder how whoever maintains that only the One-Motionless exists, could explain the transmission of knowledge from teachers to disciples in any way at all. Is not the very presentation of Parmenides' disciples *in the plural* an ironic way of pointing out that transmitting something to *many* is not compatible with a doctrine according to which *there are not many* but only one?

The fact is that, in the *Poem*, the goddess 'teaches' the *kouros* both ways; the way of doxa necessarily admits plurality, and speaking and writing a poem imply movement and plurality. The fact is that Socrates says he does not understand Parmenides' words and their meaning here, while Plato makes Parmenides himself test his own thesis in the homonymous dialogue, to come to paradoxical conclusions.

While the materialists' views make it impossible for knowledge to flow, and Heraclitean logorrhea makes it impossible for anything to be preserved from teachers to disciples, (indeed, not even language as such is possible for words are universals that refer to steady meanings), the rejection of understanding on behalf of Socrates seems to block the way out in the case of Parmenides, despite of his having disciples, such as Zeno and Melissus. In fact, in all three cases there are undoubtedly teachers and disciples. But the point is that according to a certain extreme (humorous) reading of their respective doctrines, they should not be able to account for this fact.

The Parmenidean case is especially revealing in order to understand the *Theaetetus* thoroughly, as the Megaric disciples of Socrates, whose text we are reading (see 142d4–143c6), are precisely Parmenideans. Do we not find, then, throughout the whole dialogue, a strong no longer Socratic, but Platonic irony, an irony that Plato uses to take distance from his Megarian classmates?

Theaetetus is not, however, a disciple of the Megarics, but of Theodorus. Let us conclude our consideration of the *Theaetetus* by suggesting a key to its interpretation to progress towards a vision of the dialogue as a whole.

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6 Conclusion: The *Theaetetus* as a Philosophy of Education

6.1 Becoming Good Men

The Socratic joke that presents the maieutic master as a dietician feeding different wisdoms to his disciples inspires a further, no less humorous, comparison, to epigenetics.[6]

Beyond its innate qualities, there is no doubt — at least according to the evidence we have presented extracted from the *Theaetetus* itself — that the environment in which they develop and the wisdom they feed from has a great influence on the man each one of them is to become. If the twisted atmosphere of the courts produces men of twisted souls, Theodorus' teaching nourishes docile men and that of Heraclitus, individuals with whom it is not possible to hold a conversation.

Theaetetus is a disciple of Theodorus. Is he in good hands? At the beginning of the conversation, Socrates shows his keen desire to know which young Athenians might become good men (ἐπίδοξοι γενέσθαι), and in fact this interest is what gives rise to the whole conversation (143d3–e2). Now, the collection of evidence that we have presented seems to suggest that what a young person becomes does not solely depend on his/her innate qualities and that even the best of the young Athenians educated by the courts will hardly become good men but rather twisted ones.

As for Theodorus, his teaching produces an initial beneficial effect on his disciples' souls: he makes them docile and able to follow a conversation. We might ask ourselves, however, if this is enough.

6.2 The *Theaetetus* as a Philosophy of Education

The situation in the *Theaetetus* is, then, as follows. As we have seen, young people do not become of a certain character — upright or twisted, combative or meek, etc. — in a self-sufficient way, but, at least in part, it depends on the environments they frequent and the teachings they receive. In the *Theaetetus* Socrates attempts to examine the teaching of Theodorus in the presence of his disciples. To what

6 It is known that two individuals of the same species subjected to a completely different diet or environment can develop very diverse potentialities. The case that is usually cited is that of queen bees, individuals genetically identical to the workers whose only difference is their diet based exclusively on royal jelly.

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end? Perhaps so that Theodorus' disciples will notice that, in spite of their virtues, their master's teachings are not enough to train them as real philosophers and good men. It is obvious that Plato introduces Theodorus on several occasions as somebody afraid of examining Protagoras' doctrine openly, which means he is not brave enough to proceed as a free philosopher should.

Clearly, Theodorus senses the danger to which he is exposed, since he stubbornly resists entering into conversation with Socrates. Nevertheless, at the centre of the dialogue he ends up recognizing, with his praise for the portrait that Socrates has drawn of the leading philosopher, that his knowledge and, therefore, his teaching, knows nothing of men. The formation that he offers his disciples must, therefore, be completed with another teaching that helps them to move among men. However, what Theodorus conceives as a complement to his knowledge is not another form of knowledge, because, in his understanding, there is no possible knowledge about man. The only thing he expects from his friend Protagoras (162a3) — whom Socrates regards as his teacher (179d) — is an effective defence that allows him to live in peace among his fellow citizens.

Though the leading philosopher makes a fool of himself when he appears before a court, because he cannot persuade anyone as to the nobility of his own knowledge, for a moment, Socrates seems to give Theodorus what he needs, as he exclaims: 'If, Socrates, you could persuade all men of the truth of what you say as you do me, there would be more peace and fewer evils among mankind' (176a2–3).

Note that what he appreciates is the power of persuasion. If Theodorus is Protagoras' friend and trusts in his wisdom, it is precisely because Protagoras promises, not knowledge, but mediation with the city that guarantees the success of any enterprise one proposes. That Protagoras has no real disciples is well known from the opening scene of the dialogue that bears his name, where Hippocrates blushes with embarrassment when Socrates asks him if he wants to hire the services of Protagoras to become a sophist (312a). Protagoras has a choir of 'blind followers'; he is not a teacher like Theodorus, but someone who compares himself to a physician, and who promises to produce a beneficial effect on the cities: 'The wise and good orators — Protagoras says — make (ἐποίησεν) the useful (χρηστὰ), instead of the evil, seem to be right to their states.' (167c4–5).

Theodorus professes a theoretical knowledge that knows nothing of political life, while Protagoras claims to possess a power capable of *producing* well-being in the lives of individuals and cities. For a moment, Theodorus sympathized with Socrates when it seemed that he could produce an opinion in the city favourable to his (Theodorus') knowledge. However, the Socratic examination of Protagoras'

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wisdom reveals to us the dangers to which any young person devoted to it will be exposed.

The whole of the *Theaetetus* seems then directed to save the young Theaetetus from the clutches of sophistry into which he could unconsciously be thrown by Theodorus’ teaching. To this end, Socrates will guide the boy to reflect on the limits of the knowledge professed by his maths teacher, but also on the nature of wisdom in general.

Seen through today’s eyes, Protagoras would be something like a guru of high finances or a top-paid coach, an expert in all kinds of strategies to ensure practical success in all types of companies, including political parties.

Those of us who work in high schools today know fine well that this rhetoric of success or competition has been creeping into our schools progressively. Everything that refers to the human being now tends to be measured with criteria of effectiveness. Of our young people we only hope that they are competent, that they succeed, and we do not care if they have solid elements to become thoughtful in the strong sense of the expression anymore. The so-called “humanities” have gradually dissolved due to the corrosive effect of our Protagoreanism. It is true that we still, sometimes, value art and literature, but we do it as a personal taste or as a sophisticated hobby, as a mere aristocratic option that does not need to be wanted by all our students.

At the centre of the *Theaetetus*, the very central question itself is what it is to be a good man (176a4–177b6). The role that the different knowledges and the different wisdoms can or should perform in the formation of young people so that they become good men and women is what has moved the whole of the investigation about what knowledge and wisdom are. The *Theaetetus* appears therefore, in short, as a Platonic contribution to a philosophy of education for our time. For, do we do well to entrust our young people in an exclusive manner to the modern-day Theodorus and Protagoras? Or should we still defend a mediating — maieutical — role for philosophy in the formation of good men and women? Whatever our answer may be, such is, in my view, what Plato set out to defend throughout the whole of his *Theaetetus*.

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Part IV: **Knowledge and Thinking**

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Thomas M. Robinson

Soul in the *Theaetetus*

In this paper I want to examine the concept of soul as found in the *Theaetetus*, and what if anything can be learnt from this examination about the relative place of the *Theaetetus* in a cluster of dialogues that appear to be positioned from late-central to early-late in the system, the *Timaeus*, *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, and *Sophist*.

In the *Theaetetus* two celebrated models of how the soul operates epistemically are those in which it is said to have within it (*en tais psychais enon*, 191c; cf. 197d) something analogous to either a wax tablet or an aviary. The models are, notoriously, rejected by Socrates as descriptions of how we think and know, though nothing is said, one way or the other, during the discussion about the ontological status of the soul (*psyche*) or intellect (*dianoia*) as such, which appear in context to be interchangeable terms (cf. 189d [*bis*] and 189e), and which are the supposed source or ground of the thinking (*dianoeisthai,* 189e and *passim*) at issue. I need to stress at the outset that the soul or intellect itself is not said to be *like* a wax tablet or an aviary (though at least one commentator takes this to be the case),[1] but that the soul or intellect has *within* it a block of wax or aviary (191c, 197d), so we cannot assume that if Socrates rejects these two famous analogies of intellection he also rejects the two particular visions of what a soul or intellect *is* that accompanies them; until we have evidence from another source, we must assume that he could have, in theory at any rate, rejected the former but steadily upheld the latter.

To get the discussion off the ground, let us begin by hypothesizing, *argumenti causa*, that Socrates did not see his own concept of what a soul as such is as being at issue, but merely somebody's notion of how it supposedly ratiocinates. This still leaves us to grapple with the complex issue of what he thought an intellective soul (or soul *qua* intellective; or the intellective 'part' of soul [*to logistikon* in the *Republic*], or some such locution) actually was. I say the intellective soul because this is the only soul which appears to be at issue here, where what is being talked about is the nature of the soul of those living creatures which ratiocinate, not the nature of the soul of living creatures simply *qua* living creatures, which, being alive, are as such all of them vivified by the presence (in some sense of the word presence) of soul (*psyche*) (let us call it the 'biological' soul). Nor, finally, are the other two 'parts of soul', famously described in the *Republic* as *to thymoeides* and

1 J. McDowell (tr.), and L. Brown (Introd. and Notes), 2014 nn. *ad* 191d, 197d.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-010

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to epithymetikon, at issue here either, on the simple grounds that they are not relevant to the topic at hand.

Evidence that Socrates (Plato) has in mind only the intellective soul when he talks of soul in the *Theaetetus* we have just seen by his use of the word *dianoia* interchangeably for *psyche*, something he had already done in the *Phaedo* (67c). This is reinforced by his famous description of the thinking process (*dianoeisthai*) as being one of soul's discourse with itself (*logon pros hauten*) (189e), a process he goes on to clarify as 'conversing' (*dialegesthai*); asking itself questions; answering those questions with a yes or a no; and finally coming to a decision which we call a judgement (or opinion) (*doxan*) (190a). To 'formulate a *doxa*' (*doxazein*), he then goes on to say, is for the soul to make a silent statement (*logos*) to itself (*ibid.*).

This remarkable view deserves a paper in itself, but for present purposes I simply quote it as further evidence that in the *Theaetetus* it is only the intellective soul (or part of soul, in the schema of the *Republic*) that is under discussion. This is further reinforced, I think, by the passage in the same dialogue on Socrates as midwife (150b ff.), at one point in which the offspring of all souls whom the god favours and which Socrates helps to deliver are warmly described as 'numerous and *kala*' (150d), a phrase of approval with, in the context, clearly epistemological overtones, given that those who leave Socrates too early are said to suffer miscarriages; consider 'impostures and images' more important than what is true (or real) (*tou alethous*); and finish up, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others, as ignorant (*amatheis*) (150e).

What can be said of this intellective soul? What, in the *Theaetetus*, is its ontological status? No answer is offered in the dialogue itself, as far as I can see, and we are obliged to speculate. But the speculation does not have to be idle; there is, I think, a good deal of evidence in clearly previous dialogues like the *Phaedo* and *Republic* to draw upon (maybe the *Timaeus* too, though the claim that it lies closer to the *Republic* in composition than to, say, the *Philebus* and *Laws* will remain, it seems, deeply controversial). To start with the *Phaedo* first: while the visions of soul underlying the various attempts in the dialogue to show soul's immortality are numerous, all seem to have in common the fact that, for Socrates (Plato) it is a substance distinct from the body; it is never described as simply a feature of the body, or an ability of the body, or something of that order, still less is the body the 'real' self, as it was to the Homeric warrior. On the contrary, the *soul* is the real self, says Socrates (115d–e), and it will survive the death of the body, either with all of its faculties intact (as the various myths of the afterlife seem to suggest) or simply as intellect (*dianoia*). If there is a problem (and ever since Aristotle philosophers have insisted that there is), it is how to relate

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this substance, which is the real self, to the body. In the case of the individual human soul, Socrates (Plato) in the *Phaedo* seems for the most part to think of the body as being some sort of container within which it is enclosed; it is famously described, for example, in the *Phaedo* as being 'imprisoned' in the body (62b; cf. 82e and 92a1) and, later on, in the *Phaedrus*, it is described as being fettered within the body 'like an oyster in its shell' (250c). And this 'container' theory is reinforced in striking terms in the *Timaeus*, when the three parts of soul, previously described in detail in the *Republic*, are said to be located in the head, thorax, and belly respectively (44d–45b, 69d–72d).

So far, however, nothing has been said which could allow us to place the *Theaetetus* in any particular position in the dialogues vis-à-vis, say, the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus*. But we have, I think, heard only half of the story. Soul in the *Theaetetus* is still the life-soul, even though it is no part of Plato's intention in the *Theaetetus* to lay any particular stress on this particular role it plays. In the *Timaeus*, by contrast, soul as life-force is central to the discussion, along with soul as intelligence, because the soul of the *world* is now at issue, as well as the souls of all particular living things, from humans to molluscs. And interesting problems emerge. If part of the description of soul as life-force is that it has or is a power to vivify, whence comes this power, how long has it been there, and how long will it last? If the creation story of the *Timaeus* really is an *eikos mythos* ('a *likely* story', 29d2) or *eikos logos* ('a *likely* account', 30b7) (on one occasion [44d1] Timaeus adds the adverb *malista*: the chance of this story's being accurate is particularly likely), all souls in the world were created in the beginning (that is, at a point in time which is the beginning *of* time) from the same soul-fashioning constituents, and all from the beginning exercised their potential to vivify throughout the range of all living things. But from the beginning world-soul and individual human souls were also marked by one major difference between them. Human souls had an everlasting destiny elsewhere, whether that elsewhere was one of happiness with the gods or misery in Tartarus; world-soul had a quite different destiny, that of vivifying a physical universe while enjoying an everlasting life, but only by divine *fiat* (41a–b); the *natural* destiny of the universe, says Plato, would, but for the above-mentioned divine *fiat*, have been to come to an end, like all other living things, with its constituents continuing on sempiternally as the chaotically moving traces of earth, air, fire, and water from which the Demiurge had originally composed it.

This divine *fiat* introduced a note of exceptionalism into Plato's theory of soul which I think he soon regretted; some time later he is arguing, famously, in the *Phaedrus*, that *all* soul (or: 'soul in all its forms') exists eternally, without temporal beginning or end (245d). The soul in question that he is talking about must

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be, as Hermias saw (*in Phdr., ad loc.*), intellective soul only (note the reference to 'soul, *divine and* human' at 245c2–4), and this would naturally include the world-soul of the *Timaeus*, which is nothing if not rational (36e, *emphronos*). But the problem to which this description of soul is offered as a solution continues to exercise him for the rest of his life; only in the *Laws*, in old age and possibly in the very last year or months of his life will he — possibly influenced by Aristotle — make the ultimate move of describing the soul of the universe as being sempiternal in duration (that is, without temporal beginning or end), not merely everlasting (that is, with a beginning to its duration but without an end). Now, finally, rational soul will, *qua* soul, sempiternally vivify a sempiternally existent physical universe, and *qua* rational, serve as the ground of reason in a sempiternally existent physical universe, while itself being an eternal activator of its own life and reason. Or to put it differently, the world and its soul, along with all rational souls within the world, are now seen as having the maximum duration possible in a world now clearly implied to exist across a time which is beginning-less and end-less (894e–895b), that is to say, sempiternal in duration.

Where might the *Theaetetus* fit into all of this? The only soul this dialogue concerns itself with is the human soul *qua* rational, as I have mentioned, and this is very much soul as it has been described in the *Phaedo*, the central books of the *Republic*, and, I myself would add, in the *Timaeus*. A hint of change might be the fact that there is in the *Theaetetus* no mention of the tripartition of soul which is so central to the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, but it would be at best a hint; on this, as on so much else, any argument *ex silentio* is hazardous. More interesting, I think, is to look again at the *Phaedrus*, where, if it is to be found at all, the doctrine of tri-partition has been reduced, in the tale of the two-horse chariot, to a story, with no comment this time on the relative likelihood or unlikelihood of the story, antecedently to its final reduction to a set of *disiecta membra* scattered across Plato's final political work, the *Laws*. This seems, on the face of it, to be a small indication that the *Timaeus* was written prior to the *Phaedrus*, but it still leaves open the question of its location vis-à-vis the *Theaetetus*, since in the *Theaetetus* soul's tripartition is not at issue one way or another.

Is there any other evidence which might be adduced to suggest an answer to the question? One interesting suggestion on the matter has been put forward,[2] in which the author argues that in the *Theaetetus* we have what might be the beginnings of a new position on soul, in which soul is no longer viewed as a substance (or in his own terminology, no longer 'reified') but has become a *dynamis*, a 'power', instead. My own view is that for Plato soul has always, by definition,

2 F. Gonzalez 2007b, n. 37.

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possessed the power to vivify; what is interesting is the suggestion in the *Phaedrus* that *rational* soul, in all of its forms, possesses such power eternally (245d), rather than, as in the *Timaeus*, merely everlastingly (i.e., it has a beginning to its duration but not an end). Whatever the *Timaeus* may have suggested about soul's having been generated, at a point in time which is the first point *of* time, by a cause higher than itself, we now have, apparently, a clear statement that it has not (245e6–246a2).

A further aspect of the *Phaedrus* definition of (rational) soul is that it is not only eternally empowered to move or activate (*kinein*) the physical, it draws eternally upon its own *self*-movement (or self-activation) to do so (245c5–9).[3]

What these psychic self-movements consist of, since the discussion is of *rational* soul, are primarily, as he says later, in the *Laws*, when describing the soul (or 'type' of soul, 897b7) which guides the universe, 'wish, reflection, foresight, counsel, judgment (true or false), pleasure, pain, hope, fear, hate, love, and whatever other kindred or primary motions there may be' (897a).

In all of this, however, I see no sign that Plato has moved in any way in the direction of denying what seems to have been a basic tenet of his from the beginning, and that is, that soul is a reality, a thing; it is not just a quality of that thing, or an ability, or a power of that thing. Only at the very end, when he finishes up calling soul 'the *movement* which is able to move itself' (or 'the activity which is able to activate itself') (*Laws* 896a1–2) might he be thought to have been possibly moving in that direction, and in doing so admitting, perhaps, that he was finally starting to doubt something that had characterized his writings over a life-time, psycho-physical dualism. But before that statement I know of nothing to suggest that he considered soul to be anything other than a substance.

3 The phrase 'within the self-moved thing' (37b5, tr. Zeyl, 1997) seems to be a clear reference to the universe, as Cornford (n. *ad loc.*) sees, but I see no reason to think that the reader is meant to add, as an explicative mental note, 'That is, it continues on, by divine *fiat* (41ab), as everlastingly self-mov*ed* (*kinoumenon hyph'hautou*, present passive) after an initial impetus from a World-Soul which is itself eternally self-mov*ing* (*Phdr.* 245c7, *hauto kinoun*)', especially if, as I believe, the *Phaedrus* postdates the *Timaeus*. The reference is, rather, to the universe's everlasting spinning on its own axis, once it has been *set* in such motion (*kinethen*, aorist participle passive, 37c6) by the everlasting World-Soul which the Demiurge has made; it is an instance of the common, un-technical use of the participial adjective 'self-moving' we would employ to describe any living thing that is able to move locally from point *a* to point *b* once it has acquired the ability to do so. (Cornford, n. *ad loc.*, muddies the water badly for Greek-less readers by treating *kinethen* [37c] as a reference to *self*-motion — an interpretation not a translation — while correctly translating the *text* as '*set* in motion'). There is no reference here (or anywhere else in the *Timaeus* that I know of) to the doctrine of *eternal,* rather than *everlasting* self-movement of *all* rational soul to be found in the later *Phaedrus* and *Laws*.

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Let us return now to the *Theaetetus*. From what we have just seen, it seems to me highly likely that it comes later in Plato's writings than the *Timaeus*, if one takes *au pied de la lettre* the *Timaeus*'s world-formation story, and its commitment in very great detail to the theory of tri-partition of soul so prominent in the *Republic*, as I myself think reasonable (but that's another paper). How much later is uncertain, but it seems possible that antecedent to it and to what seems to be its immediate predecessor, the *Parmenides*, lies the *Phaedrus*, where signs of Plato's firm and deep commitment to psycho-physical dualism are apparent (one is struck by that statement that the soul is like an oyster fettered in a shell), while at the same time he may be feeling that there are problems with his theory of soul's tri-partition; it figures now in the dialogue only within the context of a *mythos*, as we saw, and never appears in the dialogues again as a full-scale theory. Sporadic references in the *Laws* look mostly like memories of parts of the theory rather than the theory itself, a theory which, had Plato still adhered to it and wished to employ it, the *Laws*, in which Magnesia has the same tripartite structure as Kallipolis earlier on in the *Republic*, was offering him a golden opportunity to use a second time in his description of the souls of its inhabitants).

Are there other features of the *Theaetetus* which might be brought to bear on the question? A major one, it seems to me, would be the sheer newness of the *look* of the *Theaetetus*. If one thing seems clear in Plato's writings, it is that in both the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* Plato has a very clear and confident-sounding view of what knowledge is, and how it differs from *doxa*. So why is he apparently starting all over again, this time to end in a state of *aporia* reminiscent of earlier, Socratic dialogues like, say, the *Meno*? An easy answer is to deny such doubt, and to hypothesize a supposedly lost (or left-unwritten)[4] dialogue, the *Philosopher*, which would have solved all apparent problems by the introduction of the Forms, as found in their classical guise in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*. But no such hypothesis seems necessary. The second part of the *Parmenides*, in conjunction with the *Theaetetus*, looks to be more than enough by way of the sort of training in dialectic that was first emphasized by Parmenides as a necessity for the young Socrates (*Parm.* 135d) if he was ever going to be able to define forms accurately. Because *forms* of 'the things that are' there must indeed *be*, says Parmenides, if we are to have something constant to turn our minds to, and not destroy the power of discourse (*ibid.*, 135 b–c).

However, nothing in this suggests that for Parmenides such forms enjoy any particular ontological status, still less a transcendental status. And the same

4 See M-L. Gill 2012.

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seems to be true in the *Theaetetus*, where terms such as *auta kath'hauta,* employed in a semi-technical way to describe the transcendental Forms in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, have now returned to their basic, workaday usage to mean 'just by themselves' (see, e.g., *Tht*. 187a, where the mind operating 'just by itself' [*aute kath'haute*] is distinguished from the mind operating through the senses; cf. also 189b). None of which is to suggest, of course, that Plato from the *Parmenides* onward ceases to be an essentialist; he remains an essentialist till the end of his life, just as he remains a psycho-physical dualist. It is just that confidence in the nature of the essentialism seems to be less vigorous from the *Theaetetus* onwards; 'form' terminology from this point on could just as easily be applied to forms *in re*, or even, for that matter, to universal concepts, as to supposedly transcendental particulars. When Socrates *denies*, in the *Parmenides*, that forms are purely conceptual, it is, within the framework of that dialogue, a very young Socrates who is talking, and in Parmenides' opinion a young Socrates who is still in need of a lot of training in how to define forms (135c–d). It seems to me noteworthy that, in the *Parmenides*, Parmenides has no comment on the putative ontological status of the forms that need to be defined. And at the end of the day, in *Laws* 12, when Plato is talking about what the guardians of Magnesia will be studying, the Athenian says it will be the problem of the 'one over many' they will be studying (965b ff.), where there is no need for any assumption that any of the ones in question needs to be reified in the way forms seem to have been in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, or indeed to be reified in any way at all.

What there seems to me to be in the *Theaetetus* is a sense of philosophical return, as though the *Parmenides* has jogged Plato into a realization that the young Socrates had, at the end of the discussion, been set a specific challenge by Parmenides, and it was time to illustrate from the very *end* of Socrates' life what he had managed to do by way of response to the challenge. The so-called 'Socratic dialogues' had, of course, been a lengthy illustration already, not least the *Euthyphro*, which had also been set at the very end of Socrates' life, but the metaphysics of the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus* had since that time moved the emphasis of the dialogues in a new direction, and the challenge in the *Parmenides* to the Theory of Forms set out in those dialogues may well have triggered a final, unequivocally 'Socratic' dialogue from Plato illustrating how till the very end Socrates never gave up responding to the challenge Parmenides had set him. This dialogue is the *Theaetetus*, a work in which Socrates himself is now in the role of the older Parmenides and Theaetetus in the role of the young Socrates of years before, and not surprisingly it, too, like just about all other 'Socratic' dialogues, ends in the familiar state of *aporia*. But that is the final such ending in

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these later dialogues (the unique *Philebus*, something of an outlier in the dialogues, both starts and ends *in mediis rebus*), and the presence for the most part of a different lead-speaker in them (the exception being the *Philebus*) leads me to see the *Theaetetus* as being meant to be seen as, in effect, Socrates' last hurrah, given how carefully it is set at the very end of Socrates' life, just before his trial and death by hemlock.

On that note let us return to the *Theaetetus* with a *Denkenexperiment*. Let us imagine that the goal of the dialogue is to portray Socrates 'at work' in the way he knows best in the days just before his trial and conviction. Readers of some of the Socratic dialogues antecedent to this will have a very good idea of what to expect. There will be an attempt to define a major general term (in this case 'knowledge'); there will be an assumption about what a soul is, particularly, given the topic at issue, soul when stressed as intellective; and the discussion will end in *aporia*. While there may be an assumption on Plato's part that his pupils in the Academy will be familiar with all or most of the dialogues he has already written, there will be no such assumption in regard to all other readers, whom we shall simply call 'thinking Greeks', and more specifically 'thinking Athenians'. *They* will treat a dialogue in much the way we ourselves will read a novel by a well-known author, say Márquez or Vargas Llosa; it is of some interest to have read one or two of their earlier novels, but we assume that the novel itself is a self-contained entity, and will carry within it the pointers necessary for understanding it. Where the novelist himself 'is' in his intellectual and emotional life in this particular work, or where Plato himself 'is' in the dialogue we have just picked up to read, is, if anywhere, likely to be found in a combination of the 'drift' of the novel or dialogue in combination with, in the case of the dialogue in particular, the case presented with the most force, usually by its lead-speaker.

Let us assume, in our own case, that we are all students of philosophy, and that the *Theaetetus* is the third dialogue of Plato we have read (the first, let us say, was the *Euthyphro* and the second was the *Meno*). As we have seen, our instant impression will be that it is a richly argued work of a standardly 'Socratic' type, in which, in the last weeks of his life, he finishes up in *aporia* about a major term, 'knowledge'. If we are then informed that most scholars think that between the writing of the *Meno* and the writing of the *Theaetetus* Plato seems to have written the *Republic*, in which he has Socrates arguing in great detail about knowledge, and, far from being bogged down in *aporia*, appears to have a very good idea indeed of what constitutes knowledge, we are likely to be more than a little puzzled, and start questioning, like Vlastos, whether the Socrates of the *Republic* (except perhaps the Socrates of *Republic* Book One) is not more likely Plato himself than Socrates, or if not that, a Socrates who now has a lot of Plato to him.

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However that may be, in two of the three dialogues we have read, the *Euthyphro* and the *Theaetetus*, Plato seems to have made it abundantly clear, by his 'dramatic' date for each one, that Socrates is in the last weeks of his life, and in both instances doing what he apparently always does, failing to reach a satisfactory definition of what he is looking to define.

Let that be the *Denkenexperiment*, and I leave it with you. For myself, let me go on to draw my own tentative conclusion about the nest of dialogues surrounding what seems to me perhaps the most powerfully argued of the so-called 'Socratic' dialogues, the *Theaetetus*. At the end of the generally accepted 'Socratic' (or 'early') group I would, like many scholars, place the *Gorgias* and *Meno*, and then, along with many, I would begin the central group with the *Symposium* and *Phaedo*, followed by the *Republic*, of which I see Book One as what was once a 'Socratic' dialogue pressed into new service. The *Timaeus* and *Critias* would come next, as a grand conclusion to the period of high metaphysical and epistemological optimism that seems to have marked this period in Plato's life.

But challenges are now starting to present themselves. While writing the *Timaeus*, Plato has had to cope in detail, for the first time, with the concept of World-Soul not just individual soul, and now, since his final return from Sicily, he has also had to cope with the arrival of the young Aristotle in the Academy, and the writing of a small work by him, *On Forms*, which has called into question the very centre of his philosophical system, the classical Theory of Forms as expounded in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*. Results of his possible discomfiture are the publication of two dialogues, the *Phaedrus* and the *Parmenides*. The first of these I hypothesize to be some sort of bridge to the final group of dialogues, in which the Forms (and possibly) the tripartite soul seem to be still part of his metaphysical system but now feature as items in a central myth rather than as pillars of a system established by argument. In the second, the *Parmenides* (or possibly just the first section of it), Plato is clearly feeling the need to grapple directly with the criticisms of the young Aristotle. In natural sequence to this dialogue comes the *Theaetetus*, in which Plato may well have set out to preserve his teacher Socrates from Aristotle's criticisms by making it clear that the classical Theory of Forms was his and his alone; the Socrates of history was, till the very end of his life, like his pupil, committed to the view that essences were different from particulars, and were the referents of major general terms, but, unlike his pupil, apparently had no grand theory as to their putative ontological status as transcendental particulars, or at any rate never seems to have wished to publicly proffer one. Once this point has been clarified, Plato can then go on to write major dialogues like the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, in which exact definitions can once again be

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reached, as in the *Republic*, but there will be no further pressure to keep on using Socrates as a lead-figure in the discussion.

As all this suggests, I think the placement of the *Theaetetus* in the scheme of the dialogues is a harbinger of significant change. If it is located where I think it is, Socratic essentialism and psychological dualism will continue to be a major feature of Platonic thinking till the end in the dialogues, but Plato will also continue his own inner dialogue on each tenet till the end too, with a number of thoughts that come as no particular surprise, but with others that are greatly surprising. But that is another paper, or several papers...

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Carolina Araújo

Disposition in the Aviary Model

Disposition is a modal explanation for phenomena. In general it accounts for present properties or states of beings that produce specific effects in counterfactual circumstances.[1] One application of dispositional explanation is to knowledge. Dispositional knowledge accounts for characteristics present in someone who performs 'knowledge' actions in specific circumstances. In Antiquity the most influential model of dispositions is Aristotle's concept of potentiality. Aristotle applied it to knowledge by stating that it is a capacity that is sometimes exercised and sometimes not. Plato's *Theateteus* is a dialogue on knowledge. In general the dialogue is focused on knowledge of items,[2] considered today a case of knowledge by acquaintance. Occasionally it discusses propositional knowledge, knowledge about some state of affairs. Only once the *Theateteus* deals with dispositional knowledge, in a passage that came to be known as the aviary (195c5–200d4).[3] There, as I intend to show, a complex model of dispositional knowledge is gradually unfolded. I would like to point out that this model differs greatly from Aristotle's potentiality.

I shall start (section1) by pointing out the two problems that the passage aims to address. Then, in section 2, I analyze the three stages in which the account unfolds: the cloak (2.1), the aviary itself (2.2), and arithmetic (2.3). In reviewing these passages, I will show how damaging the prevailing Aristotelian interpretation is to the argument. In the third section I will address Socrates' dismissal of his own theory on dispositional knowledge, while arguing that the reasons for this rejection leave the explanatory model unaffected. Finally, in section 4, I shall provide further evidence to claim that this dispositional account finds dramatic support in the dialogue, that is, it explains how both inquiry and *aporia* are possible. I conclude that — for better or worse — a case could be made for a particular notion of disposition in the *Theateteus*.

1 See Ryle 2009, 31; Goodman 1983, 42, Lewis 1973b, 36.

2 See the Anonymus in Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 300–301.

3 See for example Bostock 1988, 186; Ferrari 2011, 104. All references are to the OCT *Theaetetus* edition: Duke et al. 1995.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-011

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1 What Is the Problem?

The aviary model is introduced in the context of inquiry on false beliefs. While analyzing the hypothesis that knowledge is belief, Socrates and Theaetetus agree that the first must always be true and the latter may be either true or false (187b4–8). Purging falsity from belief is therefore an important task in order to relate it to knowledge, but first we need to explain falsehood. One attempt at clarification resorts to the wax block model (191c8–195b1), according to which to know an item is to have its imprint in our soul. In this case, a false belief would be a mismatch between a perceived object and the imprint (195c7–d2). This is an insufficient explanation for false belief in different ways. In the first place, it is restricted to beliefs about presently perceived objects: mistakes refer only to what is perceived *hic et nunc*. Secondly, a previous argument in the dialogue had already concluded that the synthesis of sense data that forms a perceived item entails a certain intervention of thought — or of the soul as a whole (185c4–e2). If it is not my bare sensation that allows me to perceive something as a unity, both the imprint and the perceived object in the wax block model must be products of thought.[4] Thirdly, the wax block insists emphatically that mistakes should be ascribed to the act of choosing imprints, and never to the individuation of perceived objects.[5] Finally, if it is granted that one either knows or does not know something (188a1–6, 196c1–2, see also 165c7), the wax block suggests that one may not know an item one knows (196b7–c2). Socrates dismisses the model on the basis that it cannot explain how this is possible.

Although I take the second and third objections to be fatal to the explanatory model, I acknowledge that the text provides evidence that only the first and the last are reasons to abandon the wax block. If so, then we should expect the next argument — the aviary model — to explain (a) not only perceptual, but also conceptual mistakes, such as how someone can believe that a man is a horse (195d6–10); or how someone can believe that seven plus five are eleven (195e1–196b6). Additionally, we should expect it to explain (b) how one may not know an item one knows. Socrates says that this challenge amounts to a *tour de force* against an objector trained in antilogy (197a1–4). This imaginary interlocutor would protest that Socrates and Theaetetus have been illicitly employing the verb ‘to know’ throughout the dialogue — to denote their own cognitive states on the matter of

4 See Burnyeat 1990, 93–94.

5 It is worth noting that the mismatch could be at individuation level, and not at judgmental level: I judge this sense data is Theaetetus. However, due to the indetermination of the first item, this would not allow for the propositional form of belief.

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the inquiry —, since they do not know what they mean (196d11–197a4).[6] The objection rests on the principle that 'knowledge of X is required to the use of X,' a principle Socrates insists should be rejected under the evidence that the use of a word is required for the search for its definition (197a1). The aviary is expected to answer this objection by explaining that one can know how to use a term without knowing its proper definition, or, in a more general phrase, that one may not know (properly) an item one knows (how to use). In sum, the aviary should account for: a) conceptual mistakes (or false beliefs), in which case it would provide a distinction between knowledge and belief and improve the wax block model; b) the concept of dispositional knowledge that would allow for Socrates' method of inquiry and refute his objector.

2 Three Different Descriptions of the Aviary Model

2.1 The Coat

Socrates introduces the aviary model establishing that, in its ordinary use, the verb 'to know' means 'to have a specific ἕξις' (197b1). In other words, instead of being what we presently call an action verb, it has a predicative function, denoting a property or state of the subject. Then Socrates performs a transposition of this meaning (μεταθώμεθα: 197b3)[7] to its genetic explanation: he adds that knowledge is a state we have for having acquired it (ἐπιστήμης κτῆσιν: 197b4). Acquisition of knowledge, as he is about to explain, occurs either through learning from others or through discovering by oneself (197e3–6, 198b4–6). This being the case, Socrates states a necessary condition: one must have learnt or discovered something (i.e., one must have performed an action) in order to be a knower (i.e., to be in a certain state). The difference between having a state and acquiring it (197b8–9) is illustrated by the example of the coat. As it is sometimes the case with philosophers, examples introduce further difficulties to the theory they were supposed to explain. In this case it duplicates the states. Socrates says: 'as for instance someone who has bought a coat and, while still having control over it,

6 For similar objections, see Plato, *Meno*, 80c and *Euthydemus*, 275d–278c.

7 Because a previous condition is being added, μεταθώμεθα is better translated as 'may we transpose' than as 'alteration', as in McDowell 1973, 87, or 'change', as in Levett 1990, 332 and Narcy 1995, 264.

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does not wear it. For that matter, he would not have it, but would nevertheless have acquired it' (197b9–10).[8] Accordingly we have:
1. To buy is to acquire a coat.
2. To have control over it is the state of the owner for having (bought) the coat: he can decide to wear it or not.
3. To wear it is a state of the owner *qua* user.
4. Not to wear it is a state of the owner *qua* user.

The coat example shows that there are two different states involved in the explanation: one resulting from acquisition and another that depends on use.[9] Therefore it is possible to be in the state of the owner while not in the state of the user (197c1–2). The first state is a necessary condition for the second, and an act of choice is interposed between them. So the owner, simply from the fact of being an owner, has the power to be or not to be a user, a power the non-owner cannot have. Applying the model to knowledge, we have the following:
1. acquisition (action)
2. state of the knower (first order state) → power of choice to use or not (first order power)
3. state of the user (second order state)

Some interpreters have taken this formula to be an anticipation of Aristotle's conception of rational power for opposites, as stated, for example, in the ninth book of the *Metaphysics* (1046b3–12). Aristotle understands knowledge as a rational power (1046b1–2) that can generate either possession or privation of the known item depending on choice (1046b7–12). This seems good reason for the correspondence with the *Theaetetus*. The problem is that Aristotle is talking about productive knowledge, one that works as a principle of change in other or in oneself *qua* other (1046b3–4). In this context, possession and privation are not states of the knower, but of the beneficiary of the production: the doctor is able to produce either health or disease *in her patients*. The doctor knows that morphine is lethal and this knowledge will be active either if she decides to prescribe it or not to prescribe it to someone. The knowledge of morphine was active as a condition for

8 I disagree with some of the translations: given the ambiguity of *ekhein* in the model, it is highly misleading to translate κεκτῆσθαί in this sentence for 'possess it', as in McDowell 1973, 87; Levett 1990, 333 and Ferrari 2011, 102. Narcy has it right: 'il l'a acquis'; see Narcy 1995, 265.
9 See Cornford 1935, 130. It is important to notice that *hexis* and *ekhein* are used to both of the states.

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the choice for opposites (prescription or not prescription). Therefore, the opposition, in Aristotle's account, refers to external results of production, not to the mind content (morphine) one has while performing her power. Because it refers to a power of choice over one's own states, the coat example is not an image of Aristotle's rational powers. However, in order to make a more consistent argument for the distinction in question, we need to further develop the Platonic model.

2.2 The Aviary

The dispositional account of the coat unfolds into the aviary model. According to it, we have knowledge in the same way a collector has birds in a cage. When we learn or discover items of knowledge (the birds), we capture them from the wilderness and put into an aviary for good (197c1–2). This is the first order state, and it is cumulative. We begin with a clean slate and insert items into it throughout life. The number of known items may grow, but our condition as knowers refers to the entire set as one single state. This suggests that accumulation entails systematization into a unified whole. Furthermore, the aviary model ascribes to the collector the power of hunting the bird she wants whenever she wishes (197c7–8). To know an item is to have a certain control over it, more specifically, the power to deliberate about its use. In comparison to the coat, the aviary introduces a second power: after the knower has chosen to use an item (197c7–d1), she can choose to cease to use it or not (197d2).

1. acquisition (action)
2. state of the knower (first order state) → power of choice to use it or not (first order power)
3. state of the user (second order state) → power of choice to cease to use it or not (second order power)

There are several ways in which the aviary improves on the previous model. One relevant feature is the variety of items one can use or have: some are doves, others are pigeons, and so forth. Most importantly, in contradistinction to the wax block, as Polansky notes, 'although all the birds resemble each other, they need not resemble, as do the imprints, what they are the knowledge of.'[10] Items of knowledge are not things in the world; they are added to the collection as entities of the same species, i.e., they are concepts. This leads us to another feature of the model:

10 Polansky 1992, 197.

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items in the aviary are not isolated individuals (197d4–8); some live in flocks, some in groups of a few and some alone. An aviary is a whole of different interrelations, connections and classes. When we acquire them, we locate them within these different categories. However remarkable these details are, many are the interpreters who have dismissed them. The main reason for this blindness is that to most of them the aviary is the Platonic version of Aristotle's potential knowledge.[11] As we saw in the previous section, Aristotle's account on rational power for opposites is very similar to the power of choice in the *Theaetetus*. Notwithstanding, as I pointed out, this power was supposed to describe productive knowledge, i.e., the causation of change in others, and this should be taken into consideration. Now I would like to pursue this distinction between the two approaches and begin with one of Aristotle's key passages on the subject: the account of incontinence in Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1146b31–35.

According to Aristotle, potential knowledge may fail to be used, and in practical circumstances this is how incontinence happens. He cannot explain incontinence as a power of choice between opposites. For sure, incontinence is a liability of the agent; it is, employing a Platonic vocabulary, a failure instead of a choice to turn the state of having the knowledge into the state of using the knowledge. Were incontinence depicted as resulting from the power of choice, Aristotle would never be able to distinguish it from vice. This may well be the reason why Aristotle avoids the word power (δύναμις), and uses the word control (κράτος), to refer to how potential knowledge is put into practice. Socrates also refers to control in the coat example in the *Theaetetus* to denote the state of the owner (see ἐγκρατής, 197b9). Control, both in Aristotle and in Plato, refers to a state of power, not to a potentiality. To have a coat potentially is to have the potential to buy it and not yet to own it. If Plato thinks that to have knowledge is like to own a coat, his knowledge is powerful, not potential.

It might yet be objected that, in dealing with theoretical rather than practical matters, as is the case with the *Theaetetus*, Aristotle could agree that the use of knowledge requires a choice for opposites. This would give us good reasons to read the aviary model as an antecedent of potentiality. Burnyeat, for instance, seems to be sure about this interpretation:

> It is one thing to know something, i.e., possess some knowledge, quite another to have the knowledge actively in use, e.g., to answer a question. The Aviary model likens the first to

11 See for example, Lewis 1973b, 262; Polansky 1992, 196; Burnyeat 1990, 106–107; McDowell 1973, 220; Ackrill 1966, 397; Hackforth 1938, 27; Gonzalez 2009, 17.

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> having a bird in one's cage, the second to having a bird in hand. In more logical terms, the first is a power or capacity (197c), the second the exercise of a power or capacity.[12]

Burnyeat's understanding of power here is unfortunately very obscure. The power referred to at 197c7 is the control over the items so to be granted free choice among them, a feature that, as we saw, could resemble Aristotle's power for opposites. According to Aristotle, a capacity for opposites is active whenever a decision is to be made. What the *Theaetetus* tells us is quite different. It says that the use of knowledge depends on a choice among our items of knowledge. The problem is: is it reasonable to suppose that the doctor chose between, say, morphine or hemlock, when she first used the power to activate her knowledge on morphine, and then used the power to activate her knowledge on hemlock, and then the power to choose? If this is so, chances are that we would be trapped into Molière's regress:[13] the power to have the power of having the power and so on. In the following section I intend to show that the regress follows if, and only if, we try to bring Aristotelian and Platonic accounts together. If we resist the temptation, we may see that the full-blown version of the aviary model shows that the *Theaetetus* understands dispositional knowledge as a present state that produces its proper effects through a power of choice.

2.3 Arithmetic

The aviary model is expanded into an account of arithmetic (the art of numbers, their operations and the properties of these operations) and of literacy (the art of letters, reading and spelling). For our analysis arithmetic poses further problems than does literacy, so we will take it as our standard object. Socrates assigns to this case the same principle as to the previous ones: to know is to have acquired items (198b5–6). However, the surprising feature of arithmetic is that Socrates describes it as a state of being a hunter, instead of an owner. He says: 'Now I want you to think of this as a hunt for pieces of knowledge concerning everything odd and even' (198a7–8, trans. Levett). Arithmetic is an art; it is neither simply a state nor simply a power of choice. Know-how is added to these two previous categories, and becomes the instrument that turns known items into items in use. As we see, arithmetic offers a much more complex system for our dispositional account of knowledge:

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12 Burnyeat 1990, 106.

13 See Molière, *Le malade imaginaire*, troisième intermède.

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1. acquisition (first order action)
2. state of knower (first order state) → power of choice to use or not (first order power)
3. know how to select an item (second order action)
4. state of user (second order estate) → power of choice to cease to use it or not (second order power)

After introducing the example, Socrates calls Theaetetus's attention to a much more controversial claim, one that will begin to bring out the difficulties of the model. He says that the mathematician must have every single number in his soul (198b8–10). Were Socrates to mean that the learning of arithmetic[14] implies the actual counting of all the numbers one by one, he would have to suppose that this is an impossible knowledge for being infinite.[15] If arithmetic is to be learnt, he must concede that some birds are caught in flocks, i.e., when mastering the interrelations among some of the items of knowledge, we acquire multiple items.[16] If so, we have more reasons to understand why the addition of 'hunting,' i.e. know-how, is central for arithmetic. One acquires these flocks by mastering some rule that encompasses innumerable items: odds and evens, as Socrates says at 198a7–8, and maybe universals in general. In cases like this, hunting for an item involves the understanding of the guidelines for specification.

We are now in position to understand why Socrates compares counting (ἀριθμεῖν, the action proper to arithmetic) not only to hunting, but also to examining, σκοπεῖσθαι (198c4–5). The situation is such that we must go to our stock of known items with a specific intention, we have a question and we are looking for the one that would answer it. We do not know which one we are looking for; the reason is that we need a specific item that was previously acquired as a kind, or yet, as

14 The case of literacy is not different: a certain number of units combined in infinite ways.

15 It seems that Hackforth does not realize the problem when he claims that he "can see no meaning in the expression 'knowledge of 12' if it excludes knowledge of the sums of smaller numbers that produce 12," to defend that the item of knowledge consists in something like '5+7=12'; see Hackforth 1938, 28. How would these infinite items be learnt? Remarkably, Polansky uses the peculiarity of the arithmetic example as an excuse to conclude that the aviary 'inadequately depicts the most important kinds of knowledge' for it treats objects of knowledge as isolated bits (Polansky 1992, 198). I intend to show the opposite, that the aviary is relevant precisely for its treatment of know-how.

16 See Lee 1939, 210.

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the rule that establishes the set.[17] One must take Socrates seriously when he compares this know-how to the act of learning from oneself: 'in himself to learn again from himself what was known' (198e4–5).[18] Both operations catch items, but while to learn is to introduce a certain item in our soul through the unification of sense data; to know how to select is to individuate an item from general kinds that we know. We can learn the same thing that we have already learnt when we know a certain general description of its set and have to find one individual according to a specific demand.

Examining and learning are incompatible with Aristotle's account on how to activate potential knowledge.[19] This is indeed an argument in two connected passages of the third book in *De Anima*: 429b6–9 and 429b28–430a2. In the first of them he states literally that activating a potential knowledge is not like learning and discovering. Learning is the generation of a first actuality in the intellect. This generation is similar to a first imprint in the wax block or, as the second passage states, in Aristotle's writing tablet. This imprint is what gives us knowledge that may be activated in due circumstances. Aristotle's attachment to the wax block model is a crucial distinction between him and Plato's preference for the aviary model. As I argued in section one, an important improvement of the aviary when compared to the wax block was that it dismisses the resemblance between items we already know and the ones we seek to recognize. In emphasizing this resemblance, Aristotle treats the activation of knowledge as something similar to a basic act of memory, i.e., we are simply using in the present an item that we came to know in the past. Moreover, he is committed to the thesis that the objects of thought are individuals, and not kinds or rules for specification. As I tried to show, the interrelation of items in a whole is a distinguishing feature of the aviary

17 Lewis, one of the champions of the Aristotelian interpretation of the passage, makes much of arguing that the aviary entails that one has to have performed the calculation before resorting to the aviary, see Lewis 1973b, 270–275. He supposes that first one realizes that 7 + 5 = 11 and then goes to the aviary to activate the potential item '11' (*Id.* 268). Therefore, the aviary would be an activation mechanism for thoughts performed elsewhere. No wonder he reaches extreme negative conclusions: the aviary accounts for neither falsehood, nor mistake and not even beliefs.

18 Ferrari is right in calling attention to the fact that the cognitive process is a kind of double hunt (*dittè èn he théra*: 198d2), see Ferrari 2011, 103. His interpretation of the passage is on the right track, claiming that the aviary offers an account of knowledge that 'comporta la capacità di servirsi operativamente delle regole di conessione tra i vari elementi.' However, he insists that the dialogue has to dismiss it because Socrates and Theatetus keep on conceiving knowledge as a static phenomenon that deals with atomic and non-related objects. Therefore, he ends up concluding that the model cannot express Plato's point of view on the matter of knowledge, see Ferrari 2011, 104–105.

19 See MacDowell 1973, 220.

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model; a feature that allows Socrates to claim that learning is similar to know how to activate knowledge.

If the aviary model is incompatible with Aristotle's potential knowledge, it is not without violence to Plato's text that interpreters read Aristotle's patterns into it. They should avoid saying that the Theaetetus indicates that 'one can have twelve without recognizing it as twelve,' or that in inquiring someone is 'unknowingly thinking.'[20] The aviary grants that one can have the knowledge that twelve is a number without knowing how to grab the answer of 5 + 7.[21] To replace these categories with terms like 'latent' or 'virtual' knowledge and 'conscious' or 'effective' knowledge[22] is in itself misleading. However, this is only the tip of the iceberg. The confusion between the aviary model and potential knowledge makes the former useless to explain false belief. Because potential knowledge is knowledge of individuals, it may fail to be activated, but it cannot activate a mistake.[23] The *explanandum* remains without explanation. No wonder interpreters of Aristotelian persuasion found the aviary so irrelevant to the point.[24] I suggest that a more charitable reading should take its merits and demerits for what they are. So now we shall proceed to Plato's reasons for dismissing the model.

20 See Burnyeat 1990, 112. For emphatic agreement to Burnyeat's mistake, see Gonzalez 2009, 14.

21 I do not see evidence in the text for Hackforth's suggestion that the piece of knowledge one looks for is '5+7=12', see Hachforth 1938, 27. Moreover, I do not see any evidence for his thesis that the mistake is due to the similarity of the items, to the fact that 11 is close enough to 12. Why should false belief be restricted to 'close enough' items?

22 See Cornford 1935, 130–131; Hackforth 1938, 27, Lewis 1973b, 265. It is surprising that, while acknowledging that there is only one sense of knowledge in the passage, that of the possession of knowledge, Burnyeat still insists that knowledge can be a capacity that might fail; see Burnyeat 1990, 106. 'Latent' implies notions such as 'dormant'; 'undeveloped', 'concealed', none of them present in the aviary model. If for consciousness we imply awareness, this must be attributed to both knowers and users. If it means apperception, then there is nothing of the kind in Plato.

23 See Ackrill 1966, 402.

24 Bostock claims that the aviary is addressed to a wholly unreal problem and is not helpful to solve what he considers to be the puzzle of false belief in the *Theaetetus*, i.e., how, given Leibniz's law, 'since everyone who knows *a* believes that *a* is *a*, ought it not to follow that if *a* is *b* then everyone who knows *a* believes that *a* is *b*?', see Bostock 1988, 163; 186; 189. I suggest, instead, that the aviary addresses another problem, 'how someone who knows a concept can fail to answer a question about this concept?'. As I intend to show, Socrates is not committed to the thesis that we can think that 12=11; see Cornford 1935, 134 and Lee 1939, 209. The real problem the aviary aims to explain is how we specify items from known kinds.

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3 The Dismissal of the Aviary Model

When concluding his presentation of the aviary model, Socrates asserts that its great advantage is that: "we have now gotten rid of this 'not knowing what one knows'" (199c5–6). The justification is that the argument employs the verb 'to know' throughout unambiguously: to know is to be in the state of possessing items. However, just some lines below, Socrates announces his main reason for rejecting the model: it implies that the knower would ignore what he knows (199d1–2). We should all be perplexed: What happened here? The fault lies in one crucial passage that says that whoever calculates that 7 + 5 = 11 'thinks that 11 is 12' (199b3–4). The rationale for it is that any selected item was previously known, and thus there could be no mistake about it. In other words, the objection is that knowledge of the item cannot be the explanation of a mistake concerning the item (199d2). In what follows I would like to argue that this claim is not harmful to the model. I shall point out three reasons.

First of all, we must acknowledge that this disapproval is simply a restatement of the previous objector's appeal (compare 197a1–5 with ἀμφισβητήσεις at 198c9). As pointed out in our first section, one of the aims of the aviary model was to fight the thesis that 'knowledge is required to use,' a version of the previously agreed principle that one either knows or does not know something. Challenging his opponent means to grant that inquiry is possible: I can use the word whose definition I am looking for. Inquiry is precisely what the aviary explained as knowing how to select items. So my first reason is that the aviary model puts forward a consistent distinction between being a knower and knowing how to select.

Secondly, the objection is based on the premise that items are known *qua items*. This premise, as we saw, would turn the learning of arithmetic impossible. If we don't learn arithmetic by counting, but rather by properties of numbers and their operations, the objection does not refer to the model. My second reason therefore is that the items we know are not the same items we are looking for. This is also sufficient reason to reject the Aristotelian interpretation of potential knowledge, according to which if I know 12 potentially I cannot activate its knowledge as 11.

Thirdly, the objection supposes that false belief is 'to judge something to be other than it is' (199d3), for instance 11 to be 12. However, Socrates is clear about the mistake occurring in the selection of the answer: 'when he is hunting for one piece of knowledge, it may happen, as they fly about, that he makes a mistake and gets hold of one instead of the other' (199b2–3, trans. Levett). The mistake is not about the known item, it is not in our 'knowledge either of 11 or of 12' (199b4–5). It refers to knowing how to individuate the right answer to 7 + 5 from the series

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of numbers. Technically speaking, 11 is the mistake (the one taken instead) of 12, and this is the false belief. If false belief is due to a failure of know-how, the objection becomes innocuous.[25] So my third reason is that the model does explain what a mistake is. On Plato's dispositional account the distinction between knowledge and know-how sets up a strategy for both preserving the principle that one either knows or does not know something, and allowing that one can inquire into something that one knows.

If I am correct, the rejection of the aviary model dismisses its important contribution to the analysis of arithmetic: the difference between to know and to know-how. Theaetetus has an insight on this issue when he suggests that some of the birds might be items of ignorance (199e1–3). What he obscurely tries to argue is that ignorance and knowledge should be determined according to the item that was taken (199e4–5). If this means that one was liable to select either the right or the wrong item, it could be compatible with the model. The problem is that Theaetetus's phrasing suggests that the wrong item is an item that is ignored; and surely allowing for the knowledge of an ignored item amounts to ruining the model altogether.

In his reply to Theaetetus's intervention, Socrates points out that he who picks the wrong item will not consider it to be a false belief (200a3). This seems to be a statement about the limits of the model: now we will need a truth maker for know-how. I take this to be the specific question that the model does not answer. To put it clearly, in claiming that the aviary model should not be dismissed for the given reasons, I do not mean that it provides sufficient explanation for everything it aims to explain. I understand that without a thesis on the truth about know-how, the aviary model entails that there is another knowledge of knowledge and ignorance (200b5–7). The strong objection to the model has the form of a regress: there will be a second wax block or a second aviary to validate the selected items.[26] Socrates is right in fearing his opponent on this point (see 200a12–c3). One way out of this is to object that the regress supposes another internal repository for truth makers. Thence Socrates might dismiss it by suggesting, for example, that they can simply be the specification of items in the same repository. This is a hypothetical counter-argument. Nonetheless, it seems to me that the dramatic form of dialogue may provide some support for it.

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25 See Cornford 1935, 137.

26 See Lewis 1973b, 283–284.

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4 The Performance of Dispositional Knowledge

In the beginning of the *Theaetetus* Socrates introduces his midwifery by declaring that he can test the truth or falsehood in the thoughts of a youth (150b8–c3). I would like to show how this description matches the relevant contribution made by the aviary model. As remarked in section one, the model intended to explain (a) the difference between true and false belief and (b) dispositional knowledge. Socrates' midwifery supposes that the youth will give birth to a statement, i.e., he will put some of the items he knows into use, and he will express his belief on whatever question, in this case, 'what is knowledge?' The dialogue enacts how Theaetetus believes, for example, that knowledge is perception. He proposed this definition because this was his best catch in the answer hunting. The situation of the mathematician that looks for a solution in an equation is the same as that of Theaetetus looking for a definition of knowledge in the dialogue. So the mathematician 'thinks that 11 is 12' just as Theaetetus 'thinks that knowledge is perception.' 12 and knowledge is what they know as a kind, 11 and perception is what they were able to select. They know a certain general description for knowledge — and thus they are right in saying that they don't *know* what knowledge is —, but they cannot specify this general description to the present demand — they don't know what *knowledge* is. Socratic midwifery therefore emerges from the dispositional account of knowledge we find in the aviary model: the difference between being a knower and knowing how. This is, of course, open space for inquiry without any attack on the principle that one either knows or does not know.

In stating 'knowledge is perception,' Theaetetus believed it to be true. What happened next was that Socrates inquiry proved him that it was false. No further internal repository of truth makers was needed: midwifery offers the measure for the art of internal hunting. But midwifery, as well as internal hunting, is a form of inquiry, and not a repository of truth makers. So it is know-how itself that provides its own truth makers through the constant practice of inquiry. Inquiry is the art of selecting items and learning how to select items (see μαθόντες: 150d7). If I am right, the dramatic setting of the dialogue shows that no regress is involved in the aviary model, and it provides us with a method to distinguish between true and false beliefs.

Socrates' midwifery supposes that the youths are pregnant; they are knowers. What they do not know is how to choose the offspring they will give birth to. The labor pains that they feel is their acknowledgement of their lack of know-how. Attention to the dramatic composition of the dialogue shows that it presents a detailed approach of failure in knowing-how, suggesting two kinds. On the one hand, it can have the form of failing to inquire: we avoid the effort of the art of

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hunting altogether, as Theodorus seems to do. On the other hand, one may acknowledge that there is a right item to be selected and hunted, but still be unable to find it; this is *aporia* (151a5–8), thoroughly performed by Theaetetus. Neither of these two cases of ignorance refers to "not being pregnant" nor to the lack of knowledge that is incompatible with possessing the known. This kind of *agnoia* is absent from the *Theaetetus*.

5 Conclusion: Disposition in the *Theaetetus*

In the preceding we saw that the aviary model introduces a distinction between knowledge and know-how that provides an explanation for how mistakes apply to known items. I argued that this model should not be read within the parameters of the Aristotelian concept of potentiality for three basic reasons: (i) it involves a power of selection of the right items, which would correspond to an Aristotelian rational power and not to the activation of a potential knowledge; (ii) it involves individuation of items learnt in general and not simply updating a latent item of memory (iii) it involves inquiry and learning, and not simply knowing. The account on dispositional knowledge we have in the *Theaetetus* consists on the whole of all known items in the soul — a state that qualifies this agent as a knower —, plus an active inquiry to individuate an item for use. The reproach Socrates presents to the model is simply a restatement of the previous objector's thesis and is innocuous to the explanation. The aviary model leaves unanswered how one can verify the truth of an item in use. This jeopardizes the model due to an infinite regress. An answer to this objection is to be found in Socrates' midwifery and the dramatic composition of the dialogue: the truth about use is given by cross-examination, which is the external action of knowing how to individuate what we know.

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Francisco J. Gonzalez

Thinking as Conversation in Plato's *Theaetetus*

In the modern period, most accounts of dialectic as a method, e.g., in Hegel, clearly divorce it from dialogue in the sense of a shared search through conversation.[1] In Plato, however, such a distinction seems absent. Even in his most technical accounts of dialectic, e.g., in the *Republic*, Plato appears still to identify it with the give-and-take of question and answer and thus with dialogue between two people.[2] This must strike us as odd, since it seems a fundamental conviction of philosophy at least since Descartes that, strictly speaking, philosophy *cannot* be done *with* others, but is by its nature monological. As Richard Robinson, in his influential study on Plato's 'earlier dialectic', asks in disbelief, 'Can Plato really have thought that you cannot do philosophy by yourself?' (1953, 81).

Robinson, who deserves credit for forcefully raising the problem of Plato's 'strange doctrine' (79) that question-and-answer is essential to philosophical dis-

1 As Nikulin 2010, 65 has noted, Hegel's dialectic 'utterly disassociates itself from dialogue and becomes the method and driving force that cannot be divorced from philosophy as the enterprise of solitary thinking'. Sichirollo 1966, 59 in a study concerned with 'der ursprunglichen Gestalt der Dialektik, iherer Entstehung als *Rhetorik*, Dialog, Diskussion, und nicht zuletzt als Ablehnung eines überlieferten (aristokratischen) Wissens zugunsten der *Meinungen* des gemeinen Bewusstseins,' chooses as his title *Διαλέγεσθαι-Dialektik* rather than simply *Dialektik* because "wir bei dem Wort 'Dialektik' eher am System und Wissen denken". Sichirollo traces this transformation of dialectic into a non-dialogical science or system back to Plato, but I would argue, for reasons partly presented in this paper, that dialectic is never in Plato understood as a science or system divorced from dialogue between two people. As Sichirollo must himself acknowledge, dialogue appears essential even to the dialectic of collection and division practiced in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* (72). The mistake is to attribute to Plato the sharp separation between dialectic and dialogue that will become common after Plato, i.e., the view that 'die *Dialektik* kann sich als διαλέγεσθαι darstellen, aber die Gleichung διαλέγεσθα = Dialektik ist nicht umkehrbar' (84). My own *Dialectic and Dialogue* 1998, in explicit opposition to the treatment of the same topic in Robinson 1953, seeks to interpret the thematic and formal accounts of dialectic in Plato in relation to the practice of dialogue dramatized in his works, though I now see it as remaining too formal in its treatment of dialectic and as not emphasizing enough the dialogical dimension.

2 In the *Republic* dialectic is identified with the ability to *give and receive logos* (531e4) as well as with the ability to *question and answer* in the most knowledgeable manner (534d9–10). The continued use of the verb διαλέγεσθαι (as at 511b) also can be seen as preserving the connection to conversation.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-012

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covery, complained as long ago as 1941 that this problem 'has usually been overlooked by students of Plato's dialectic' (81).[3] The situation has certainly improved, but a qualified version of Robinson's complaint can still be made: though there has been growing discussion of Plato's choice of the dialogue form of writing, the prior question of why Plato considered dialogue essential to philosophy as such still usually goes unasked.[4] Ironically, this may be because Robinson himself concluded that the question had no answer, or at least no philosophically interesting answer:[5] he saw in Plato's identification of philosophy with dialogue nothing but a psychological quirk, which he described as 'the fondness of the ancient Athenians for discussion' (83). Such a conclusion is not surprising given Robinson's view that Plato's dialectic is a logical method for arriving at certainty: such a method obviously has no necessary connection with dialogue. However, perhaps the most explicit and determined rejection of the idea that dialogue is essential to the Platonic conception of philosophy has come from a scholar who would sharply distinguish her conception of dialectic from Robinson's: I am referring to M. Dixsaut, who has articulated her position in a chapter of her *Platon et la Question de la Pensée* (2000), as well as in a paper entitled "What is it Plato calls 'Thinking'?" (1997).[6]

More Recently, A.G. Long, in *Conversation and Self-Sufficiency in Plato* (2013), while acknowledging the 'dialogical' character of thinking for Plato, defends a

3 As an exception to this rule, Robinson cites Nettleship 1898, 280 who indeed writes: 'We may ask why a word meaning discourse should be used to signify the true method of gaining knowledge'. Nettleship's own answers are that questioning and answering are the natural method for arriving at the truth in a step-by-step fashion and that for Plato 'education does not mean simply putting something into the mind as if it were a box, but is a turning of the eye of the soul to the light, or a process of eliciting from the soul what in a sense it already knows, -a process in which the soul which learns must itself be active' (280). While these answers are on the right track, they do not, as Robinson notes, go far enough. Such explanations, in Robinson's view, 'make question-and-answer at best a useful dodge, and by no means the imperative necessity suggested by Plato's regular inclusion of it in his conception of the supreme method' (1953, 82).

4 An exception is the book by Nikulin cited above. One can read there, for example, the following: 'By questioning the other, the dialectician establishes communication with her. In other words, the dialectician cannot but be in dialogue, which is what developed into the genre of Platonic dialectical dialogue' (2010, 24). Yet the usefulness of this book for the question here is limited by its taking the form of a wide-ranging essay that does not engage very thoroughly with either Plato's texts or the secondary literature.

5 'It is useless to look for sufficient reasons for the Platonic doctrine that the supreme method entails question-and-answer, because there are none' (Robinson 1953, 82).

6 A short critique of her position can be found in my review of the 2000 book in Gonzalez 2002.

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developmentalist thesis according to which Plato in later dialogues comes to locate thinking in an internal dialogue that makes the philosopher self-sufficient and no longer dependent on conversation. So are dialectic and dialogue in the sense of conversation two distinct things even in Plato, despite his habitual failure to distinguish between them? This of course is a huge question that cannot possibly receive a conclusive answer in the present paper. My goal here is only to suggest a possible answer through the consideration of some key passages in the *Theaetetus*. I choose the *Theaetetus*, first, because it is the dialogue to which Dixsaut appeals in arguing that dialogue is not Plato's model for philosophy and also the dialogue in which Long sees Plato *turning away from* an identification of thinking with conversation. Secondly, I turn to this dialogue because it strikes me as not only suggesting that dialogue in the sense of conversation *is* the model for thinking, but also, and most importantly, as indicating *why*. In other words, the *Theaetetus* is the dialogue that appears to confirm most directly the following assertion of H.-G. Gadamer: 'The inner connection between dialogue and dialectic is the decisive starting-point if one aims to understand the conception of knowledge at issue in Plato.'[7]

1 Socrates on Midwifery in the *Theaetetus*

The most explicit indication of what one can call a 'dialogical' conception of knowledge in the *Theaetetus* is Socrates' comparison of his method with the art of midwifery. This comparison suggests two things relevant for our purpose. The first is that Socrates himself cannot give birth to knowledge; he is 'barren of wisdom' (ἀγονός εἶμι σοφίας, 150c4) and therefore cannot teach his interlocutors anything, but can only deliver them of the beautiful things they have within themselves (150d6–e1, see also 157c–d). But the second important point made by Socrates' analogy is that even those pregnant with knowledge cannot give birth to it *without him*. Those who give themselves all the credit for their offspring and leave Socrates' company in the belief that he is useless (150e1–2) become ignorant (ἀμαθεῖς, 151a1). Knowledge can be brought to the light, and even properly reared (see 150e5), neither by Socrates on his own nor by the interlocutor on his own,

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7 'Die innere Zusammenhang von Dialog und Dialektik ist also der entscheidende Einsatzpunkt, wenn man den Begriff des Wissens verstehen will, um den es bei Plato geht' (Gadamer 1991, 107). See also the first chapter of Gadamer (2000, 15–73), the aim of which is, in Gadamer's own words, 'den Zusammenhang des sokratischen Dialogs mit der platonischen Dialektik aufzuklären' (162). In neither text, however, does Gadamer appeal to the *Theaetetus* to support his argument.

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but only in their mutual *association* (συνουσία, 150d2, d4, 151a3–4). This certainly appears to imply that dialogue between two people is the only means of attaining whatever wisdom human beings are capable of attaining. This is why the other skill Socrates claims for himself is that of matchmaking, of being able to determine with whom one should associate (151a2–b6). Specifically, Socrates has the ability of determining whether a person is pregnant and thus can profitably associate with him or whether this person is not pregnant, in which case Socrates can match him up with one of the sophists: since the sophists claim to possess wisdom, all they need are empty vessels into which to transfer this wisdom. That wisdom can be possessed by anyone on his own and then merely transferred to someone else, however, is precisely what Socrates' midwife analogy is meant to challenge.

Yet it might be argued that the midwife analogy, taken strictly, does not support the suggested interpretation. Even if the interlocutor needs to associate with Socrates to be delivered of the knowledge he has, this is still knowledge that he has arrived at and possesses on his own and thus without Socrates. In other words, if Socrates is only the midwife delivering knowledge, he has played no role in the *procreation* of knowledge. But here the analogy becomes a *disanalogy*, as Socrates himself notes: unlike the midwife, Socrates can deliver his interlocutors of either false phantoms or something genuine and true, where the difference between the two is very hard to discern (150a9–b2). Therefore, what Socrates claims to be his most important skill (μέγιστον, 150b9) is something that plays no role whatsoever in the midwife's art: i.e., the ability to determine through every kind of test whether his interlocutor's offspring is true or false. In this case, what Socrates delivers is not knowledge, but beliefs that can be determined to be true *only in the testing and examination undertaken in the discussion.* In other words, knowledge does not precede the association between Socrates and the interlocutor but is obtained, if at all, only in and through this association. Even though giving birth to an idea can involve a laborious and lengthy elaboration, as we see in Socrates' invocation of Protagorean relativism and Heraclitean flux to explain the thesis that knowledge is perception, this painfully delivered child can still prove only a phantom. This is why Socrates considers the testing of the interlocutor's newborn idea for its truth or falsity a more important part of his art than the delivery itself. In putting this ability into practice, Socrates' discussion with Theaetetus appears to enact what it is searching for. Is not, after all, this ability to 'discriminate what is true and what is not' (τὸ κρίνειν τ' ἀληθές τε καὶ μή,

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150b3–4) through a shared dialectical examination itself a certain kind of *knowing*?[8] In this case, knowledge would be neither perception nor true belief nor true belief with an account — all suggestions shown to be incompatible with Socrates' practice — but rather what is to be found in and through Socratic dialogue.[9] Socrates is not wise in the sense of being unable to produce knowledge by and through himself (he is 'barren'), but he is wise in the sense of being able to discriminate between the true and the false in examining the views of others and thus in conversation. If Socrates keeps his art a secret, as he tells Theaetetus (149a), this is presumably because it is the wisdom hidden behind his usual profession of ignorance.

In discussing this part of the dialogue, Long expresses, in parentheses, the following frustration: "(It is unfortunate that he [Socrates] does not explain his criteria for being 'wise' or explain how he can have such criteria without an understanding of the nature of knowledge)" (2013, 118). But in case we somehow fail to note the inescapable circularity in the project of seeking to know what the nature of knowledge is, Socrates himself draws this circularity to our attention. Later in the dialogue he will observe that "for some time past our whole method of discussion has been tainted. Time and again we have said … 'we know' and 'we do not know', as if we could to some extent understand one another while we are still ignorant of what knowledge is" (196e; Levitt trans). The problem is that there is no way of avoiding this 'taint'. As Theaetetus rightly responds, 'But how are we going to carry on the discussion at all, Socrates, if you keep off these words?' (196e). But if any inquiry into the nature of knowledge must assume a

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8 See D. Garcia Xavier: "Pertanto, il Socrate del *Teeteto* è sì, un individuo *epistemologicamente* ignorante, nella misura in cui il dio gli impedisce di partorire conoscenze proprie; però, il suo sapere *tecnico* è fondamentale per l'impostazione generale del dialogo: Teeteto è 'gravido' e Socrate è, secondo l'immagine concepita da Platone, l'uomo a cui il giovane deve affidarsi nel processo di concepimento" (2011, 113); 'Proprio per questo, la sterilità del maieutico, conduttore del processo dialettico, attraverso cui nascono le conoscenze, non può che essere relativizzata in certo modo da Platone tramite l'inserzione di un sapere tecnico d'origine divina, e non meramente derivato dall'impegno personale del suo detentore' (114).

9 It is significant that R. Robinson sees in the midwife analogy a mere 'subterfuge' by which Plato attempts to make the *elenchus* at home in his 'alien,' 'otherwise very Un-Socratic mind' (1953, 83–4). Before we join Robinson in attributing such a misguided and self-deceptive piety to Plato, we must already be convinced not only that we can make a sharp distinction between Plato's Socrates and Plato, but also that the Socratic *elenchus* is purely destructive while Plato's dialectic is purely constructive as a method for arriving at logical certainty. If, on the other hand, we read the *Theaetetus* with the assumption that it has not been warped by a mere subterfuge, then perhaps we will arrive at a very different conception of Plato's dialectic and of the nature of the knowledge it is meant to achieve.

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certain conception of knowledge, then we should note the particular conception of knowledge assumed by Socrates' practice of midwifery in this dialogue. In this case we see that while Socrates' midwifery assumes a 'dialogical' model of knowledge according to which knowledge capable of separating the true from the false requires conversation, all of the definitions refuted in the dialogue defend a monological conception of knowledge according to which you can know something by yourself by perceiving it, opining it, or giving an account of it. If the comparison of Socrates to a midwife is found nowhere else outside of the present dialogue, as has often been noted, this may be because, in this particular context of an inquiry into the nature of knowledge, it serves the very specific purpose of drawing attention to the model of knowledge, to the kind of wisdom, presupposed by Socratic conversation.

Yet there are two important points made by Long that need to be addressed here because, if valid, they would prevent us from drawing any conclusion about the nature of knowledge from Socrates' description of his midwifery. The first is Long's insistence that we cannot generalize from Socrates' peculiar case. His midwifery might require conversation to arrive at knowledge, but this midwifery is peculiar to him. The dialogue, Long claims, 'does not suggest that other philosophers share Socrates' cognitive limitations and does not bar other philosophers from operating in a manner unlike Socrates' own manner' (2013, 119); 'Socrates' own explanation of his barrenness does not involve the strong claim that for *everyone* knowledge is only activated, and wisdom only available, in conversation' (118–119). Now it is true that when Socrates comes across people who do not appear pregnant, he 'gives them away' to Prodicus and 'also to other wise and inspired persons' (151b). The implication is indeed that these 'wise persons' are wise in the sense of themselves possessing knowledge that they therefore can pour into the empty vessels of the students Socrates gives to them. But should we be as tone-deaf to the irony here as Long appears to be? Is Socrates really claiming that only he is barren whereas someone like Prodicus is not? Prodicus would certainly have much to teach a student, but would Socrates recognize this as knowledge or wisdom? As for the students, Socrates is quite adamant about their inability not only to give birth by themselves, but even to nourish their 'children' by themselves. As already noted, he describes some who, having given birth in conversation with Socrates, give themselves all the credit and leave Socrates' company; the invariable result, according to Socrates, is that their 'children' are lost through neglect (150d–e). The suggestion is that whatever knowledge these students are pregnant with requires conversation to be given birth *and conversation to be nourished and sustained*; apart from such conversation, the knowledge becomes ignorance. The fact that Socrates ironically identifies as not barren only

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the sophists and unspecified 'wise and inspired' people to whom he gives away his worst, empty-headed students, and his insistence that even the 'pregnant' students are incapable of possessing knowledge outside of their association with him, together have the effect of universalizing Socrates' midwifery and its assumptions about the nature of knowledge in the way denied by Long.

Long's second point is that when we look at how Socrates practices his midwifery, he thinks more by himself than he does with Theaetetus: he is the one who develops, through the introduction of Protagorean relativism and Heraclitean flux theory, the thesis he then subjects to criticism. He also shows himself to be perfectly capable of engaging in a dialogue with Protagoras without Protagoras being present. Thus Long concludes that in the *Theaetetus*, as well as in the *Sophist*, 'the protagonist both speaks for an opponent and engineers the attack *against* an opponent. We are now shown that a philosopher can without external aid stage a fair debate with his opponents' (2013, 138). But there appears to be a fundamental confusion here. To claim that conversation is required for arriving at knowledge or understanding is *not* to make the patently absurd claim that we are incapable of thinking by ourselves. I of course can develop an elaborate theory all by myself and I of course can examine and debate this theory all by myself *as if* I were conversing with someone else. What is important to note is, first, that Socrates in developing his theory is elaborating an idea given birth to by Theaetetus and doing so with the help of ideas that are also not his own (namely, those of Heraclitus and Protagoras): the resulting theory is thus thoroughly 'dialogical' and as far as possible from the paradigm we find in Descartes of an autonomous thinking based on clear and self-evident ideas possessed by the subject. Secondly, Socrates' critique of the theory of Protagoras *models itself on* an actual conversation with Protagoras (see especially 170a) and believes it must do so in order to escape the charge that this refutation is mere eristic and word-play (164c–e). Socrates also makes clear that this is *not* an adequate substitute for an actual conversation with Protagoras (169d–e). In short, the question is not whether one is capable of thinking by oneself, but whether one's thinking must model itself on conversation with others and whether it requires actual conversation to arrive at anything one could call knowledge. Socrates' practice of midwifery already suggests a positive response to both questions and these positive responses are further supported in the dialogue that follows.

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2 Socratic Dialogue as the Measure

What the discussion of the first definition of knowledge shows, if we pay attention to its performative dimension, is that Socratic examination is incompatible not only with Protagorean relativism, since in making every belief true such relativism undermines what has been identified as the most important function of Socratic examination, but also with the claim to expertise embodied by the mathematician Theodorus, who repeatedly refuses to participate in the discussion with the excuse that he is unused to Socrates' kind of "dialectic" (ἀήθης τῆς τοιαύτης διαλέκτου, 146b3; see also 162a–b, 165a).When Socrates finally succeeds in dragging Theodorus into the discussion, it is with the purpose of determining precisely whether 1) Theodorus is a measure in geometrical demonstrations or 2) everyone is as competent as he is (169a).[10] Ironically, however, Theodorus can prove himself to be the measure only by submitting to the common argument and thus ceasing to be the measure! The paradox is that dialectical discussion is the only means by which Theodorus can justify his being a measure against those who would deny him this. In general, experts who claim to be the measure of what counts for knowledge can justify their claim only by submitting to a discussion of what knowledge is, but in doing so they cease to be the measure they claim to be. Indeed, how can *anyone* be a measure in the discussion of the nature of knowledge, when what is sought is precisely such a measure? Do we not find ourselves in a vicious circle? How can we seek to *know* the measure of knowledge without already invoking such a measure?

We have seen that this circle is to an extent unavoidable, but Socratic discussion could keep it from becoming vicious if, while recognizing no one as the measure, it could itself provide some kind of measure. This is precisely what a

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10 Polansky rightly observes: 'Although Theodorus' commendation of the soul merits consideration (enough to warrant testing the person praised), his expertise does not deserve simple trust, and Socrates himself undertakes examining Theaetetus. This somewhat illogical conclusion, that Socrates himself must investigate Theaetetus' virtue and wisdom, may presuppose that he has expertise qualifying him to inquire' (1992, 43). With regard to this expertise, Polansky writes: 'The discussion proceeds to hint at a sort of expertise not possessed by the established sciences: Socrates points toward the need for philosophy or dialectic for measuring things' (43). I would insist that this is a very peculiar kind of 'expertise'. With regard to the claim that perception must be knowledge because it gets us to what is and is 'infallible', Polansky writes: 'Impressive as this may sound, it will not do. Even if perception or thought achieves such success, Socrates eventually shows it need not involve genuine understanding. We may truly and certainly apprehend things without really understanding them. Only comprehensive understanding ultimately constitutes complete knowledge' (107; see also p. 171, n. 139).

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crucial passage at 179a–b suggests. Here Socrates asserts that it is necessary for Protagoras to agree that one person is wiser than another and that the wise person is the measure (μέτρον). But who is Socrates to assert this necessity? Socrates himself immediately complains that his earlier defense of Protagoras forced him into the position of being a measure even though he lacks knowledge (ἐμοὶ δὲ τῷ ἀνεπιστήμονι, 179b2–3). But if Socrates himself is not a measure, both because Protagoras is wrong about everyone being the measure and because Socrates is not wise, then by what measure can Socrates judge it necessary that only the wise man is the measure? If only the wise man is the measure, then presumably only the wise man could be the measure of the truth that only the wise man is the measure. Yet the passage at 179a–b begins by invoking a different kind of measure. Levitt's translation reads: 'Then we shall be giving your master fair measure [μετρίως ἡμῖν] if we tell him that he has now got to admit that one man is wiser than another …' How can Socrates give fair measure in asserting that only someone with the wisdom he lacks could be a measure? As the 'we' in the cited passage suggests, what provides the fair measure for what must be admitted as true is not *Socrates*, but rather *his discussion with Theodorus*. The measure invoked by Socrates is neither every individual nor the expert: Socrates himself lacks expertise and he also, despite what he suggests to the contrary, does not allow Theodorus the expert to be the measure, forcing him instead, very much against his inclination, to 'strip' (162b) and join the discussion. The passage at 179a–b thus exhibits the performative contradiction that characterizes the entire dialogue: Socrates can assert that only the wise person is the measure only by invoking the very different kind of measure provided by the discussion itself: a discussion in which none of the participants are wise.

Socrates earlier describes his midwife's art as follows: while all of the *logoi* come from the person with whom he is in dialogue, what Socrates claims to know is 'nothing more than' how to take and receive these *logoi* 'in measure' (μετρίως, 161b2–5). What provides the fair measure even for the *logoi* of the wise is dialogue itself. This idea of dialogue itself being the measure of what is true is not unique to this passage of the *Theaetetus*, but is articulated even more clearly in the *Republic* and the *Protagoras*.

In the first book of the *Republic*, when the radical disagreement between Socrates and Thrasymachus regarding the question of the relation between justice and happiness has become clear, Socrates describes two possible ways in which they can go about resolving this disagreement. The first is for each to give a long speech in turn, with Socrates listing the goods of the just life and Thrasymachus listing the goods of the unjust life. The problem with this approach, however, is that it will require a counting and measuring (ἀριθμεῖν … μετρεῖν, 348a6–b1) of

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the goods on both sides and thus ultimately an appeal to judges who can do this (δικαστῶν τινῶν τῶν διακρινούντων, 348b1–2). If such judges could be found, i.e., judges in possession of a knowledge of what is just and what is good and thus in possession of the ability to measure the goodness of a life with quasi-mathematical precision, then this might indeed be the best approach. Socrates' rejection of this approach, however, suggests that no such judges are to be found. What then is the alternative? The alternative is to continue doing what they have been doing, i.e., seeking agreement with each other in such a way that they become themselves at once both judges and advocates (ἅμα αὐτοί τε δικασταὶ καὶ ῥήτορες, 348b2–4). Thus, in the absence of a judge outside the discussion who could provide an external measure, we can ourselves, through dialogue and only through dialogue, become the judges and measure of the truth of what we say. It is surprising, but also revealing, that Long's chapter on the *Republic* does not even cite this passage of great importance for the theme of his book.

In the *Protagoras*, the discussion between Socrates and Protagoras breaks down when Socrates insists on short responses while Protagoras insists on making long speeches. This disagreement is especially difficult to resolve because it is a disagreement precisely about which of the approaches described in the *Republic* is the best approach for resolving disagreement. Hippias comes up with a simple suggestion: Socrates and Protagoras could choose some umpire who, watching over their discussion, will insure that their words keep to an appropriate length (τὸ μέτριον μῆκος τῶν λόγων ἑκατέρου, 338a7–b1). Socrates rejects this suggestion of an external mediator or judge by claiming that such a judge would need to be even wiser than Protagoras claims to be (338b4–c6). Since Socrates clearly brings into question even Protagoras' wisdom, it is doubtful that he would recognize anyone, even in the illustrious gathering at Kallias' house, as possessing the wisdom that would place him above a discussion as its judge and measure. The alternative again is for both interlocutors to let themselves be tested by the discussion and thus take their measure from it (333c7–9). This of course is why Socrates so strongly resists, in the name of συνουσία, Protagoras' desire to give long speeches: to give in to this desire is to abandon that measure of truth that only genuine being-together in dialogue can provide. In short, what all of the cited passages suggest is the following: even if we do not find a measure for knowledge of the kind that would make an individual an expert in knowledge, this does not mean that we must fall back on the Protagorean view that each and every individual is by and for himself the measure: in Socratic dialogue we have

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a measure that is neither an expertise possessed by a few nor a mere appearance relative to each individual.[11]

3 The Soul's Conversation with Itself

In the context of refuting the second definition of knowledge as true belief, a definition that is shown to render impossible the very distinction between true and false beliefs on which Socrates' own method depends, we get the identification of thinking with a dialogue, a give-and-take of question and answer that the soul carries out with itself, and of *doxa* with a silent *logos* that concludes and brings to an end this thinking (189e–190a; see also *Sophist* 263e). This characterization of thinking clearly picks up from an earlier characterization of the soul's relation to being and truth as a *striving* (ἐπορέγεται, 186a4): the soul does not 'intuit' being, does not perceive it through the senses, but rather approaches it through itself, through a process of continually interrogating itself. But note also the claim there that the soul's thinking about being requires time, much work, and education: 'reasonings about these things [what we perceive] with regard to their being and advantage come to those to whom they come with difficulty and in time through much work and education' (τὰ δὲ περὶ τούτων ἀναλογίσματα προς τε οὐσίαν καὶ ὠφέλειαν μόγις καὶ ἐν χρόνῳ διὰ πολλῶν πραγμάτων καὶ παιδείας παραγίγνεται οἷς ἂν καὶ παραγίγνεται, 186c2–5). The reference here to 'education' in particular suggests that, if the soul strives for being through itself and not through the senses, this does not mean that it does so *without others*. Furthermore, if we ask about the nature of this required education, do we not have an example of it in the midwifery put into practice by Socrates' conversation with Theaetetus in which they have been trying to determine precisely the being and the benefit of what is perceived?[12] If what requires being educated is what is here described as the soul's attempt, in rising to compare the different qualities we perceive, to *discriminate* (κρίνειν, 186b8) their being and their opposition to each

11 See McCoy's suggestion, in commenting on the *Protagoras*, that 'whatever sorts of discoveries' philosophy arrives at, these are not finally discoveries that the non-social, non-human world gives to us directly. Socrates does not hold that there is some independent, universal epistemic standard by which a person could judge whether his beliefs are adequate or inadequate (e.g., an argument grounded in self-evident propositions)' (2008, 73).

12 Delcomminette has rightly identified the education in question here with dialectic (2013, 80). However, he regards Socrates' maieutics as only the first stage of dialectical education, not noting the fact that it already involves an ability to discriminate being and truth.

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other and thereby get hold of truth (186b1–7), we should not forget that what Socrates identified as the most important part of his midwife's art is its ability to *discriminate* what is true (150b3–4). If the soul's ability to discriminate requires education and if it is precisely this ability that Socrates' midwifery cultivates in examining with Theaetetus which of his 'offspring' are genuine and which are not, then the soul's conversation with itself does not exclude, but rather requires conversation with others.

There is another detail, however, that needs to be considered: the passage that describes thinking as the soul's conversation with itself also describes this conversation as coming to an end in a *doxa*. What does this mean exactly? Is this *doxa knowledge* that would bring the conversation completely to an end? A negative answer is suggested not only by the eventual refutation of the definition of knowledge as a kind of *doxa*, but also by the words with which Socrates prefaces his characterization of thinking: 'I am saying this as someone who does not know' (ὡς γε μὴ εἰδώς, 189e7).[13] Socrates thereby makes clear that the outcome of his own soul's conversation with itself is not knowledge.[14]

Is it then simply his opinion? Socrates in fact is not willing to proceed according to his opinion about thinking until he has determined that Theaetetus *shares it*. He asks Theaetetus if he means the same thing by 'thinking' (189e4) and requires his agreement (190a6–7). Thus, at the same time that thinking is characterized as the soul's conversation with itself, this characterization is submitted to the conversation between two people for judgment: a crucial detail altogether missed by Long. In the pursuit of the knowledge Socrates claims to lack, what counts most is therefore not the belief arrived at by an individual on his or her own, nor even the internal conversation by which such a belief is arrived at, but rather the conversation between two people to which the results of each person's internal conversation are submitted for examination. The soul's individual striving for being and truth must, as already suggested, take place in the context of a *mutual striving* for being and truth. The emphasis on striving here is important: both the 'knowing' involved in Socrates' maieutic method and the relation the soul is said to have to being and truth take the form of a dynamic process of examining, considering (ἐπισκοπεῖν, 185e2, 185e7; σκοπεῖσθαι, 186a11) and practice

13 In a recent text Dixsaut stresses the qualifications with which Socrates introduces what she claims to be not even an opinion about thinking, but merely an expression of what meaning he gives the word: 'Il ne dit donc ni *ce que c'est* que penser ni ce que cela lui *semble* être, il précise quelle signification il donne à ce mot' (2015, 38). Revealingly, however, she says nothing about what I proceed to emphasize below: Socrates' need for confirmation through dialogue that Theaetetus understands by 'thinking' the same thing as he does.
14 Cf. Dixsaut 1997, 10.

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(πραγματεύηται περὶ τὰ ὄντα, 187a5–6) that, if occasionally coming to rest in an opinion, proceeds to bring this opinion into question; note that in the passage quoted earlier, what the soul is described as doing is *attempting* to discriminate the being of what we perceive (κρίνειν πειρᾶται ἡμῖν, 186b8–9).[15] Both in conversing with itself and in conversing with others, the soul is continually striving for being and truth.[16] Furthermore, that the soul's own striving for being and truth requires the education of striving for being and truth with others means that, if thinking is appropriately characterized as the soul's conversation with itself,[17] this is because it is an imitation of that conversation that takes place between two people,[18] contrary to Dixsaut's insistence that it is instead itself the model for such conversation.

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15 The significance of this qualification has been noted by Narcy: 'Dire que, lorsque l'âme connaît selon son mode propre, la pensée, elle juge; interpreter, autrement dit, *dianoeisthai* comme un jugement, c'est faire de la connaissance une activité. Or, si au lieu d'être recue, comme la sensation, la vérité est atteinte par l'âme, elle peut aussi être manqué. Voilà pourquoi Socrate n'avance pas le verbe *krinein* sans le flanquer de *peirasthai*, 'essayer': juger ne peut jamair être — du moins pour nous, qui ne sommes pas des dieux — qu'un essai: dans son effort pour atteindre la vérité — l'âme humaine — peut échouer' (2013, 101).

16 Delcomminette rightly stresses this dynamic character of the knowledge of being and truth described at 184b–187a: '… c'est bien dans le raisonnement sur les impressions … que la science est dite consister, et non dans son résultat' (2013, 88). He also rightly singles out Martin Heidegger as one of the 'rare commentators' to note this dynamic aspect of the grasp of the common objects (88, n. 2). See Gonzalez 2007a.

17 Burnyeat finds inadequate the very characterization of the soul's thinking as a conversation with itself. He writes: 'Even as a description of the philosophical thinking which has been going on in this dialogue, it omits much that is important. Most conspicuously, it omits all mention of reasoning' (1990, 84). This latter claim is very odd. What does Burnyeat mean here by 'reasoning'? Presumably logical inference or deduction, rather than what Plato means by it: the give and take of question and answer. See Dixsaut's comments on Burnyeat's objection (1997, 8, n. 13). Burnyeat can therefore also say the following: 'I suggest that the more features of external speech you find it plausible to transfer to internal speech, the less plausible you will find it to *identify* a person's internal speech with their thought' (1990, 84). Read: the more you model internal speech on dialogue, the less plausible it is to identify it with thinking. In short, for Burnyeat dialogue is not thinking and vice versa. And yet Burnyeat can later write: 'The one thing I am confident of is that Plato has designed this whole stretch of text as an invitation to his readers to engage in the *kind* of thinking or internal dialogue which I have been sharing with the readers of this introduction' (88).

18 See Sedley's suggestion that Socrates is led to this characterization of thinking by 'The intellectual midwife's dependence on question and answer as the proper mode of investigating ideas' (2004, 34). It is this that arguably led Plato himself to choose the dialogue form. If Plato saw the soul's dialogue with itself as the model, then one would expect him to have written Meditations instead of Dialogues. Dixsaut herself asserts that the ground of Plato's choice of the dialogue

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To support this point further and clarify its significance, let us examine Dixsaut's contrasting interpretation. Claiming that in the passages from the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* in which the soul's dialogue with itself is contrasted to spoken speech 'the word *logos* is used indiscriminately for speaking and for the act of thinking,' while the words *dialogos* and *dialegesthai* 'are kept exclusively … for the soul's dialogue with itself,' Dixsaut thinks we should draw the conclusion that 'It is not at all … spoken, outward dialogue which acts as a paradigm of thought, but quite the opposite' (1997, 4). Two objections can be made here: 1) if we do not consider the one passage in isolation, we see that the dominant sense of *dialegesthai* in the *Theaetetus* is conversation between two people: this is the kind of *dialegesthai* which Socrates claims to want to promote (146a7) and which Theodorus resists with the excuse of being unaccustomed to it (146b3); 2) the mere expression or communication to another of our soul's conversation with itself is not dialogue in the sense of *conversation with* someone else, but only a statement or *logos*. Such a *logos*, as a statement communicated to another, is of course merely incidental to thinking. But it is clearly a confusion to conclude from this, as Dixsaut does (1997, 5–6), that *dialogue* in the sense of *conversation with* another is itself merely incidental to thinking understood as the soul's conversation with itself. Dialogue between two people is not merely the shared verbal expression of each person's inner dialogue: therefore, that the latter should be incidental to thinking by no means shows that the former is. In sum, the passage in question from the *Theaetetus* cannot, as taken in isolation, show that inner, silent dialogue is the paradigm rather than spoken dialogue, as Dixsaut claims (6), for the simple and obvious reason that spoken *dialogue* is not even mentioned in this passage. This is why we must put the passage back into the context of the spoken dialogue on which Socrates insists throughout the *Theaetetus*: ironically, however, this is precisely what Dixsaut's commitment to an anti-dialogical thesis prevents her from doing.[19]

form 'lies in his conception of thought as inner dialogue' (1997, 25). Yet because Dixsaut's interpretation of the identification of thought with inner dialogue can by no means provide a ground for Plato's choice of the dialogue form, it is no accident that Dixsaut persistently neglects explaining this choice. Finally, and most importantly, it is Socrates' conversation with Theaetetus that is providing the model and measure by which to judge the different accounts of knowledge.

19 It is significant that the dialogue began as the conversation of Socrates' soul with itself since Socrates in narrating to Euclides his conversation with Theaetetus and Theodorus spoke for them as well as for himself. Euclides, in editing out Socrates' narrative (143b–c), transforms this inner conversation back into a dialogue in which Theaetetus and Theodorus speak directly and

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It is also here that we can address Long's developmentalist thesis since it depends on a reading of the passage on the soul's conversation with itself in the *Theaetetus* opposed to the one being defended here. According to this thesis, what the passage shows is that Plato 'now' believes 'that without external aid the soul can reflect on a question from different perspectives or speak for different perspectives' (2013, 115), that he 'now' takes to be possible 'the internal representation of other views' (115). I will ignore here the general problem of the chronological ordering presupposed by this thesis, for which Long can give no more defense than to claim that it 'has become mainstream in Anglophone scholarship, or at least in the branches of Anglophone scholarship that avoid skepticism about chronological ordering' (8); in other words, Long feels no need to defend the chronological order he assumes because the branch of Anglophone scholarship with which he identifies 'avoids' questioning it. Instead I will note as the first problem with this thesis its quite implausible suggestion that Plato *ever* considered a philosopher incapable of thinking by himself in the sense of considering different views and perspectives without others being present to express them. The emphasis given to the importance of conversation elsewhere does not exclude the possibility of internalizing the views of others and thus internalizing the conversation:[20] the point is that in this case what serves as the model is precisely conversation. The soul converses with itself *as if it were conversing with another* and in its thinking approximates such conversation as closely as possible. Secondly, because Long divorces the characterization of thought in the *Theaetetus* from the question of the nature of knowledge under examination there, he does not see what I have tried to show with the preceding discussion of the 'measure': the question is not whether we can think by ourselves (of course we can!), but *whether we can come to know something by ourselves*. The passage indeed describes the soul as arriving at an opinion by itself, but the context, as we have seen, suggests that such an opinion requires confirmation in conversation with others. Thinking is conversation both in the sense that thinking *is modelled on conversation* (myself as another, not the other as myself) and in the sense that

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for themselves rather than through the voice of Socrates. In doing so, Euclides is of course reconstructing the original source of Socrates' narrative. We can say, then, that in its very form the present dialogue emphasizes conversation with others over the soul's conversation with itself.

20 I agree with McCoy's suggestion, in a review of Long's book, that 'Socrates' movement between thinking and conversation is a constant dialectic between interpersonal dialogue and thinking, where each energizes the other' (2014, 837). See also G. Kirk: 'In this very important sense of thinking as a conversation one has with oneself, one can adopt the voices of others, and thus the border between oneself and others is shown to be remarkably porous' (2015, 170).

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thinking requires conversation for the testing and confirmation of the opinions it arrives at by itself.

4 The Dialogue's Outcome: Knowledge of Knowledge as a Way of Being with Others

In the final part of the dialogue we are witness to the ironic spectacle of Socrates, whose own method is characterized by the giving and receiving of *logoi,* refuting all attempts to define knowledge as true belief with a *logos*. What is going on here? Without being able to go into the details, I can make the following observation: what Socrates refutes are definitions of *logos* that turn it into some property (articulation in speech, enumeration of parts, or statement of a difference) that could convert an isolated true belief into knowledge simply by being added to it. What is refuted is therefore a non-dialogical conception of knowledge according to which it is simply a true belief with some added feature. What Socrates' practice suggests, in contrast, is that the only thing that can make a belief more than a belief is its submission to that give and take of *logoi* that is dialogue. Such dialogue of course will not produce the sort of knowledge that is sought and not found in the *Theaetetus*, i.e., a knowledge possessing a certainty and finality that frees it from any further subjection to the test of dialogue, but in exposing false beliefs as such it will still provide a kind of knowing.

This is what explains the dialogue's *positive* outcome. Socrates reassures Theaetetus that even if he never gives birth to another child, as we should expect given Socrates' own apparently permanent barrenness, he has still gained from the discussion a gentler disposition in being with others (ἧττον βαρὺς τοῖς συνοῦσι καὶ ἡμερώτερος, 210c2–3) as well as a certain kind of virtue and knowledge: exhibiting temperance in not thinking he knows what he does not know (σωφρόνως οὐκ οἰόμενος εἰδέναι ἃ μὴ οἶσθα, 210c3–4). In this case, a certain knowledge of knowledge, i.e., knowing what you know and do not know, *has* been achieved despite, or rather on account of, the failure to give an account of knowledge.[21] Furthermore, Socrates associates this knowledge of knowledge with

21 As Futter 2018 has observed, if what Socrates means in characterizing Theaetetus as 'pregnant' at the beginning of the dialogue is that he is pregnant with a theory of knowledge, then Theaetetus turns out not to have been pregnant after all; furthermore, Socrates' one demonstration of his 'maieutic' art in the dialogues proves in this case a complete failure. Finding what he calls this 'standard view' incompatible on this and other points with the text of the dialogue,

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a certain way of *being with others*. This outcome of a knowledge of knowledge exhibited in dialogue with others should not surprise us because it is precisely the outcome Socrates predicted at the start of the dialogue. First, the declared purpose of the discussion was to examine Theaetetus' own virtue and knowledge (145b). Secondly, when Socrates' question 'What is knowledge?' was initially met with perplexed silence, Socrates explained that it was motivated by his love of *logos* (φιλολογία) and his desire to 'make us converse and become friendly and talkative with one another' (ἡμᾶς ποιῆσαι διαλέγεσθαι καὶ φίλους τε καὶ προσηγόρους ἀλλήλους γίγνεσθαι, 146a7–8).[22]

5 Philosophical Knowledge as Dialectic and Dialogue

Part of the conclusion suggested by these reflections on the *Theaetetus* is one that Dixsaut has formulated with admirable succinctness and clarity: 'Dialectic is not for Plato the way to a higher knowledge, it is the highest way of knowing' (1997, 18). What Dixsaut means by this statement is, I believe, what I myself would mean by it: not that philosophical knowledge is to be *identified with* dialectic understood as the give-and-take of question and answer, but that it is *inseparable from* this dialectic, i.e., that as a knowledge of knowledge it cannot be a result that concludes dialectic, but rather is always a way of knowing carried out in and

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Futter argues that what makes Theaetetus 'pregnant' is his desire for wisdom and that refuting the false theories about knowledge implanted in him by others is Socrates' way of helping him give birth to his wisdom: a wisdom impossible without the knowledge of what one does not know. According to Futter, therefore, 'Socrates seeks to get Theaetetus to recognize that a theory of knowledge does not constitute knowledge or wisdom and that the travails of spiritual labour have a normative significance for the way that he lives his life' (505). Of Socrates' own barrenness, Futter writes: 'Socrates no longer conceives and gives birth to theories because he has come to recognize that all theories of virtue are ultimately wind-eggs and not worth bringing-up (210b8–10; cf. *Ap.* 23b3–4), even while the activity of philosophical discourse in giving and taking theoretical *logoi,* must be carried on, for the purpose of developing his true child within' (509). All this is in line with what is argued in the present paper, except that Futter does not emphasize (while also not denying) the connection between true wisdom and dialogue.

22 With regard to this passage, Roochnik rightly comments: "Notice that Socrates does not say that the 'what-is-it' question can be answered, or that if it could, the answer would carry a unique theoretical benefit. Instead, he explains his asking of the question as an expression of his love for *logos*, his spirited pursuit of conversation (*dialegesthai*), and his desire to have friends" (2003, 54).

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through dialectic.[23] It is thus knowledgeable thinking without being the kind of possession of knowledge that characterizes expertise. In the words of the *Philebus,* 'the power of dialectic' (ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις, 57e6–7) is 'the power of loving the truth' (δύναμις ἐρᾶν τοῦ ἀληθοῦς, 58d4–5).[24]

Yet, as indicated earlier, Dixsaut and Long would add the qualification that dialectic is something one can carry out by oneself and, at least for Dixsaut, strictly speaking, only by oneself. While this view assumes that conversation is only the externalization of thinking, the present paper in contrast has attempted to show that Socrates' maieutic method, as described, exemplified and made paradigmatic in the *Theaetetus,* suggests that for Plato thinking is only internalized conversation.[25] While Dixsaut claims that one cannot think with others, Plato would claim that, even if there is an obvious sense in which one can think by oneself, there is another stricter sense in which one cannot: even when thinking alone, i.e., when questioning and answering oneself, one is arguing with oneself *as if one were another*:[26] one is trying to imagine what objections others would make, anticipating their questions, and arguing against positions not one's own.[27] That even solitary thinking must be dialogue is due to the indispensability

23 Thus in *Le Naturel Philosophe* Dixsaut writes: 'Pourtant la dialectique ne constitue pas la réponse à la question du savoir, le savoir n'est pas la dialectique, il ne suffit pas de mettre en oeuvre des questions et des réponses, de faire circuler le même et l'autre, d'unifier le multiple et de multiplier l'un pour savoir' (1985, 308). But later she writes: 'Le savoir n'a pas de définition positive et il ne peut se posséder. Savoir signifie apprendre et enseigner, interroger et répondre, en savoir toujours plus et toujours moins qu'on n'en sait' (347). In the specific case of the *Theaetetus,* Dixsaut suggests 'dialectic' as a sense of *logos not* considered at the end of the dialogue and writes: 'Les modalités du jugement, affirmer et nier, qui immunisent contre l'inquiétude de la pensée, ne sont pas celles du discours dialectique' (2013, 149).

24 P. Stern has drawn attention to the importance of the notion of 'powers' in the *Theaetetus:* both the soul and its activity of knowing are conceived of as powers and this is what prevents both from being grasped as stable objects of definition (2008, 170, 200, 226, 239–40, 244). For my own defense elsewhere of a similar reading, see Gonzalez 2009; Gonzalez 2007b. For a similar reading that, however, ignores this prior literature, see Teisserenc, 2013, 221–2.

25 Polansky appears to lean towards this view when he writes: 'The speaking that takes place within the soul in thought is inextricably linked to the speaking between persons that results from it, expresses it, and engenders it' (1992, 223).

26 While it is true that 'se parler à soi-même, ce n'est pas monologuer, mais ce n'est pas non plus parler à d'autres' (Dixsaut 2015, 39), what prevents speaking with oneself from being a monologue is its approximation to dialogue with others.

27 In a seminar held on January 23, 1999, Monique Dixsaut insisted that while 'la pensée est fondamentalement dialogique,' 'cela n'implique pas un interlocuteur réel.' M. Francis Jacques objected with the view I am defending here: 'Je soutiendrais volontiers que dans la réflexion comme dialogue intérieur nous prolongeons, nous reprenons, nous intériorisons — au reste de

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of dialogue to the discovery of philosophical truth. If Dixsaut in contrast asserts that "research in common does not seem to me to be held by Plato as a necessary condition for the attainment of truth" (1997, 23), we must object that this better describes the position of Theodorus than it does that of Socrates or Plato. Perhaps a mathematician can go through the steps of a proof without ever imagining himself in dialogue with another: but that is because he takes his starting points for granted, as given to him directly through some sort of intuition. He can think monologically because he does not question his starting points or, in other words, because his thinking is not sufficiently radical. The radical thinking of philosophy, on the other hand, always takes the form of a dialogue because it recognizes no absolute starting points, because it always begins *in mediis rebus*.

One can of course carry on this dialogue by oneself, but then it is derivative of genuine dialogue and not equal to it: the soul's dialogue with itself can never reproduce even the limited unpredictability and independence of another interlocutor.[28] Given the absence of some light of nature, given the impossibility of

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manière défective — une structure qui a *d'abord* été la structure dialogique effective d'un entretien avec quelqu'un d'autre, avec un interlocuteur réel (je puis me poser une question et y répondre).' Dixsaut 1) replied that she did not see why the opposite could not be the case, i.e., why dialogue with another could not be the exteriorization of an internal structure; 2) granted that empirically it was more plausible that I speak with myself because I speak with others than vice versa, but 3) insisted that 'parler avec, ce n'est pas dialoguer au sens où je l'entends, c'est-à-dire penser' (1999, 36–37). We thus see that what is behind Dixsaut's position is the unjustified conviction that *dialogue with another* in the strict sense of *thinking with another* is an impossibility: thinking for Dixsaut is inherently and necessarily a solitary act. It is hard not to see here a trace of Cartesianism. Roochnik's view is similar to my own when he claims that *dialegesthai* 'requires more than one person: that is, it is dialogical'. One can, however, conceive of an internalized dialogue. Indeed, in two similar passages, *Theaetetus* 189e–190a and *Sophist* 263e, thinking itself is described as such a conversation. Still, its basic meaning surely implies what Gill calls a 'shared search' (2003, 144). Roochnik adds that "Because it is dialogical, dialectic is 'site-specific'" (144). One can also cite here C. Gill's argument (1996), cited by Roochnik, that "the late dialogues may be seen as maintaining the early Platonic commitment to the idea that philosophy consists, at a fundamental level, in dialectical 'shared search' rather than the monologic exposition of predetermined doctrines" (296) and his suggestion that even these dialogues can be interpreted as 'maieutic' (302–304).

28 George Rudebusch, in commenting on an earlier version of this paper, has insisted that there are significant limits to the interlocutor's independence and unpredictability and that this is a good thing, since too much unpredictability and independence would be incompatible with genuine dialogue. I agree and maintain only that there is still a degree of independence and unpredictability in genuine dialogue that the soul's dialogue with itself cannot hope to reproduce. Replying to this same objection made by the commentator for her 1997 paper, Dixsaut suggests that great philosophers may not need an interlocutor for the requisite element of surprise: 'When

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some direct relation to the truth in our current embodied state, the only measure we have for the truth of our beliefs is dialogue with one another. This may not be the kind of divine measure a Theodorus might dream of, but neither is it the purely human measure advocated by Protagoras. In rejecting the idea that man is the measure and in striving for a divine measure recognized to be unattainable in this life, Socratic dialogue provides a measure that is perhaps best described as an "imitation of god" (ὅμοιωσις θεῷ, 176b1).[29] This is why even the current monologue, or rather internal dialogue, must itself be now submitted to the common measure of genuine dialogue with others.

reading these philosophers, we rather have the impression that they are often objecting to themselves what no one else would have thought of' (1997, 23). But could they object to themselves if they had never experienced the objections of others?

29 It too often goes unnoted (Garcia Xavier 2011 is a clear exception) that Socrates describes his art of midwifery as a likeness (ὁμοιότητα, 149c3) of the goddess Artemis (see Polansky 1992, 63) and as God-given (210c7) and God-compelled (150c7–8; see Socrates' repeated insistence that his midwifery depends on the help and willingness of the god: 150d4, d8, 151b4, 151d5).

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Franco Ferrari

Traces of *Euporia* in an Aporetic Dialogue: Relational Ontology in Plato's *Theaetetus*

1

The date of composition of the *Theaetetus* almost certainly coincides with the mature years of Plato's career and, in all likelihood, is later than that of texts like the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Symposium*. However, this dialogue shares many of the formal aspects of Plato's early works, which is to say his 'Socratic dialogues', whereas it seems to differ from his mature works in terms of structure and aims.[1]

The *Theaetetus* shares at least three features of the early dialogues: a) the definitional character of the conversation, which revolves around the attempt to define the nature of *episteme*; b) the absolute centrality of the figure of Socrates, who in works from the same period appears instead to be downplayed to the benefit of other characters, such as Parmenides, Timaeus and the Eleatic Stranger; c) the formally aporetic outcome of the conversation between Socrates and his interlocutors, who do not reach a truly satisfactory result when it comes to the question of 'what knowledge is' (*episteme*), and are forced to acknowledge that none of the suggestions put forward in the course of the dialogue has passed the test of the maieutic method, has withstood the strength of the winds, and is ἄξια τροφῆς, that is, worth rearing (*Tht.* 210b).[2]

As is widely known, the whole dialogue is shaped by another theme, which in a way constitutes its focus and brings together the three features just mentioned. This is the reference to the maieutic method, and in particular the fact that Socrates presents himself as 'midwife', which is to say someone without any personal opinions yet capable both of extracting from his interlocutors the conceptions they have within themselves but are not fully aware of, and of evaluating the theoretical consistency of the theories that are progressively brought into play.[3]

1 Sedley 2004, 1–3.

2 On the similarities between the *Theaetetus* and the Socratic and aporetic dialogues of the early period see Ferrari 2016, 65. A good discussion on the reasons why the *Theaetetus* appears singular and puzzling is provided by Cooper 2000, 25–27.

3 Sedley 2004 places particular emphasis on the maieutic character of the dialogue.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-013

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The aporetic outcome of the conversation on knowledge between Socrates, Theodorus and Theaetetus is no doubt largely due to the method adopted by Socrates, who does not seek to provide a personal answer to the question of what *episteme* is, but rather to extract Theaetetus' opinions and vet them for consistency, in order to establish whether each of them is εἴδωλον καὶ ψεῦδος, that is, a false image, or γονιμόν τε καὶ ἀληθές, that is, fruitful and true (*Tht.* 150b).

It must be added that the 'maieutic' (and hence non-dogmatic) character of the dialogue is expressed not just through the vetting of Theaetetus' 'pregnant' soul but also, and most significantly perhaps, through the analysis of those doctrines that progressively emerge within the discussion. This means that the maieutic technique is applied not only to flesh-and-blood interlocutors, such as Theaetetus, but also to 'theoretical' interlocutors, which is to say to actual doctrines. A particularly enlightening case here is the Protagorean conception of *homo mensura*: Plato maieutically reconstructs its implications, presuppositions (in this case, Heraclitus' *Flussontologie*),[4] and consequences, while also assessing its philosophical consistency. Maieutics, therefore, represents the *underlying structure* of the dialogue, and finds expression both in the engagement with the young and 'pregnant' Theaetetus and in the examination of the philosophical doctrines that emerge during the investigation.[5]

The purpose of this premise is to highlight the reason why the *Theaetetus* presents such a markedly aporetic profile. Contrary to what certain interpreters would appear to believe, it does not depend in the least on the lack of a 'Platonic' answer to the question of the nature of knowledge, still less on the intrinsically aporetic character of the Platonic notion of knowledge. Rather, it depends on the maieutic nature of the dialogue, which is not designed to provide a definite solution to the question of knowledge, but rather aims to examine certain theories surrounding it.[6]

Every Platonic dialogue has an 'open' character, which is to say that it requires an interpretation capable of appreciating its internal and external references.[7] The need to read each dialogue in relation to other sections of the Platonic

4 On the Heraclitean theory of radical flux as ontological support for Protagoras' epistemology see Buckels 2016; see also van Eck 2009.

5 I have attempted to support this thesis in Ferrari 2016, 70–75.

6 I therefore fully agree with Seeck 2009, 9, according to which 'es wäre also ein grundlegendes Missverständnis, zu glauben, Platon habe im *Theaitetos* seine eigene Erkenntnistheorie darstellen wollen. Was er versucht, ist die Sichtung und Systematisierung der zeitgenössischen Diskussion'.

7 The 'open' character of the Platonic works is highlighted, from different points of view, by Erler 1987 and Kahn 1996.

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corpus is even more pressing in the case of the *Theaetetus*, which explicitly points to the *Sophist*, both on the dramatic level and from the point of view of its philosophical content.

The *Sophist* effectively represents a follow-up (i.e., a sequel) to the *Theaetetus* and — as we would expect — provides a consistent and philosophically well-founded answer to the question of the nature of knowledge.[8] According to Plato's perspective, an answer of this kind can only be attained by referring to the forms, which is to say to an ontological sphere consisting of stable, enduring and perfect entities that are as a consequence intelligible and knowable.[9] By contrast, the discussion developed in the *Theaetetus* remains anchored in the plane of phenomenal objects, because the answers to the riddle of knowledge provided by Theaetetus essentially apply to this ontological domain. Indeed, both Protagorean sensualism, which is invoked to lend philosophical consistency to Theaetetus' first answer (*episteme* = *aisthesis*), and the Heraclitean conception of universal flux, designed to provide an ontological foundation for Protagoras' relativist epistemology, remain confined to the phenomenal sphere of reality. Even several of the examples occurring within the discussion on the nature of true opinion and the origin of false opinion have an empirical character.

Furthermore, Socrates himself explicitly announces that the conversation reported in the *Theaetetus* is programmatically designed to stay within the sensible realm. In response to Theaetetus' request that he accurately analyse the monistic and immobilistic position of the Eleatics as well, Socrates states that he would rather leave this perspective aside for the moment, with the prospect of possibly investigating it again on a different occasion. Socrates wishes merely to 'deliver [Theaetetus] through the maieutic art' (τῇ μαιευτικῇ τέχνῃ ἀπολύσαι), which is to say only to examine the theoretical implications of the solution put forward by his interlocutor, not least because the complexity of the Eleatic conception would require a kind of in-depth enquiry incompatible with a cursory and accidental treatment (ἐν παρέργῳ) such as the one provided in the dialogical context of the conversation (*Tht.* 183c–184b).

Socrates, therefore, argues that the immobilistic theses propounded by the Eleatics are foreign to his discussion with Theaetetus and Theodorus, insofar as this is only intended to bring out the assumptions implicit in Theaetetus' answer

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8 Kahn 2007 correctly emphasizes this point.

9 See Cornford 1935, 99: 'The conclusion Plato means us to draw is this: unless we recognise some class of knowable entities exempt from the Heracleitean flux and so capable of standing as the fixed meanings of words, no definition of knowledge can be any more true than its contradictory [...] Without the Forms, as his Parmenides said, there can be no discourse'.

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and to vet their consistency, and hence only requires a reference to Protagorean sensory-relativistic conceptions and Heraclitean ones concerning universal flux. The refusal to deal with Eleatic doctrines, however, does not imply that in Plato's view they are foreign to the question of knowledge. Indeed, a serious investigation of knowledge is bound to bring into play an in-depth reflection on Parmenides' conception of it. And the *Sophist*, as a genuine 'sequel' to the *Theaetetus* (*Soph.* 216a), aims precisely to fill a gap that was consciously left open in a dialogue devoted to the topic of *episteme*.

As Ronald Polansky noted long ago at the beginning of his famous commentary on the *Theaetetus*, 'an inquiry into knowledge must especially consider two things, the suitable objects of knowledge and the cognitive relation of the mind or soul to these objects'.[10] As is evident from dialogues such as the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic* and later *Timaeus*, according to Plato the only objects of genuine knowledge are the intelligible forms, and the question of knowledge requires an investigation of the relation between the soul, or rather the rational part of the soul, and the forms: as is well known, according to Plato the rational part of the soul is akin (συγγενής) to Being, that is, to the world of the forms (*Phd.* 79d, *Rp.* VI 490a–b, X 611e, *Ti.* 90a, etc.).[11] All this is absent from the discussion staged in the *Theaetetus*, which never explicitly mentions the forms, and does not directly address the question of the relation between the soul and entities of this sort. So it would be truly odd and out of place to find a decisive answer to the question of the nature of knowledge in the conversation between Socrates, Theaetetus and Theodorus.

A correct interpretation of the *Theaetetus* requires that this dialogue be viewed in relation to its sequel, namely the *Sophist*. Here the enquiry focuses on dialectic, which takes the form of knowledge of the relations of participation that connect the various genera of being, which is to say the intelligible forms. This means that the question of what *episteme* is, which is formulated in the *Theaetetus*, can only find a sensible and Platonically consistent answer within a conversation such as the one developed in the *Sophist*, where Plato describes the features of ἐπιστήμη μεγίστη, the only science for free men (253c), which of course coincides with dialectic. The description of dialectic, therefore, constitutes 'the missing part' of the *Theaetetus*, which is to say the kind of exposition that Socrates had implicitly deferred to another occasion.[12]

10 Polansky 1992, 11.

11 On the kinship between the soul and the forms see Aronadio 2002, 221–44 and Ferrari 2019.

12 The need to read Plato's dialectical dialogues in connection with one another has been underlined, from a different point of view, by Gill 2012.

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The need to read the two dialogues in a correlated and contextual way had already been felt by the ancient commentators on the *Theaetetus*, or at any rate by those mysterious Platonists mentioned by the Anonymous Commentator on the *Theaetetus*. According to them, Plato, 'having set himself the task of investigating knowledge, shows which objects are not its concern in the *Theaetetus*, and which objects are in the *Sophist*' (ἐν μὲν τῷ Θεαιτήτῳ περὶ ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν δεικνύναι, ἐν δὲ τῷ Σοφιστῇ περὶ ἃ ἔστιν)' (Anon. *In Tht*. Col. 2,33–39).[13] Without sharing this approach entirely, I believe that it is crucial to come up with an "open" interpretation of the *Theaetetus*. In this case, too, the principle of the autonomy of the dialogues shows all its limits.

2

The *Theaetetus*, therefore, does not provide the 'Platonic' answer to the question of the nature of knowledge. Using a maieutic approach, it investigates certain epistemological doctrines that were circulating between the late 5th century and the first decades of the 4th. Along with Protagoras' relativistic sensualism and the radical phenomenalism of the Heracliteans, the dialogue takes into consideration some positions that may be traceable back to the milieu of Socratics like Antisthenes (possibly evoked in Theaetetus' third answer),[14] along with some interesting models for *doxa*, including both true and false *doxa*.

The lack of a Platonic answer, however, does not imply that the dialogue provides no hints that might help the reader to adopt a correct point of view in the field of epistemology. While operating within an aporetic context, Plato still provides some insights that point towards the πόρος, the way out of the aporia. I fully agree with the position emphatically upheld by Dorothea Frede, according to whom 'there is always at least an indication of a *poros*, a path, that would or could lead to a solution if it were pursued'.[15]

The thesis I wish to put forward is that in the discussion that follows the formulation of Theaetetus' third answer, the one identifying knowledge with ἀληθὴς δόξα μετὰ λόγου, Plato both directly and indirectly provides some meta-epistemological indications by which he aims to outline the general traits that an object

13 On this important testimony see Sedley 1996, 90–91.
14 For the hypothesis that Antisthenes is the source of the third definition of knowledge see Brancacci 1993 and Hardy 2001, 219 n. 4. The issue is discussed in depth by Oberhammer 2016, 41–42 n. 99.
15 Frede 1989, 20.

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must possess in order to prove genuinely knowable, which is to say attractive from the point of view of Platonic epistemology.

Within the overall framework of the dialogue, Theaetetus' third answer represents a correction and further development of the second, which established the identity between knowledge and true opinion (ἀληθὴς δόξα). As is widely known, the failure of all attempts to explain the origin of false opinion, and hence the nature of true opinion, leads Socrates and Theaetetus to discard this solution, or rather to replace it with a conception that perfects it.[16] Theaetetus refers to this thesis — whose authorship he ignores — as the assertion that knowledge consists more precisely of ἀληθὴς δόξα μετὰ λόγου, that is, true opinion accompanied by *logos* (account, reason, explanation, explication etc.). According to the champion of this epistemological doctrine, things devoid of *logos* are unknowable, whereas ones furnished with *logos* are knowable (ἐπιστητά).

Socrates reconstructs the general framework of the conception evoked by Theaetetus by describing an ontology which applies to two kinds of entity: primary elements (πρῶτα στοιχεῖα), which are utterly simple, that is, devoid of any characterisation other than their name, and complexes or aggregates (συλλαβαί), which are complex entities stemming from an interplay or interweaving of the various single elements. As is widely known, Socrates presents his exposition as a 'dream in exchange for a dream' (ὄναρ ἀντὶ ὀνείρατος). As Myles Burnyeat has correctly noted, this is the Socratic interpretation of the theory expounded by Theaetetus (in his own translation: *let me tell you my version of your dream*).[17]

Be that as it may, Socrates envisages an ontology populated by two sorts of entity. The first are *hyper-austere ones*, which is to say ones that do not admit of any property; he claims that we cannot even predicate the οὐσία and μὴ οὐσία of these entities, that is, their being and non-being (201e); the being under consideration here is being in general, and refers to all forms of predication. The elementary entities of the dream theory are so austere and isolated that they do not allow for any predication and therefore are ultimately unknowable, insofar as no information pertaining to them can be inferred. The other entities populating the ontology implicit to the dream theory are, by contrast, *complex ones*, and each of them is knowable (γνωστόν) insofar as it is possible to enumerate the elements of which it is composed.[18] Hence according to the dream theory, complexes are

16 On the move from the second to the third definition of knowledge see Ferrari 2011, 105–09, 2013, 410–15. See also the recent essay by Broadie 2016.

17 Burnyeat 1970, 103.

18 On the distinction between austere and generous individuals see McCabe 1994, 158–61 and *passim*.

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knowable, but its parts, i.e. the elements, are not knowable; they can only be perceived and named.

Socrates has no trouble demolishing the asymmetry implicit in the dream theory, by showing the absurdity of a position that explicates the knowability of compounds in terms of their elements, which are unknowable. So the dream theory seems to be implying that knowability is based on what is in itself unknowable (202e–203e).

Before refuting the dream doctrine, Socrates makes a highly relevant epistemological observation. In discussing the conception he has just expounded, he distinguishes between the condition of the person who possesses the truth (ἀληθεύειν) and the position of the person who has truly acquired knowledge (γιγνώσκειν):

> Therefore, when someone forms a true belief about something, but without an account, his soul is capable of grasping the truth (*aletheuein*) about that thing, yet he does not know it. For the person who is not able to give and to receive an account of anything, is not in a relation to it that we can call knowledge. But if he adds an account to his true belief, then it is possible for all that is implicit in his having knowledge to come about. Indeed, he may reach a perfect condition regarding knowledge (202c: transl. Chappell).

This is hardly a surprising statement, at any rate in the eyes of anyone familiar with Plato's epistemology. Socrates here confirms a position that is often expressed in the dialogue, namely the idea that the possession of the truth does not in itself coincide with the possession of knowledge, for an assertion might be descriptively true and yet be confined within the realm of *doxa*, and in particular that of *doxa alethes*, until it is justified and firmly founded through the process of λόγον διδόναι, which is what dialectic consists in.[19] As is demonstrated according to different yet perfectly compatible points of view by the *Meno* and by Book 6 of the *Republic*, it is possible to possess the truth in a certain field without having knowledge (*episteme*) of it, precisely because knowledge requires a foundational *supplementum* that only dialectic can provide.

In the light of this short yet important digression, we can now get back to the conception of the dream. Socrates' refutation seems particularly compelling and effective: if the ontological universe is populated by two types of entity, *austere* ones devoid of characteristics and *generous* ones which are complex, and if knowledge of complex entities is based on the enumeration of their elements, which are, however, unknowable (ἄγνωστα), then the epistemology of the dream

19 See Ferrari 2013, 413–19.

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collapses. The asymmetry between simple elements and complex entities engenders an absurd epistemology that apparently forces us to abandon the solution provided by Theaetetus' third answer.

3

Socrates, however, comes to the rescue of the dream doctrine by advancing the hypothesis that a particular way of conceiving the relation between a whole and its parts can save the conception that Theaetetus has adduced, and which he himself has reconstructed. As we shall see, however, Theaetetus proves incapable of accepting this help.

Socrates envisages two alternative ways of conceiving the ontological identity of any complex entity: the first, which we might call the *aggregative* or *mereological* way, is the one implicit in the dream doctrine, at any rate as this has been reconstructed by Socrates and accepted by Theaetetus; the second way, which is *holistic* and *structural*, undoubtedly seems more promising, although, strangely, it is abandoned by the dialogue's protagonists.

In the first way, Socrates states that the identity of a compound a) may be presented as the aggregation of its elementary parts, so that the compound itself can be conceived as an 'all' (πᾶν) that is perfectly equivalent to its parts: τὰ πάντα μέρη; alternatively, b) it may correspond to a single idea which stems *from* the parts that comprise the compound but is different from them, meaning that it cannot be reduced to them. It is this second mode of conceiving the identity of an entity he is referring to when he says:

> χρῆν γὰρ ἴσως τὴν συλλαβὴν τίθεσθαι μὴ τὰ στοιχεῖα ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐκείνων ἕν τι γεγονὸς εἶδος, ἰδέαν μίαν αὐτὸ αὑτοῦ ἔχον, ἕτερον δὲ τῶν στοιχείων
>
> Perhaps we should have said that the syllable is not the same as the letters [the elements]. Rather, it is some single form that comes into being out of those letters, which has a unitary nature of its own that is different from the letters [the elements]: 203e.

In order to distinguish this second model from the summative and aggregative one, Plato introduces the notion of τὸ ὅλον by contraposing it with that of τὸ πᾶν.[20] He confronts Theaetetus with this famous and crucial dilemma:

20 On the philosophical meaning of the opposition between *to pan* and *to holon* see Centrone 2002, 143–50.

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Ὅτι οὗ ἂν ᾖ μέρη, τὸ ὅλον ἀνάγκη τὰ πάντα μέρη εἶναι. ἢ καὶ τὸ ὅλον ἐκ τῶν μερῶν λέγεις γεγονὸς ἕν τι εἶδος ἕτερον τῶν πάντων μερῶν;

Because if something has parts, then necessarily the whole of that thing is all its parts. Or do you claim that a whole, like a composite, is some form arising out of the parts, which itself has a single nature of its own different from the parts?: 204a; transl. Chappell.

The holistic model implies the existence of entities that are *complex*, which is to say made up of parts, and at the same time *unitary*, which is to say such as to present a high degree of unity. What this means is that such entities possess a *strong ontological identity*, since this cannot be reduced to the mere sum of their elementary parts. From an epistemological perspective, these entities are also knowable, since something can be said about them precisely by virtue of their complexity.

By introducing this holistic model, which conceives ontological identity in a non-aggregative and non-summative way, Plato intends to outline a kind of entity that is actually interesting from the point of view of his ontology and epistemology. As Mitchell Miller rightly noted a few decades ago, this is 'a being that, by virtue of having parts, is not merely a simple one and yet, by virtue of its unitary form or character, is also not merely the aggregate of its parts'.[21]

It is certainly true that Socrates' suggestion that we distinguish structural identity, based on the notion of the whole (ὅλον), from the aggregative identity furnished by the sum of all parts, which is to say by the all (πᾶν) conceived as identical to τὰ πάντα μέρη, is ultimately abandoned by Socrates and Theaetetus. Yet it is equally true that the reasons behind this rejection are misleading, fallacious and utterly foreign to Plato's perspective.

Indeed, Socrates resorts to the model provided by numbers to argue that the all is identical to the sum of its parts, thereby doing away with the distinction between ὅλον and πᾶν previously suggested (204b–c). After having explained that the number 6 is identical to the sum of six units, but also to 3 x 2, or 4 + 2, or again 3 + 2 + 1, he observes that 'in the case of anything that is composed out of numbers, we use the all and all the parts interchangeably' (204d). He exemplifies this model by referring to the cases of the pick and the stadium, which are clearly perfectly identical to their the number of their parts.

However, as is widely known, according to Plato the arithmetical model, which is a summative one, cannot be rigidly applied to the sphere of ontology, at any rate in the case of the intelligible and transcendent realm of reality. Aristotle

21 Miller 1992, 93.

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credits Plato with a conception according to which ideal numbers present a different profile from arithmetical, that is mathematical, numbers, and in particular behave in a different way. Indeed, in Plato's view, according to Aristotle, ideal numbers are ἀσύμβλητοι, which is to say that they cannot be combined or added, whereas mathematical numbers are σύμβλητοι (*Metaph.* M 6, 1080a17–23, M 7, 1082a1–15). Clearly, what this means is that the ideal pentad, for example, cannot be reduced to the sum of five units, or to the sum of the numbers 2 and 3, but presents a different formal profile compared to the sum of its parts. The fact that Socrates resorts to an arithmetical model is probably a concession to Theaetetus the 'mathematician', and is intended to demonstrate that a scheme of this sort is incapable of describing the nature of the objects of knowledge.

Something similar holds for the other argument by which Socrates appears to justify the identity between 'the all' and 'the whole'. Indeed, the fact that both the all and the whole do not lack anything does not imply that they are identical, as Socrates would instead appear to be arguing at 205a: 'But isn't the all just this: what you have when nothing is lacking? [...] And won't the whole be exactly the same thing: that from which nothing of any sort is missing?'. This is a fallacious argument, because the fact of having a shared quality (since both the all and the whole do not lack anything) does not imply absolute identity.

Socrates' suggestion, therefore, is discarded on the basis of anti-Platonic assumptions and fallacious arguments. However, this does not mean that it cannot provide a genuinely useful contribution to the investigation of knowledge. As we have seen, in this section of the dialogue Socrates and Theaetetus are concerned with establishing the requirements that an object must fulfil in order to be truly knowable, and hence attractive from an epistemological point of view. The conversation between Socrates and Theaetetus which followed the exposition of the dream theory has indirectly established what these requirements are: a) an object must not be so 'austere' and isolated as to rule out all predication, because in that case nothing could be said about it and it would be unknowable; on the other hand, b) an object must not be entirely devoid of unity, which is to say it mustn't coincide with the mere sum of its elementary parts, because in that case it would lack genuine ontological identity.

If we were to reformulate Plato's suggestions in positive terms, we would have to conclude that according to the discussion featured in the final section of the *Theaetetus* an entity X, in order to be the object of genuine knowledge (*episteme*), must at the same time be *unitary* from the ontological point of view and *multiple* from the predicative point of view; in other words, it must possess a unity strong enough for it not to not be reduced to the mere aggregation of its parts, and complex enough for it to be an object of informative knowledge.

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4

In the middle dialogues, and certainly later in the *Sophist*, *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, Plato identifies intelligible forms as the objects of philosophical knowledge. The forms, however, are absent from the *Theaetetus*, at least in the sense that they are not explicitly introduced as objects of knowledge.[22] This absence is understandable in the light of the fact that the epistemological conceptions discussed in the dialogue are chiefly sensualistic, and therefore presuppose an ontology devoid of intelligible forms. Still, this does not mean that in the *Theaetetus* there are no allusions to or mentions of entities of this kind. In particular, in the discussion that follows the exposition of the dream theory, we find plenty of references to the terminology typical of the conception of the forms: the nouns εἶδος and ἰδέα are frequently used (203e, 204a, 205c etc.), and in the same context Plato also employs the adjectives ἀμέριστος and μονοειδές (205c, d), which are usually applied to intelligible forms.

Therefore, even within a theoretical context that does not require the introduction of the forms, Plato still alludes to them, in order to point the reader towards the solution to the riddle of knowledge. Besides, while in the final part of the *Theaetetus* the conversation between Socrates and Theaetetus highlights, if only indirectly, the requisites that objects of knowledge must fulfil, in the *Sophist*, which appears to be a sequel to the *Theaetetus*, this topic is more explicitly explored, according to the indications formulated in the previous dialogue.

The Eleatic Stranger outlines a relational ontology whereby objects of knowledge must prove *unitary* from an ontological point of view and *multiple* from a predicative point of view. The *Sophist*, just like the *Theaetetus*, rules out the possibility of acquiring knowledge of entities that are so austere and isolated that nothing can be said about them, other than their name. A perspective of this sort implies the rejection of all forms of predication, which is to say of informative assertion. The famous 'late-learners' (ὀψιμαθεῖς), who deny that it is possible to call a man good, but only accept that we can call the good good or a man man (*Soph.* 251b–c), are very similar to the supporters of the dream doctrine, who conceive the elements of reality as being devoid of any characteristic apart from their name.

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22 The κοινά mentioned at 185c–186a (being and not-being, likeness and unlikeness, identity and difference etc) are not separate forms but universal predicates, which allow the formulation of judgements: see Shea 1985 and Ferrari 2011, 81–90.

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According to Plato, knowledge entails that the known object is *one* from the ontological point of view and *multiple* from the predicative point of view. After having explained that many of our statements do not merely say that man is man but also add that he is good and countless other things, the Stranger formulates a general principle: 'and so with everything else: we take any given thing as one and yet speak of it as many and by many names' (καὶ τἆλλα δὴ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον οὕτως ἓν ἕκαστον ὑποθέμενοι πάλιν αὐτὸ πολλὰ καὶ πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι λέγομεν) (*Soph.* 251b).

The relational ontology described by the Eleatic Stranger meets the requisites implied by the *Theaetetus*. Although this dialogue does not explicitly introduce the forms, it points to certain requisites that only the forms can fully possess. Each form represents an absolute ontological *unity* that is indivisible (ἀμέριστον) and homogeneous (μονοειδές); however, it also represents a *multiplicity*, insofar as it possess a range of qualities that are unified by its very structure, which can be expressed by the λόγος τῆς οὐσίας. What this means is that the ontological identity of the object of knowledge, that is the intelligible form, is not produced by the sum of the elementary parts, but represents a unitary structure, made up of all the various parts yet irreducible to them, a structure superior to these elements.

In the *Theaetetus*, through the famous example of the unity of 'Hesiod's wagon', Plato seeks to outline the nature of the object of genuine knowledge. This does not coincide with the mere enumeration of the "hundred pieces of the wagon",[23] but requires a capacity to grasp the οὐσία of the wagon, which is to say the structure governing the relations among the various parts:

> Οὕτω τοίνυν καὶ περὶ ἁμάξης ἡμᾶς μὲν ὀρθὴν ἔχειν δόξαν, τὸν δὲ διὰ τῶν ἑκατὸν ἐκείνων δυνάμενον διελθεῖν αὐτῆς τὴν οὐσίαν, προσλαβόντα τοῦτο, λόγον τε προσειληφέναι τῇ ἀληθεῖ δόξῃ καὶ ἀντὶ δοξαστικοῦ τεχνικόν τε καὶ ἐπιστήμονα περὶ ἁμάξης οὐσίας γεγονέναι, διὰ στοιχείων τὸ ὅλον περάναντα
>
> So in this case, about Hesiod's wagon. This critic will say that we have correct belief about the wagon, but that person who can express its essence by going through its hundred parts — the person who adds that is the one who has added an account to his true belief. He is the one who has replaced mere belief about that wagon with knowledge and a craftsman's understanding of the true nature of the wagon. This he has achieved by getting to the wagon as a whole by way of its natural parts: *Tht.* 207b; transl. Chappell.

23 The theory according to which a *logos* is identical with the mere enumeration of the elements seems to be too naive: see Cooper 1995, 78–79 and Oberhammer 2016, 82–86.

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Plato's adoption of a point of view of this sort clearly entails that the object of knowledge is a unitary and indivisible whole (ὅλον ἓν καὶ ἀμέριστον) whose essence (οὐσία) consists in the unity of its elements, which is to say its parts, and cannot be reduced in a mereological way to their sum. In such a way, Plato lays the foundations for a conception capable of reconciling a *relational ontology* and an *informative epistemology*: every form is both a metaphysical unity and a structured multiplicity.

According to the indications provided in the *Republic* and confirmed in many other dialogues, philosophical knowledge consists in determining the λόγος τῆς οὐσίας ἑκάστου or in the capacity to give a *logos* (justification, account, explanation, etc.) of every hypothesis; and it is possible to do so because the object of knowledge, while constituting a unitary and indivisible entity, is also possessed of an inner articulation, which can give rise to genuine, which is to say informative and relational, knowledge.

The formally aporetic outcome of the *Theaetetus*, therefore, should not lead us to attribute to Plato a form of epistemological pessimism that would be utterly incompatible with the conception of knowledge formulated in other dialogues. Nor should this outcome lead us to conclude that Plato abandoned the doctrine of the forms and the belief that they constitute the only objects of genuine knowledge. Rather, an outcome of this sort is due to a specific communicational strategy and to the character Socrates' choice of systematically resorting to the maieutic technique. The aporia of the *Theaetetus*, like that of many other dialogues, applies to the level of the characters (πρόσωπα), and does not extend to the author of the work.[24]

24 See Ferrari 2016, 67–68.

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Part V: **The Reception**

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Claudia Mársico

Intra-Socratic Polemics in Plato's *Theaetetus*: Antisthenes and the Dream Theory

Plato wrote his works on the horizon of a quirky and controversial community formed around the figure of Socrates. Beaten by his condemnation and execution, this group faced the challenge of designing a defence strategy which went beyond theoretical and personal differences. Centuries later, Augustine said that such an immense difference among the disciples of a single man was something striking,[1] and historiography has strongly emphasised this aspect. Therefore, it is necessary to detect, beyond the biographical elements and the corporate attitudes of the member of this group, which were the links between their philosophies, pointing out the shared aspects and not only the elements that separate them. The *Theaetetus* is a fertile ground for this search. Unlike others dialogues, the *Theaetetus* awakes a nostalgic gaze. Remembering Socrates and Theaetetus in their splendour at a time when one is dead and the other is agonising keeps alive the memory of better times, when the community life was something quotidian. It also provides valuable information about shared points and frictions about common problems.

Indeed, when consulting the appendix of G. Giannantoni's *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* and its review of the Platonic *loci* that could allude to the philosophies of their fellow disciples, we find that they are particularly concentrated in *Republic* and *Theaetetus*. There is a big difference in length between these two texts, so that the concentration in the *Theaetetus* underlines its importance as a testimony of the intra-Socratic dialogues.[2] In this framework, taking into account the discussion about the aporetic or euporetic character of this work that cut across recent studies, we will consider some signs of these theoretical exchanges. Then, we will analyse 'Socrates' dream' to provide an interpretation supported by the Antisthenian materials present in the last characterization of ἐπιστήμη. Some proposals about the way of understanding Antisthenes' philosophy, and therefore its possible connection with the 'dream passage', will show relevant aspects in order to evaluate the general direction of the dialogue and its place in the framework of Platonic epistemology.

1 *SSR*, I.H.13.
2 *SSR*, I.H, 28 and 31.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-014

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1 The *Theatetus* and Traditional Historiography

The *Theaetetus* places us before skilled and subtle interlocutors who listen to the reading of the record of a conversation between Socrates and the comrade that gives name to the dialogue. After analyzing three possible approaches to knowledge, they realize that they are far from reaching a satisfactory outcome. The whole text has been considered as a purificatory procedure to rule out failed solutions and therefore as a propaedeutic step. There cannot be a proper settlement in this dialogue because the Theory of Forms is not present and the ultimate goal would be precisely to indicate that without that tool we cannot account for knowledge. In fact, delving deeper, we could say that it seeks to warn against the devastating effects of combining δόξα and ἐπιστήμη without a solid parameter. These problems will be solved in the *Sophist*, where the dynamic view about Forms and the explanation of the relationship between ontology and language finally offers an acceptable model.[3]

On the other hand, other readings maintain that knowledge and opinion are compatible if δόξα does not relate to perception but to a type of justified judgment which would constitute a kind of non-infallible knowledge. This perspective does not usually point towards the result of the dialectical procedure, but to the process that draws upon hypotheses and accepts a coherentist approach at least as the first stage of the method. With different variants, these perspectives take into account the significance of the characterization of knowledge as δόξα ἀληθὴς μετὰ λόγου in contemporary epistemology and consider that Plato accepted some similar idea. So there is not a complete rejection but a criticism because of some failures in conceiving λόγος.[4]

To assess this discussion, it is important to observe its controversial components grasping the dialogical tension in this passage.[5] Let's begin by briefly mentioning some figures whose presence is glimpsed in the *Theaetetus*. In the first place, the dialogue is the product of a conversation between Euclid and Terpsion. The work is, so to speak, in the hands of Megarics. It is striking, in fact, that a work with epistemological interests is guided by thinkers who propose a radical limitation of this realm, and postulate that being a philosopher is, in some sense, to proclaim the impossibility of positive knowledge.[6] Against this

3 See, among others, Cornford 1935, 142 ff., Gerson 2003, 194 ff., Sedley 2004, *passim* and Ferrari 2011, 141 f.

4 Among others Fine 1979, Burnyeat 1990 and Trabattoni 2010 and 2016.

5 On the notion of 'zone of dialogical tension' as a historiographical tool, see Mársico 2010.

6 See Muller 1985, Mársico 2013 and Gardella 2015.

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backdrop, the *contaminatio* between δόξα and ἐπιστήμη and the difficulties regarding the notion of an infallible ἐπιστήμη are not marginal subtleties but expected, central features.

In addition, the Megaric presence invites to consider other aspects, such as the view about writing, which contrasts with the approach in other dialogues,[7] as well as the Platonic evaluation of eristics, either as a form of dialectic that Plato tries to condemn, as is usually understood,[8] or as a version of the Socratic *elenchus* that he seeks to legitimize, as M. Narcy held in a suggestive reading that brings both philosophies closer together.[9] In any case, the absence of any positive conclusion may respond to the Megaric influx and could be an indication that this group is not entirely rejected nor defended, but considered both valuable and insufficient at the same time.[10]

In the second place, there has been a debated but extremely persistent suspicion that behind the secret doctrine of the κομψότεροι in *Theaetetus*, 151a we can find Cyrenaic theses. This is a suggestion made by F. Schleiermacher, taken up by F. Dümmler at the end of the nineteenth-century and posed again in the twentieth-century by R. Mondolfo and K. Döring. Despite some objections, such as those of G. Giannantoni and V. Tsouna, this view has gained recent adherents, such as J. Brunschwig and U. Zilioli, among others.[11] The Cyrenaics would be, in this perspective, neo-Protagorian thinkers who cannot properly underpin their claims.

Of course, as we mentioned above, we must add the reference to Antisthenes. The anti-Antisthenic roots of the *Theaetetus* have been, in fact, the most analysed. With different degrees of acceptance and plausibility, it was said that the dialogue points out entirely to this polemic.[12] In particular, the influence of this Socratic figure has been seen in various passages of the dialogue scattered throughout the three characterizations of knowledge, especially at 152e–153d, 155e–156a, 161c–169b, 174a–175d, 187b–200c and 201a–205e. We will return to this issue.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that there is a less explored set of relations between this dialogue and the works of Aeschines, Simon and Phaedo of Elis. In fact, Plato had shared concerns with Aeschines of Sphettus regarding

7 About writing, see Rowe 2007.
8 See Dorion 2000, Auffret/Rashed 2015, 31–48.
9 See Narcy 2013, 130–166, esp. 165.
10 See Mársico 2011.
11 See Schleiermacher 1884, 127; Dümmler 1882, 56; Mondolfo 1953, 127–35, Döring 1988, Giannantoni 1990, IV.365 ff., Tsouna 1998, Brunschwig 2001, 457–478 and Zilioli 2012, 46–74.
12 See Natorp 1903, 91–92, Joël 1901, 839, Raeder 1905, 280–283.

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philosophical education and the effects of abandoning it too early, as at 150e–151a.[13] And there are also links with the testimonies we keep about Simon the Shoemaker, that has been seen as the origin of some examples associated with his τέχνη. He is also relevant to the issue of the written record, because Diogenes Laertius recalls that he was one of the initiators of the Socratic dialogues when he began to record the master's conversations.[14]

Phaedo of Elis, on the other hand, was also a member of the Socratic circle and leader of a group with interests and proposals different from the Platonic ones. He is in some sense a parallel figure of Euclid, since Plato made them protagonists of fictional dialogues of distinctive importance in metaphysics and epistemology. Both lines are the most akin to Platonism, and doxography refers to friendly relations between them, as well as to the hostility towards Aristippus and Antisthenes. This division within the group gives rise to the idea of a proximity of Plato's developments to the Megaric and Eliac ideas. In fact, these lines were not incompatible, so that it is not necessary to always think in terms of confrontation between them.

In short, the *Theaetetus* reveals some identity features within the group, which are not visible in the solutions they choose but in the type of diagnosis of the problems they study.[15] It is, therefore, an exploration of the constraints of other passages in order to show the need for an alternative path, and to clarify at the same time Plato's position within the group: to think about knowledge requires to abandon the Megaric restrictions imposed on the epistemological realm, without falling into the Cyrenaic subjectivism that so closely resembles Protagorism, and without getting lost in Antisthenes' quirky system of systematic truth. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish among these strands a clear difference between those who are reliable enough to make them 'responsible interlocutors' and those who will only be alluded between the lines as shadows or inspirers of dreams.

An obstacle to this kind of approach obviously lies in the fragmentary state of the sources and the differences in the interpretation of Socratic philosophies. After a progressive deployment of these studies since the eighteenth-century, a general turnaround usually associated with the speculative excesses of the nineteenth-century historiography was reinforced by a sort of exegesis that condemned *a priori* the search for traits of the intra-Socratic dialogue. The displacement of the Socratics outside the scene that leaves Plato reigning alone

13 See Tarrant 2012, 159.

14 D.L. 2.123. On Simon, see Sellars 2003, 207–216.

15 See Mársico 2018.

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is one of the most interesting phenomena within philosophical historiography in the last two centuries.

Indeed, classical historiography in contemporary times is based on the redefinition of the role of Socrates carried out by F. Schliermacher. In this movement, he emphasises the philosophical aspects of his figure choosing. Plato becomes the main source and Xenophon is pushed into the background. The success of the strategy can be seen in the growth of this reading which led in the end of the nineteenth century to a overall rejection of Xenophon. This process is not alien to the Socratics in general which were relegated to a secondary more and more blurred plane. The idea of 'minority' in the designation 'minor Socratics' was increasingly marked by a negative bias, and they have become a kind of source of explanation of some odd Platonic allusions without any interest on detailed studies about the extant materials. Indeed, the great times of the philological editions did not produce an integral edition of the Socratic philosophers. We could say that these figures are the sacrificial victims of the foundation of this historiographical period so that the great philological Works were built leaving them outside and causing a lasting effect of distortion that only in recent decades has started to reverse.

In the case of Antisthenes, whom we will pay special attention to in this work, many studies addressed his philosophy since the beginning of the eighteenth century, as can be seen from the works of G. Richter in 1724 and L. Crell in 1728, both following the 'cynic' interpretation that emerged from Diogenes Laertius. Then, the volumes of W. Tennemann on the 'Platonic system' in 1792, in the horizon of a perspective of coherence with Kantian elements, produced many changes in the interpretation of the general horizon, and a new kind of approach to the Antisthenic philosophy appeared. This interest continued along the nineteenth century. F. Schleiermacher expanded the prospects about the link between Plato and the other Socratics in his *Platons Werke*, published between 1804 and 1828, and his *Die Philosophie der Griechen* in 1839, and later there were many studies in this field. However, the idea of a broad difference in the quality of the philosophical productions within the group became stronger and paved the way to the condemnation of the Antisthenic studies as something marginal.

It is true that the exercise of comparison without deeper studies on the Socratic Philosophies often produced exaggerations that discredited the field. As a result, the twentieth century gave way to a highly critical approach to the Socratic philosophies as a whole, as can be seen in the works of U. von Wilamowitz (1919). Some time later, in the fifties, G. Kirk considered the study of the interaction be-

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tween Plato and his comrades in general and the Antisthenic approach in particular 'almost dead'.[16] During the second half of the twentieth-century, some isolated works gave rise to a gradual return to these studies. Explorations on the Socratic dialogue, investigations on particular topics of Socratic philosophies and the edition of G. Giannantoni that established firm philological foundations were starting points for new works much more in-depth than the products of the initial attempts.

In this horizon, the relevance of Antisthenes' Philosophy has been especially recognised and there have appeared important works, such as those of A. Brancacci, V. Suvak and S. Prince.[17] It is possible, then, to progress in a survey less affected by speculative deviations, and to examine intertextual allusions within the framework of the rich and complex dialogic tension within the Socratic circle. This in turn allows to improve the hermeutical conditions to understand the *Theaetetus* through a refined version of these Socratic materials.

2 Knowledge, Dreams and Elements

Let us analyse briefly Socrates' dream. This well-known passage illustrates the third characterisation of knowledge that defines it as δόξα ἀληθὴς μετὰ λόγου, as it is suggested by Theaetetus in 201c–d. It is said: 'matters of which there is no *logos* are not knowable, yes, that is what he called them, and those of which there is are knowable'. The presence of a λόγος turns the true opinions ἐπιστητά. This term is a ἅπαξ λεγόμενον that has been seen as an indication of a foreign thesis — along with Theaetetus' mention that he has heard these ideas from others—,[18] or as the Platonic construction of a theory to criticise a hypothetical adversary, or even an attempt to review his previous beliefs. To decide about this issue requires clarifying the origin of that thesis and its connection with the characterisation of knowledge as a true opinion with αἰτίας λογισμός stated in *Meno*, 98a, including its parallel passages in *Phaedo*, 76b and *Symposium*, 202a.[19] The assessment of Theaetetus' third characterisation as refutative or conservative has been linked to this point, although these options should not be thoroughly incompatible and the best exegetical alternative lies in a halfway point.

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16 Kirk 1951, 238.

17 See Brancacci 1990, Suvak 2014 and Prince 201.

18 On the list of ἅπαξ, see Brancacci 2001, 362–363. See also Narcy 1994, 366 and Ferrari 2011, 487.

19 See El Murr 2010, 135–156.

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The initial reaction of Socrates reveals a relevant interpretative key: it asks for the criterion to identify and differentiate explanatory material from that which is not, that is to say, to establish what is an explanation, and therefore knowledge, and what is δόξα in this theory. This criterion will serve at the end to evaluate the whole argument, and at this point, it anticipates the main feature of Plato's thesis: the dream theory will not be able to clarify this aspect of the argument so that although it does not imply necessarily an error in it, it is clear that it is vague. This casts doubts on the epistemological value of all what is to come.

Indeed, Theaetetus seems to know only the general features of the dream theory. When Socrates asks about the details he says: 'I do not know whether I can think it out' (οὐκ οἶδα εἰ ἐξευρήσω) (201d). That is, he does not try to repeat what he has heard but rather to reconstruct a possible foundation, which recalls the hermeneutic task on the Protagoras' thesis at the beginning of the dialogue. In fact, he had recalled an opinion without being able to explain it, which is really paradoxical in the context of this definition of knowledge: someone defines knowledge as opinion with an explanation, but cannot explain the very statement so that there seems to be total lack of knowledge in the definition of knowledge. To move beyond this embarrassing situation, Socrates displays a possible foundation. This confusion allows establishing some distance between Theaetetus' version -and its alien origin- and the one that Socrates will expose through the image of the dream. In Plato's hands, this gap is a useful tool to make adjustment in other thinker's ideas.[20]

The oneiric realm had been associated at 158b with madness as a field in which 'false opinions are formed', and the problem of indiscernibility between dream and wakefulness is alluded to, so that 'in each case the things which appear are to the one to whom they appear' true. A theory related to dreaming stresses the impossibility of distinguishing states, and that makes it *ipso facto* suspicious. Indeed, it comes to the mind (ἐννοεῖν) of Theatetus as a fuzzy memory, and he cannot answer to Socrates' requirement: 'tell us how he distinguished between knowable and the unknowable (τὰ δὲ δὴ ἐπιστητὰ ταῦτα καὶ μὴ πῇ διῄρει λέγε)' (201d). The dream highlights, then, this state of indiscernibility advancing that the theory will be unable to establish a demarcation criterion. So, the main objection is posed at the very moment in which the definition is associated with the oneiric realm.

In this context, Socrates suggests a theory in which only the compounds have an explanation and the simple elements, τὰ πρῶτα στοιχεῖα, are just referred by

20 See Narcy 2010. On the strategies against the opponents, see Mársico 2005.

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ὀνόματα. There is no λόγος of them, and it is only through their combination that the predicative level arises (201d–e). This passage recalls the invitation to a δεύτερος πλοῦς at *Phaedo*, 99c. In the same vein, in order to achieve knowledge, it would be necessary to enunciate the elements in themselves if they had an explanation (εἴπερ... εἶχεν οἰκεῖον αὐτοῦ λόγον), but this is impossible since they have only their names (οὐ γὰρ εἶναι αὐτῷ ἀλλ᾽ ἢ ὀνομάζεσθαι μόνον) (202a–b). Compounds, on the other hand, can be estimated in a true judgment.

The discomfort with this idea comes up immediately because, if so, the unknowable would be the basis of the knowable (202d–e). Thus, the entire theory reveals an asymmetry that counteracts essential conditions for justification.[21] To show the disadvantages of this position, Socrates offers the linguistic model that is at the root of the theory: the letters are simple elements, the syllables are compounds, and we can explain syllables through letters. In fact, this is a proper model to describe the τέχνη of literacy — and any other τέχνη —, because it ignores the ultimate foundation. Looking at the concrete realm, like the practices of the dianoetic level in the allegory of the line, it starts from axiomatic statements without any major impact on its epistemic status, but if we follow this model, we give up on an answer about the nature of knowledge as a whole. Strictly speaking, this aspect would suffice to jeopardise this conception, but the text tries to show a greater degree of inconsistency, which feeds the idea that Plato tries to contest a rival theory.

Sure enough, this reconstruction leads to a dilemma: the explanation of the syllable requires the enumeration of its letters so that the syllable is the same as the letters or forms a different entity. In the first case, for there to be knowledge, there should not be asymmetry of knowability, and therefore knowledge of the elements (203d) would be required. In the second case, if the syllables are a new entity, they would be as unknowable as the letters, and therefore they would lack explanation (205c–e). This implies that 'the elements as a class admit of a much clearer knowledge than the compounds, and of a knowledge that is much more important for the complete attainment of each branch of learning' (206b). That is, any theory supported by the unknowability of its elements is "a joke" (206b).

21 See Fine 1979, 369 ff.

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3 Antisthenes' Semantic Analysis and Socrates' Dream

Is there an allusion to Antisthenes' theories in these passages? This disciple of Socrates stands out in the Hellenistic doxography because of the news about his quarrels with Plato and his significant work that inspired vital aspects of Hellenistic philosophy. His main position, possibly influenced by Gorgias' philosophy,[22] adopts a kind of inversion that enables objectivism considering language as an element with full adequation to the real, and therefore it denies false discourse. This thesis is often underestimated by its eristic atmosphere, but it constitutes a significant component of the later tradition linked with the idea that the correlation between the language and reality is based in the ὀνόματα.[23] Indeed, this dissidence explains the main difference between Antisthenes and Plato.

In this framework of complete adequation, Antisthenes maintains a corporealist ontology[24] and conceives language as a mosaic of names. Thus, 'he who says, says something, who says something, says what it is, and who says what it is, tells the truth (ὁ γὰρ λέγων τι λέγει, ὁ δέ τι λέγων τὸ ὄν λέγει, ὁ δὲ τὸ ὄν λέγων ἀληθεύει)'.[25] According to Aristotle at *Met.*, V.29.1024b30ff., Antisthenes held that there is an οἰκεῖος λόγος for each thing (ἕν ἐφ' ἑνός), so that 'contradiction is impossible, and falsehood nearly so'. The term ἕν, incorrect from the grammatical point of view, can be explained, as has been suggested, if Plato was quoting Antisthenes' theory about the ὄνομα of each thing.[26] We can also think of πρᾶγμα, which refers to mundane entities, emphasising that language shows things. The Stoic linguistic developments, that claim the Antisthenic legacy, could support this idea.

On the other hand, at *Met.* VIII.3.1043b23ff. (= *SSR*, VA 150) Aristotle adds an important detail about the functioning of the ὀνόματα. After saying that the followers of Antisthenes were uncultured (ἀπαίδευτοι), he states that they argue that 'it is impossible to define what a thing is (οὐκ ἔστι τὸ τί ἐστιν ὁρίζασθαι), for the definition, they say, is a lengthy formula (λόγος μακρός), but it is possible actually to teach (διδάξαι) others what a thing is like (ποῖόν ἐστι)'. A long

22 D.L. VI.1 (= SSR, V.A.11).
23 See Mársico 2013.
24 Simplicius, *in Aristot. Categ.*, 208.28-32 (= SSR, V.A. 149).
25 Proclus, *In Plat. Cratyl.* 37 (= *SSR*, V.A. 155).
26 See Cordero 2001, 323–344.

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statement implies complexity, which is incompatible with the simplicity of names so that the Antisthenic Socrates did not ask 'τί ἐστι x', but 'ποῖόν ἐστι x'.

To clarify this point, Aristotle offers an example: 'we cannot say what silver is, (τί ἐστιν) but we can say that it is like (οἷον) tin'.[27] As we have proposed on another occasion, this idea constitutes the most relevant Antisthenic contribution to philosophy. It implies the development of a proto-theory of semantic fields, according to which the starting point is always a set of names, and we should explore their relationships with the guide of the ποῖόν τι question until reconstructing the structural underlying network that constitutes reality. Given the correlation between language and the world, the Antisthenic philosopher does not have to worry about the access to reality, because language reveals to any native speaker the keys to undertake this search. The difference between the philosopher and the rest of men lies in the ability to recognise this path and develop a systematic knowledge of the linguistic realm that has as an outcome of this hermeneutical expertise a progressive knowledge of reality. Therefore, philosophy is nothing more — and does not need to be more — than ἐπίσκεψις ὀνομάτων.[28]

In our interpretation, the predicative level associated with the definition has no place in Antisthenic philosophy, and the research rests, as in the *Theaetetus*' dream passage, on primary elements that do not require explanation. The analysis comes through the network of semantic links carried out by the philosopher in his task of understanding reality. The hypothesis of an Antisthenic definition, therefore, adds nothing, and obscures, on the contrary, a type of understanding that resembles the way native speakers understand their language.

Aristotle synthesises this idea by saying: 'there can be definition and formula of one kind of substance, i.e. the composite, whether it is sensible or intelligible; but not of its primary constituents'.[29] This statement stresses the core of the dream theory and indicates the deep motive of the controversy between these two Socratic asseverations.[30] Strictly speaking, Aristotle translates this idea into his own terminology. This is clear from the distinction between sensible and intelligible substance, which has no meaning in the context of the Antisthenic corporeism where to exist is to be something material and qualified (ποῖόν τι).

27 See also Porphyry, *Schol. ad Od.* ι 106 (*SSR*, V.A. 187–9).
28 Epictetus, *Diss*. I.17.102 (=*SSR*, V.A. 160).
29 *Met*. VIII.3.1043b23ff. (=*SSR*, VA150).
30 On the textual problems of the passage, see Brancacci 2002. This position is significant for the Aristotelian treatment of the simple elements in *Met*. VI.4 and XI.10 (See Inverso 2011).

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In sum, from the Antisthenic perspective, understood as ἐπίσκεψις ὀνομάτων, philosophy consists of the recognition of semantic fields that reflect the 'map of reality', so that predicative structures are nothing more than the expression of properties, both in cases such as 'the horse is white' or 'Socrates is in Athens', as in 'Socrates is a man', in a way that resembles the Aristotelian idea at *Categories*, 3b15 about the link between secondary substance and quality. So, definitions hide the expression of properties, in the same way as Platonic Forms were seen by Antisthenes in the *Sathon* as hypostatized properties.[31] From his point of view, Plato was just imagining stable realities as an ontological support for definitions, but this is unnecessary if we adopt linguistic parameters and the guide of the ποῖόν τι question. This model offers, as an alternative, a semantic network with an ontological correlate.

As in other cases, this is not the only possible reconstruction of the Antisthenic position and the differences have a clear impact on the evaluation about the contact between Antisthenes' philosophy and the *Theaetetus'* dream passage. The interpretation of A. Brancacci, which has been decisive in the development of the studies on this field, holds that there is a kind of Antisthenic definition associated with ἐπιστήμη. Antisthenes would not have been a supporter of a criterion based on names and the creator of a proto-theory of semantic fields, but a precursor of the idea of συμπλοκή. It is, of course, the same notion that constitutes a major novelty in Plato's Sophist, this time referring to the connection of names and qualified bodies and not of Forms. In this way, Antisthenes was trying to warn againt a kind of entities which was outside the field of knowledge understood as δόξα ἀληθὴς μετὰ λόγου, and the appealing to a kind of συμπλοκή is part of an antiplatonic strategy.[32]

In our view, if indeed it was an anti-Platonic argument whose purpose was to criticise the theory of Forms, it is not clear why Aristotle mentioned the ποῖόν τι question and the case of silver. This example is not a definition and resorts to an object without the kind of simplicity of the Forms. On the other hand, the *Sathon* held that the Forms are hypostatized qualities, such as horseness,[33] but there are no traits of simplicity as a pernicious element. In fact, the Antisthenic theory draws on names of a similar uniqueness, but without the eidetic correlate that leaves the surrounding world in the level of a copy.

We can observe some examples of the investigation of the names with the guide of the ποῖόν τι question in the extant testimonies. This is clear in the

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31 SSR, V.A. 149.

32 See Brancacci 2001, 376–367.

33 See Cordero 2002, 323–344.

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analysis of Homeric passages[34] and in the exploration of the virtues that Xenophon transmits in *Memorabilia*, IV.5.[35] According to Aristotle, this model of analysis allows to carry out teaching, which assumes an epistemic character without the need of definitions. The distance between both authors is the result of different ways to conceive the nature of language — strict correlation in the case of Antisthenes and variable correlate in the case of Plato —, and the dream theory shows the collision between the ὄνομα-criterion and the predicative criterion.

Indeed, if Antisthenes had appealed to definitions, what Plato describes as an enumeration of elements would be obscure, and it would be necessary to infer, as Brancacci does, that not only the dream theory, but all the excursus about the διαίρεσις in the *Sophist* is a reference to the Antisthenic methodology.[36] In this case, both authors should have been much closer than the sources suggest. If not, the enumeration of elements may have been a way in which Plato understood the method of semantic analysis, which at first glance may seem a mere listing, as it happens, for example, with the swarm of virtues at *Meno* 71e–72a.

A reading of this kind, on the other hand, has a comparative advantage because of its theoretical economy, since it does not require supposing that Plato advanced a thesis of ἄλογοι elements that Antisthenes never proposed,[37] and then Aristotle interpreted it literally and attributed it to Antisthenes. On the contrary, without the introduction of the idea of an Antisthenic definition, Plato just portrayed critically, but without major distortions, a rival position and Aristotle synthesised this dissent, which is a simpler explanation.

Probably Antisthenes and Plato shared the concern about λόγος and their relation to thought and reality but collided in the way of approaching the problem. Indeed, the text highlights this notion and analyses three options, all of which are relevant for the analysis of the link with the Antisthenic position and its rebuttal. The first, at 206d, says that λόγος means ‘making one’s own thought clear through speech by means of verbs and nouns’ (τὸ τὴν αὑτοῦ διάνοιαν ἐμφανῆ ποιεῖν διὰ φωνῆς μετὰ ῥημάτων τε καὶ ὀνομάτων). As we mentioned, this is the starting point of the ὀνομάτων ἐπίσκεψις, in which a man with full domain of language explores its structure and obtains knowledge of reality, i.e. of its

34 Porphyry, *Sch.* Od., I.1 (*SSR*, V.A.187), XXII, 337 (*SSR*, V.A.188), VII.257 (*SSR*, V.A.188), IX.106 (*SSR*, V.A.189), IX.525 (*SSR*, V.A.190).
35 On this link, see Maier 1943, 68-70, Decleva Caizzi 1966, 72–73, Chroust 1957, 101–134 and Brancacci 1990, 138–144.
36 See Brancacci 2001, 372.
37 See Brancacci 2001, 373.

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correlate. However, without this condition of correlation, which Plato's position does not grant except as a result of the dialectical procedure that distinguishes true from false discourse, this is indistinguishable from opinion, so that the Antisthenic position becomes a prisoner of it, i.e. it is a mere analysis of common sense.

The second characterisation, at 208b–c, implies the operation with elements, but it is understood as a case of true opinion whose explanation is not enough to be considered as knowledge. The grammatical example of the spelling of a name that may not be generalised has been mostly understood as a requirement to grasp the functioning of the element in different combinations.[38] If so, the constitutive description may not imply knowledge. This critique makes sense if the context of discussion is primarily the theory of Antisthenes, which identifies knowledge with the understanding of onto-semantic regions through the linguistic analysis.

From Plato's perspective, Antisthenes starts from elements without explanation (the οἰκεῖος ὄνομα of each thing) and then proceeds to review their associations as if it were a 'grammar of the real' but this method only reaches local descriptions which are undifferentiable from true opinion, since there is no point of foundation. Thus, knowledge supposes explanation, and a local description without a more comprehensive framework can never reach this level.

Finally, in the third option, λόγος implies the identification of 'the distinguishing characteristic by which a given thing differs from the rest' (τὴν διαφορὰν ἑκάστου ἂν λαμβάνῃς ᾗ τῶν ἄλλων διαφέρει) (208d). This possibility is considered vague, since this aspect is present in some procedures, such as the recognition of the individuality of *Theaetetus* at 209a–d, and it clearly belongs to the doxastic level. Furthermore, it is necessary to impose an epistemic requirement, so that knowledge would be 'right opinion with knowledge' (δόξα ὀρθὴ μετὰ ἐπιστήμης) (210a), and in this case, the definition would be distorted by circularity. This aspect constitutes a challenge to ἐπίσκεψις ὀνομάτων and its guide of ποῖόν τι. Indeed, in the case of the silver in *Met.* VIII.3, the explanation consists in the exhaustive description of its relations, and it is explained by features as 'like tin' (οἷον καττίτερος) in colour, and we must add other aspects as 'like gold' in brightness, 'like copper' in hardness, etc.

If the analysis is exhaustive, it offers the map of an onto-semantic region. From the Platonic perspective, however, this local description can be made entirely at the level of opinion. To put it in phenomenological terms: where

38 See Nehamas 1989, 277–278, Ioppolo 1999, lxiv, Hardy 2001, 269–279, El Murr 2010, 141, and Ferrari 2011, 520–521.

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Antisthenes claims to be making apodictic judgments based on the immediate comprehension of the οἰκεῖα ὀνόματα in a sort of linguistic reduction of full adequation, Plato sees only a mundane exploration that describes at best the way in which a man understands his surrounding world. For knowledge to arise in this context, there should be certitude about the material of the research, but Antisthenes, with his unknowable elements, cannot ensure it.

4 Corollaries

Then, all three options constitute attempts to corner the Antisthenic position and its analysis of the linguistic expressions with which man exhaustively describes things and detects their specific differences. Faced with this, Plato states that there is no explanation in the manifestation of thought, nor in the enumeration of elements, nor in the identification of differences between them, in what constitutes a rebuttal of all its aspects.

At the end of the dialogue, Socrates says that this work of revision has liberated them of false beliefs and they are better prepared for new explorations. Now, returning to our initial concern, how much newer will these analyses be and how much of the last characterisation of ἐπιστήμη does stand up to examination? From what we have said, if we accept the link between the dream passage with its critical interpretation and the philosophy of Antisthenes understood as a proto-theory of semantic fields, the traditional oppositions change. There is no dilemma between continuity of ἐπιστήμη and δόξα vs. radical incompatibility, but a Platonic strategy to show that the Antisthenic parameters never leave the level of opinion and therefore the characterisation of δόξα ἀληθὴς μετὰ λόγου can never be accepted.

It is possible, then, to reconcile positions between those who conceive the *Theaetetus* as an aporetic dialogue and those who consider that there are elements of the last characterisation that find their place in Platonic philosophy. Its aporetic character is based on the fact that, in the context of the intra-Socratic polemics, protected by a "megarizing" horizon, the Antisthenic characterisation is defeated and cannot claim any epistemic status, precisely because in this scheme knowledge is primarily *doxa* with an addition. Therefore, knowledge cannot be δόξα ἀληθὴς μετὰ λόγου under these conditions of foundation, i.e. if we understand λόγος in those terms. There is not, strictly speaking, a conception about non-infallible knowledge, but on the contrary, the claim that in such a model of λόγος, it is impossible to transcend the doxastic level and therefore the exploration must continue on other grounds.

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What will survive, then, is the awareness of the importance of finding a characterisation of λόγος far from the name-criterion by deploying a predicative criterion that suits the dialectic search of Platonic style, i.e. a model where explanation does not have a doxastic character. If something will survive from this level, it is a deflated version to the point of simply being a preliminary linguistic enunciation guided by dialectic, and therefore at the service of the noetic level, according to the recommendations at the end of the *Cratylus*. But that is another story.

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Harold Tarrant

The *Theaetetus* as a First Step on the Path to a New Academy

1 Introduction

There is no doubt that at least some Academics who were perceived as adhering to a 'New' Academy regarded the *Theaetetus* as offering support for the 'skeptical' attitude first adopted by Arcesilaus. Of a number of arguments that had been used to challenge the idea that the New Academy lacked the authority of Plato, the *Theaetetus* is solely responsible for some and partially responsible for others. We can see from what little survives of the anonymous *Theaetetus*–commentary that the dialogue had become quite controversial at an early date. I would like here to examine in detail the part that it seems to have played, and to suggest that some parts played a much greater role in the New Academic case than others, in particular those in which Socrates is most obviously practising the art of midwifery upon the young Theaetetus. I should like to claim that the dialogue has more than one layer of material, and that in part it is these layers that explain the very different attitudes that antiquity could take to this dialogue. They explain why the dialogue could be seen by some as genuinely aporetic, and by others as merely a preliminary step towards the unveiling of fully developed theories in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. The latter position appears to underlie Thrasyllus' arrangement of the corpus that has placed the dialogue immediately before these two dialogues, and it certainly underlies POxy 4941, a papyrus that offers an explanation of Thrasyllus' second tetralogy (Sedley 2009). I believe that not only Thrasyllus but also most of us today have attached too much weight to the assumed connection with the *Sophist*, and its assumed chronological connection, and that it is accordingly something which, at least for our present purposes, needs to be challenged, beginning with the very last lines of the dialogue:

> νῦν μὲν οὖν ἀπαντητέον μοι εἰς τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως στοὰν ἐπὶ τὴν Μελήτου γραφὴν ἥν με γέγραπται. ἕωθεν δέ, ὦ Θεόδωρε, δεῦρο πάλιν ἀπαντῶμεν. (210d2–4)

What are we to make of the fact that the last two sentences of the *Theaetetus* appear to look forward *both* to the *Euthyphro* (by talking about showing up at the King's Porch to meet the indictment of Meletus) *and* to the *Sophist* (by foreshadowing another meeting with the participants at the same venue again 'in the morning'?

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-015

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Among the unknowns here are (i) the actual place where the dialogue had been set, and (ii), more importantly, how Euclides could have written up the discussion κατὰ σχολὴν and checked details with Socrates ὁσάκις Ἀθήναζε ἀφικοίμην (143a2–3) if Socrates had already been close to his fatal encounter with hemlock.[1] But we are fortunate in having information about an alternative prologue that had once circulated, beginning 'Slave, bring me the book about Theaetetus'; this prologue might easily have omitted Euclides' account of his revisions and corrections to the book, and allowed Euclides to refer to the actual scene of the encounter. Perhaps, in that case, the oddities are attributable only to the version of the prologue that has finally been handed down to us, for a different prologue might have made the setting clear, omitting all talk of checking the account with Socrates. In that case it would have been less odd that the conversation had taken place on the same day as the discussion of holiness with Euthyphro, though we still face the oddity of a dialogue that referred forward to two other seemingly unrelated works.[2]

But how certain is it that the final words ever were intended to refer forward to the *Sophist*? The term ἕωθεν, even with an added αὔριον, does not look forward to another dialogue at *Laches* 201b8–c1, and we are not told in the *Theaetetus* as we were in the *Laches* that the person addressed has agreed to the meeting. Certainly the *Sophist* begins with a reference by Theodorus to 'yesterday's agreement' (216a), and Socrates confirms in the *Statesman* that his original encounter with Theaetetus was indeed 'yesterday' (χθές, 258a4), but it seems from the *Timaeus*, where χθές is found twelve times between 17a2 and 26e7, and from *Critias* 110d3 that 'yesterday' is just a convenient way of transporting the reader to a time gone by when Plato had publicly revealed many details of his Socratic state: details that we associate with his *Republic*, a dialogue that had presumably been known for quite a long time. There is not a hint at the end of the *Republic* that the Myth of Er is not the final conclusion of the discourse, and there are complex problems of how the state soon to be described in the *Timaeus* was intended to

1 Nails 2002, 320, cf. also 321: 'an interval of as much as two months', rightly allows time for a complex process between the preliminary hearing taking place the day of the initial conversation with Theaetetus and the actual trial of Socrates, so that the discrepancy is not so glaring.

2 This situation created difficulties for those trying to arrange the corpus in a natural order. Aristophanes of Byzantium positioned the *Theaetetus* before *Euthyphro* and *Apology* (D.L. III.62), while Thrasyllus grouped it after *Cratylus* and immediately before *Sophist* and *Statesman* (III.58). Neither arrangement is obviously correct, the former seeming to stress the ethical content of the dialogue and its relevance to Socratic ignorance, and the latter its relevance to epistemology and cognition.

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relate to the one outlined in the *Republic*.[3] The fact is that real sequences in Plato (*Sophist–Statesman, Timaeus–Critias*) are supposed to occur *on the same day*. They are also written in similar styles, and do not require additional characters to arrive on the scene.

The *Theaetetus* displays very few of the features of the so-called 'late' style, while the *Sophist* and *Politicus* display approximately the same 'late' style throughout;[4] they also introduce a new character to take over from 'Socrates' as protagonist. While there may be ways in which the *Theaetetus* was finally emended in order to serve better as an introduction to the other two dialogues, these two later dialogues were never envisaged when the *Theaetetus* was begun. Think back for a moment to Euclides' introduction to the book that he had allegedly written.[5] It serves only as an introduction to *Theaetetus*, the only dialogue in which Theaetetus' character and genius truly emerge, and it does not prepare us for the conversation in the *Sophist*, let alone for that in the *Statesman* where Theaetetus has the status of an auditor. There is no question that the dialogue as we have it could stand alone, in no more need of the *Sophist* (or *Euthyphro*) to complete it than the *Republic* was in need of the *Timaeus* and *Critias*. Certainly the Plato of the *Sophist* will eventually encourage us to believe that it takes up what was left unfinished at the end of *Theaetetus*, perhaps supplying the kind of educational experience that even the no-longer-pregnant young mathematician can benefit from, and certainly resuming some of the issues that had been preventing progress earlier. In this latter task it will help that the Eleatic Stranger does not share Socrates' commitment to professing ignorance on all relevant matters.

This introduction has tried to question our habit of automatically assuming that the *Theaetetus* precedes the *Sophist* by only a relatively short space of time. It respectfully rejects the view apparently proposed since Thrasyllus (if POxy 4941 is his work)[6] that the *Theaetetus*' purpose is to prepare the way for the other two dialogues by countering epistemological opinions that Plato wants to rule out. By

3 Outside the *Sophist, Statesman, Timaeus* and *Critias*, χθές is rather uncommon. It occurs multiple times only in the *Symposium* between 174a6 and 176b4, and again at 212e5, to refer to the previous evening's unrecorded celebrations. In other dialogues it occurs at *Euthd*. 271a, *Meno* 76e, *Menex*. 236b, and *Lg*. 677d (twice); at *Epp*. VII 348e8–349b4 it occurs three times, and it is present in the spuria at the beginning of *Sisyphus* and *Eryxias* to refer to otherwise unrecorded happenings of the previous day.

4 I would add that the myth of *Statesman* does adopt a register associated with other myths, and that some aspects of style do seem marginally less like *Sophist* in the later pages of the dialogue.

5 I take it that the same could also be said of the alternative prologue, which again refers (in the singular) to the 'book about Theaetetus'.

6 See Sedley, 2009.

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questioning (if not totally rejecting) the connections with the *Sophist*, we can more easily treat what it has in common with the *Meno* and *Cratylus*, two other dialogues with epistemological significance. As in those dialogues, it is difficult to believe that Plato thinks he has *all* the required solutions at the time of writing, in spite of strong signs of a developing confidence. He is perhaps anxious to move forward, but Socratic caution had not been entirely abandoned. Even so, I will not argue that the Plato of the *Theaetetus* was much like a skeptic. It is rather aimed at telling us a little more specifically about how this dialogue, and in particular certain of its episodes and certain facets of its vocabulary, could come to be used to promote, and perhaps even to lead to, a New Academic view of Plato. I hope that this will also alert us to something important both about the *Theaetetus* itself, and about a step towards the New Academy that is evidenced in dialogues like the *Alcibiades II* and the *Eryxias*.

2 Opposite Arguments

Now the New Academic view of Plato is not one of a Plato who held New Academic doctrines. The New Academy had themes rather than doctrines. Nor did it wish to claim that Plato *consistently* employed Academic methods. In my view the evidence points rather to the New Academy having regarded Plato as somebody who would generally have avoided taking the side of their opponents in epistemological debate. As outlined both in Cicero and in the anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy* (10) the New Academic picture of Plato makes no ludicrous claims, but rather highlights certain aspects of the dialogues, and privileges them over others. Take Cicero's account at *Academica* 1.46, which talks of Plato's support for investigation involving argument on both sides of the question:

> *Platonem ... cuius in libris nihil adfirmatur et in utramque partem multa disseruntur, de omnibus quaeritur,*[7] *nihil certi dicitur*: Plato ... in whose books nothing is affirmed and many questions are argued on both sides, there is a search into everything, nothing is stated for certain.

7 There is clear evidence in Cicero that searching was a part of the New Academic ideal, since the most important passage to discuss this (*Acad.* 2.7) uses both *conquiro* and *exquiro* in this context, speaking of a diligent, tireless and impartial search for the truth or for something as close to it as one could come. Here the relevant Greek verb was certainly ζητεῖν (the process that aims to εὑρίσκειν), since the process would ideally terminate in *finding* (*invenire*), a hope that is ridiculed by its opponents (*Acad.* 2.60: *volo igitur videre quid invenerint*).

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That Plato communicates through the voices of others, often allows doubts about his conclusions, and is prepared to discuss just about any subject of philosophy, goes some way to justifying the majority of these claims. The claim about contrary arguments is in fact not controversial: it is not that Plato *always* used argument on both sides of the question, but that he frequently did so. There are at least six dialogues in which antiquity detected argument on both sides of the question: *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Theaetetus*, *Phaedrus* and *Parmenides*.[8] Even Proclus approves of the correct use of such argument, which he finds in the *Parmenides* and perhaps above all in the *Lysis* (*in Plat. Parm.* V 989.10–23 Steel).[9] Already in the fourth century BC such paired arguments came under attack. The Peripatetic Dicaearchus, for instance, had attacked the *Phaedrus* for being crude and juvenile (D.L. III.38), and comparison with Hermias (*in Phdr.* 10.14–18) suggests *argumentum in utramque partem* (over whether to gratify the lover or the non-lover) had been part of this. The *Lysis*, a dialogue in which Socrates emphasises how the discussion had argued for opposite theses (222e3–4), was the subject of an early hostile anecdote (D.L. III.35, anon. *Proleg.* 3) and was attacked by the Epicurean pamphleteer Colotes in a fragmentary papyrus.[10] Hence there is a good chance that before Arcesilaus took charge of the Academy it had needed to defend its founder against attacks regarding his arguments for opposing theses. In the anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy* (10.18–20) the *Charmides* and *Euthyphro* were used in addition to the *Lysis* as examples of how Plato employed contrary arguments.

For our purposes the important thing is that the Protagorean part of the *Theaetetus* was among the places where both Proclus (*in Parm.* I 654.11–23 Steel) in the fifth century CE and the anonymous *Theaetetus*-commentator before 150 CE found opposing arguments. Fragment B.35–40 of the *Theaetetus*-commentator postulates a switch from constructing a Protagorean view by 157c3 to arguing

8 It could be argued that Olympiodorus (*in Phd.* 1.5.3–16) also involves the *Phaedo* in this, but he does not claim that the *Phaedo* actually *argues* both sides of the question, but that it contrives to *suggest* that both answers may be valid, especially when taken in conjunction with statements in the *Republic* and the *Laws*.

9 Note also I 654.19–22: ζητῶν τί φίλον ἐστί, καὶ τοτὲ μὲν ὅτι τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φίλον ἀποφαίνων, τοτὲ δὲ ὅτι τῷ ἐναντίῳ τὸ ἐναντίον, καὶ τοτὲ μὲν ὅτι τὸ φιλοῦν, τοτὲ δὲ ὅτι τὸ φιλούμενον), διὰ πάντων τὰς ὑποικουρούσας τοῖς δόγμασιν ἀπορίας προβάλλων.

10 See PHerc 208; see Cronert 1906; Philippson 1938; Concolino Mancini 1976; Vander Waerdt 1989; Kechagia 2011. Note also that Colotes also attacked the *Euthydemus*, a dialogue abounding in sophistic arguments, some of which are paired.

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against it from 157e1.[11] Plato's 'Socrates' speaks rather of a movement from the delivering of Theaetetus' brain-child to critically examining its status, using the interesting verb σκέψομαι — one of two verbs later involved in accounts of the naming of skepticism (the other being ζητεῖν).[12] The two forms of this verb (σκοπεῖν and σκέπτεσθαι) are not uncommon in Plato, and are certainly not *directly* suggestive of skepticism, but they are more common in *Theaetetus* than in most dialogues,[13] especially if the figures for the verbal σκεπτέον are also added in.[14] In this respect the *Theaetetus* resembles what we think of as the more 'Socratic' dialogues of the corpus (including *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Meno* and *Republic* I) rather than anything usually held to be post-*Republic*.[15] We will revisit this vocabulary relevant to the image of skepticism (and in my view to its development) later.

3 Expressions Indicating Doubt or Hesitation

But let us return for the moment to arguments designed to show Plato's 'New Academic' character. We have so far looked at one of these, and shown that the *Theaetetus* was one dialogue in which *argumentum in utramque partem* had been noted. Two out of the *Prolegomena*'s five arguments designed to suggest a quasi-skeptic Plato appeal directly and solely to the *Theaetetus*: the third that Plato rejected every attempt to explain knowledge (10.23–33);[16] and the fifth that appealed to Socrates' disclaimer of knowledge in the midwifery passage (150c), a

11 Strictly, I think several sections could be viewed at constructing theses, and then demolishing them, including the Wax-Tablet and Aviary passages.

12 Both σκέψις (examination) and ζήτησις (searching) are said by Diogenes Laertius at IX.69–70 to give rise to names even for Pyrrhonist skepticism; cf. Sextus Empiricus *PH* 1.7. Precisely how and when they came to have this role is unclear, but Cicero makes it clear that some such verb described an important part of the New Academy's ideology.

13 0.38 per thousand words; higher rates are found only in *Prot.* (0.39), *Phd.* (0.40), *Ly.* (0.41), *Hp.Mi.* (0.44), *Ion* (0.49), *Grg.* (0.50), *Cra.* (0.55), *La.* (0.78), *Chrm.* (0.95), *Meno* (1.06), *Rep.* I (considered separately 1.16).

14 The seven highest figures are now: *Phil.* (0.63), *Crat.* (0.78), *Tht.* (0.80), *La.* (1.00), *Chrm.* (1.19), *Meno* (1.25), *Rep.* I (1.48).

15 Rates for books II–X of the *Republic*, *Phdr.*, *Soph.*, *Plt.*, *Phil.*, *Tim.-Criti.* and *Laws* are (without σκεπτέον) 0.21, 0.12, 0.17, 0.11, 0.29, 0.03 and 0.07 respectively; (with σκεπτέον) 0.33, 0.23, 0.46, 0.22, 0.63, 0.07 and 0.09 respectively.

16 He is said to reject this *and number* (καὶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν) in the text, but it is a strange claim and the author's answer says nothing about number, beginning rather with the observation that Plato does not think that the mind is like a *tabula rasa* at birth. This brings the passages on the

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passage that we know from anon. *in Tht.* 54–60 to have been used to suggest that Plato agreed with the New Academics.[17] Only the fourth argument, which appeals rather to Plato's rejection of the accuracy of the senses *together with* his suggestion that the senses obstruct and impede the mind's activity in this world (e.g. *Phd.* 65b–66b), is clearly derived from dialogues other than the *Theaetetus*. This leaves one other argument, the first to be mentioned in the *Prolegomena* (10.7–15), in which the *Theaetetus* may also have had a role. By exploring this we can learn something about the *Theaetetus* itself, and a way in which its vocabulary is more reminiscent of *Meno*, *Cratylus*, and similar dialogues rather than of *Sophist* and *Statesman*.

This argument appeals rather to a certain kind of language said to show hesitation or uncertainty, such as 'as is likely', 'possibly', or 'perhaps as I think'.[18] There is clearly something wrong with the transmission of the text in the *Prolegomena*, for 'perhaps as I think' (τάχ' ὡς οἶμαι) cannot be found in Plato, however common its three components may be. Fortunately, the situation can be clarified by Elias' *Commentary on Aristotle's* '*Categories*' (110.12–16), which produces a comparable list of the expressions of hesitation suggesting that Plato belonged to the school that suspended judgement (the *ephektikoi*). This makes it clear that the 'perhaps' and 'I think' had once been independent members of the list.

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wax tablet and aviary to mind (*Tht.* 191c–200d), where the discussion of mistaking eleven for twelve is prominent (195e–199b) and where the knowledge of numbers is central (e.g. 198a10–b1: τὰς ἐπιστήμας τῶν ἀριθμῶν, 199a2: πάντα δὲ ἀριθμὸν ἐπίστασθαι). I therefore suspect that this argument had originally read καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ: 'even the [knowledge] of number'; corruption could have occurred even before the anonymous wrote. As a dialogue with a young mathematician the *Theaetetus*' inability to explain knowledge and false opinion concerning arithmetical truths would have been especially problematic.

17 Supporting evidence that the midwifery passage was central to the ideals of Arcesilaus and other New Academics is not plentiful, though I would draw attention to the desired result of Academic disputation in Cicero (*Acad.* 2.7): '*ut in utramque partem dicendo eliciant et tamquam exprimant aliquid quod aut verum sit aut ad id quam proxime accedat*.' I cannot think of a better verb for capturing the essence of the midwifery process than *elicio*, with its suggestion of coaxing something out from among the disputants. One may compare Plutarch's ἐπήγειρε καὶ ἀνεκίνει καὶ συνεξῆγε (*Mor.* 1000e), of which the final verb is indeed emphatically Platonic (*Tht.* 157d2, followed *next word* by ἐξαχθέντος). For discussion of Arcesilaus as a midwife see Snyder 2014.

18 Anon. *Proleg.* 10.7–12: especially ἐπιρρήματά τινα. ἀμφίβολά τε καὶ διστακτικά.

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3.1 'Seeming to me' etc.

Elias' list of hesitant phrases begins with 'I seem to me' (δοκῶ μοι) — an odd choice given that these exact words are found only seven times in the corpus, usually on the lips of interlocutors or narrators.[19] We should grant here that it is the *meaning* that is illustrated rather than exact words in any exact order. Of μοι δοκῶ we find thirty-one cases and of ἐμοὶ δοκῶ a further three. These are spread across much of the corpus, including a highly significant example of Socrates' hesitation at *Meno* 98b3, where Socrates says that he does not seem to himself to be guessing that right opinion and knowledge are different.[20] Any such equivocation over basic epistemological theses was likely to have been noticed by the New Academy. Another case of μοι δοκῶ is found at the close of *Hippias Major* 304e6, just before its one example of δοκῶ μοι, giving the strong impression that Socrates is here judging what good he has gained from his encounters with Hippias and his own *alter ego* from his *personal impression*. Hence there were grounds for the New Academy to appeal to the frequency of expressions such as 'I seem to me' as the indication of a refusal to claim absolute truth. Rather than demonstrating one's inability to reach any conclusion, it is more accurate to see this first person expression as an indication that the individual is judging *by his own impression* what is so *for him*, as if he were a *Protagorean* rather than a skeptic. The similarities and differences between skeptic and Protagorean epistemology were a standard topic in Sextus Empiricus (*PH*1.216–19), Protagoreans being acknowledged as making much of relativity, but as too keen to postulate a truth and to support their position on a particular view of the world. In Seneca (*Moral Epistles*, 88.45) Protagoras seems to resemble the New Academy in holding that there is nothing in nature that is not in doubt and that everything is open to contrary arguments. The anonymous *in Theaetetum* (63.1–40) seems to emphasize the difference between the use of relativity by the Pyrrhonist Skeptics and that of Theaetetus *and* Protagoras. Elias himself seems to *confuse* the Protagoreans with skeptics (*in Cat.* 109.31–110.3).[21]

19 Alcibiades (*Alc. I* 135c), Apollonius (*Symp.* 172a), Aristophanes (*Symp.* 190c), Hermocrates (*Crat.* 391a); of principal speakers, they are given to Parmenides at *Parm.* 136e, and to Socrates only at the very end of *Hippias Major* 304e8–9 and at *Republic* 583b.

20 There is also an 'at all' to be fitted in. Depending on the way that this is construed it could mean that he does not 'seem at all to himself to be guessing' or that he does not 'seem to himself to be guessing at all'.

21 He views the final refutation of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* (170a–171c) as a refutation of *skeptics* (*ephektikoi*), reworking the argument in terms of cognitive grasping rather than in terms of wisdom. For him the Protagoreans believe in the *truth* of what the individual assumes to be

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Expressions like μοι δοκῶ are remarkably frequent in the *Alcibiades II*, a dialogue often connected either directly with the New Academy, or, more plausibly, with a step towards it[22] (table 1: highest rates at bottom):[23]

Tab. 1: Rates of μοι δοκῶ etc. in dialogues where found

Dialogue	examples	rate per thousand words	Dialogue	examples	rate per thousand words
Laws	2	0.02	*Theaetetus*	3	0.13
Republic II-X	2	0.03	*Euthydemus*	2	0.15
Philebus	1	0.05	*Euthyphro*	1	0.18
Symposium	1	0.06	*Meno*	2	0.19
Phaedrus	1	0.06	*Republic* I	2	0.21
Phaedo	2	0.09	*Hippias Major*	2	0.22
Cratylus	2	0.10	*Crito*	1	0.23
Sophist	2	0.11	*Apology*	3	0.34
Parmenides	2	0.12	*Alcibiades* II*	2	0.45

Again, the *Theaetetus*, one of only two dialogues to use such expression three times, shows a moderately high rate that is exceeded only by dialogues usually considered 'Socratic', while the *Alcibiades II* is consciously or unconsciously imitating such dialogues. If one modifies the research, giving *third* person of the verb rather than first, with μοι before or after the δοκεῖ, one arrives at the following figures (table 2):

the case (for himself), while the suspenders of judgement follow this without claiming it to be true. The difficulties that the school of Alexandria had with appreciating the actual history of philosophy — even as it appears in Plato — is well illustrated in Philoponus *in Cat.* 1.20–2.24.

22 See Bickel 1904, and Carlini 1962 for a New Academic connection; Magris 1992 for a date early in Arcesilaus career. Tarrant 2019 will argue for a date before Arcesilaus became scholarch, and suggest a connection with Arcesilaus close friend and mentor Crantor.

23 In the tables an asterisk is used to mark *dubia*, defined as dialogues within the corpus that are *as often as not* regarded as suspect (here I include *Epinomis*, *Clitophon* and *Alcibiades I*, but exclude *Hippias Major*). Two asterisks mark dialogues from the *spuria*.

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Tab. 2: Top rates of μοι in conjunction with δοκεῖ

Dialogue	Total	Rate per thousand words
Hippias Major	4	0.45
Euthydemus	6	0.46
Republic II-X	38	0.48
Theaetetus	12	0.50
Gorgias	15	0.54
Theages	2	0.55
Charmides	6	0.71
Protagoras	14	0.77
Apology	7	0.79
Phaedo	19	0.84
Republic I	8	0.85
Hippias Minor	4	0.89
Menexenus	5	1.02
Lysis	8	1.09
Ion	5	1.22
Laches	10	1.25
Cratylus	28	1.46
Meno	19	1.83
*Alcibiades II**	10	2.26

The author of the *Alcibiades II* clearly believes that such expressions are characteristic of the kind of Platonic dialogue that he models himself on, though he also uses the stronger first person ἐμοί in close conjunction with δοκεῖ, a feature that he shares with the authors of *Eryxias*[24] and *Erastae* too (table 3):

24 The *Eryxias* is reliably placed no earlier than the late fourth century by its reference to the gymnasiarch, an office not yet in existence in Athens when Plato died. The working vocabulary of the *Eryxias* can now be shown by principal component analysis to be closer than any dialogue in the corpus to that of the *Alcibiades II*. On the *Eryxias* I have benefited greatly from discussion with Marco Donato.

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Tab. 3: Top rates of ἐμοί in conjunction with δοκεῖ

Dialogue	Total	Rate per thousand words
Euthyphro	1	0.18
Meno	2	0.19
Euthydemus	3	0.23
Cratylus	7	0.36
*Erastae**	1	0.41
*Alcibiades II**	2	0.45
*Eryxias***	4	0.74

Even more striking is the number of doubtful or spurious dialogues to over-use ἔμοιγε in close conjunction with δοκεῖ. The top rates for such expressions, which usually take the form ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ without a break are given below (table 4):

Tab. 4: Top rates of ἔμοιγε in conjunction with δοκεῖ

Dialogue	Total	Rate per thousand words
*Theages**	3	0.82
*Hipparchus**	2	0.82
Cratylus	16	0.83
Meno	9	0.87
Laches	7	0.87
*Alcibiades I**	10	0.88
Lysis	7	0.96
Hippias Major	9	1.01
*Minos**	4	1.30
*Alcibiades II**	6	1.36
*Eryxias***	9	1.66
*Sisyphus***	4	2.52

Among these twelve dialogues are found only four, *Cratylus*, *Meno*, *Laches* and *Lysis*, whose authenticity has remained largely beyond suspicion, while the two dialogues from the *spuria* have the highest rates of all. I suspect that it is no accident that speakers in certain spurious and doubtful dialogues have favoured this expression in particular, since the limiting ἔμοιγε ('I at least') is particularly

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suited to making *Protagorean* observations that reflect only how the individual speaker views the situation. At some stage[25] it was accepted, on the basis of *Tht.* 171d9–e3 for example, that the Protagorean theory of the *Theaetetus* was at least part of Plato's own emerging epistemological picture, even if it too had its limitations when applied beyond the familiar world of flux. Moreover, his Heraclitean approach to the physical world that directly explains the Protagorean *homo-mensura* principle is a regular part of Platonism.[26] Works like the *Alcibiades II* and *Eryxias* should not be thought of a 'skeptical' in any unqualified way, and yet there is an almost constant consciousness of the debate being limited by the viewpoints of the debaters themselves.[27]

In this context we might also consider the combination of δοκεῖ with σοι, for it yields comparable results (table 5):

Tab. 5: Top rates of σοι in conjunction with δοκεῖ

Dialogue	δοκεῖ + σοι	Rate
Hippias Major	8	0.090
Euthyphro	5	0.092
*Minos**	3	0.097
Cratylus	19	0.099
Gorgias	33	0.119
Meno	13	0.125
*Eryxias***	8	0.148
*Erastae**	5	0.206
*Sisyphus***	5	0.315
*Alcibiades II**	14	0.317

In this case there are five dialogues of generally accepted authenticity, three doubtful dialogues and the same two from the *spuria*. Here the *Alcibiades II* is once again found in top place, just ahead of *Sisyphus*.

25 See Tarrant 2000, 67–80, especially 77–79. I argue in particular that anon. *in Tht.* sees 'Theaetetus' as well as 'Socrates' as contributing to philosophical understanding in this passage. Protagoras' myth in the *Protagoras* was seen as part of the Platonic picture by Plutarch (*Mor.* 98d).
26 See now Thorsrud 2018.
27 Note at *Eryxias* 406a that the last two responses of the interlocutor are ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ and ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ οὕτω φαίνεσθαι, while Socrates' summing up is qualified by (a) κατά γε τοῦτον τὸν λόγον and (b) a clause commencing with εἴπερ γε ….

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Remarkably, *Cratylus* and *Meno* have appeared among the dialogues displaying high rates in all five tables (tables 1 to 5), and both have significant epistemological themes. Is it the case, then, that they have been especially influential on the authors of pseudo-Platonic dialogues? And if so, then why? Both dialogues, of course, are set against the background of the sophistic world, include epistemological material, and also mention Protagoras.[28] But in that case has the *Theaetetus* not had comparable influence? First, it directly presents a form of Protagorean epistemology, and second it is *in relevant parts* rich in the expressions with δοκεῖν that we have been considering and also in ἔγωγε/ἔμοιγε generally. We shall see which parts these are shortly.

3.2 'Perhaps' etc.

It is not surprising that expressions meaning 'perhaps' had been taken as signs of Plato's uncertainty. Both Elias and the *Prolegomena* show that such expressions as ἴσως and τάχα (no doubt thinking of the use with ἂν) were appealed to by those attempting to show Plato's affinities with the New Academics. Once again *Cratylus* and *Meno* display high rates, but the highest combined rate of ἴσως and τάχα is found in the *Apology*, as can be seen from table 6:

Tab. 6: Highest rates of 'perhaps' as % of word count

Dialogue	rate ἴσως %	Dialogue	rate τάχα %	Dialogue	combined %
Philebus	0.131	*Charmides*	0.036	*Eryxias***	0.166
Gorgias	0.144	*Phaedrus*	0.041	*Sophist*	0.167
*Minos**	0.162	*Erastae**	0.041	*Euthyphro*	0.183
Euthyphro	0.165	*Statesman*	0.043	*Philebus*	0.189
*Eryxias***	0.166	*Hippias Ma.*	0.056	*Meno*	0.192
Meno	0.173	*Apology*	0.056	*Charmides*	0.214
Charmides	0.178	*Philebus*	0.058	*Minos**	0.227
Cratylus	0.214	*Sophist*	0.063	*Cratylus*	0.234
Apology	0.226	*Minos**	0.065	*Apology*	0.282

28 *Crat.* 385e–386e; *Meno* 91d–e.

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τάχα is more characteristic of the 'late' dialogues, so that *Minos*, which seems to relate in some way to *Laws* in spite of its not being 'late' stylistically, actually displays the highest rate for this word, even though its rate of ἴσως is still much higher. Crucial for our purposes is that *Meno* and *Cratylus*, while not having many cases of τάχα, both appear towards the top of the combined list. The *Theaetetus* (0.092, 0.021, 0.113) again shows more modest rates.

3.3 'I think'

Clearly the *Prolegomena* had the simple 'I think' (οἶμαι), with or without 'as', in its list of expressions of uncertainty or hesitancy.[29] Here are the top rates for οἶμαι in the corpus (table 7):

Tab. 7: Top rates of οἶμαι as % of word count

Dialogue	number οἶμαι	rate οἶμαι %
Theaetetus	32	0.134
*Theages**	5	0.137
Ion	6	0.147
Apology	13	0.147
Lysis	11	0.150
Philebus	30	0.157
Laches	13	0.162
*Hipparchus**	4	0.165
Gorgias	50	0.180
Republic II-X	145	0.181
*Clitophon**	3	0.190
Euthyphro	12	0.220
*Alcibiades I**	26	0.230
Republic I	33	0.349
*Alcibiades II**	21	0.475

29 That this must have been the original reading of the *Prolegomena* is evident from Elias, *in Categ.* 110.14, where 'τάχα' is followed immediately by 'ὑπολαμβάνω', whose meaning is virtually identical with οἶμαι, though it is not itself used to express hesitancy by Plato.

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This is a feature of Plato's style before the 'late' dialogues, especially prominent in the *Republic*. It is once again one that the author of the *Alcibiades II* over-imitates, while it is more plausibly reproduced in several other doubtful dialogues. *Theaetetus* has a fairly high rate, and, unusually, *Meno* (0.106) and *Cratylus* (0.130) are further down the list.

3.4 Likelihood

The term εἰκός is included by the *Prolegomena* alone, and it may owe its place there as much to the popularity of the *Timaeus* as to the degree of doubt that it would normally introduce. It does however hint that less exacting standards of proof are being used than a Platonist would normally wish to apply. Here are the sixteen highest rates (table 8):

Tab. 8: Top rates of εἰκός as % of word count

Dialogue	number εἰκός	rate εἰκός %
Euthyphro	2	0.037
Philebus	7	0.037
Laches	3	0.037
Theaetetus	9	0.038
*Erastae**	1	0.041
Republic I	4	0.042
Sophist	8	0.046
Crito	2	0.046
Republic II-X	43	0.054
*Theages**	2	0.055
Statesman	12	0.065
Phaedo	15	0.066
Laws	83	0.078
Phaedrus	14	0.081
Cratylus	16	0.083
*Alcibiades I**	11	0.097

One notices once again that the *Cratylus* has a very high rate, but the presence of *Laws* in the list, higher up than *Republic*, will draw attention to the general trend

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for εἰκός to increase as Plato's life progresses. The *Alcibiades I* tops the list, but only marginally, so it is hard to say that this is a case of over-imitating a Platonic tendency.

4 Distribution of Expressions of Doubt and Hesitation in the *Theaetetus*

Already when the *Alcibiades II* and *Eryxias* were written (and I should place them after 320 BCE) it seems highly likely that Plato's 'Socrates' was seen as a kind of modified Protagorean, content to allow that we viewed most matters in this familiar world of the senses from or own personal perspective. Indeed, the very method of research through dialogue, with 'two going together', could be seen as an attempt to overcome such a restriction by ensuring that at least two viewpoints were examined, and preferably more. But multiple viewpoints only mitigated the effects of individual judgement, and did not transcend it. Across quite a broad area the certainty that we might crave seemed elusive, and 'Socrates' himself seemed aware of this. Many features of the *Theaetetus* were obviously influential in preparing the way for a New Academic view of Plato's 'Socrates'. But was the *Theaetetus* seen as rich in the kind of expressions of hesitation that was thought indicative of doubt?

As we have seen, the most obvious cases of dialogues that used many such expressions are *Meno* and *Cratylus*. Book I of the *Republic* and some of the shorter early dialogues also reinforced the impression of a 'Socrates' who found it difficult to break out of the constraints of a quasi-Protagorean universe. My own impression is that the *Theaetetus* was originally conceived before the *Republic* came to fruition, and probably at a time close to when the *Meno* and the original version[30] of the *Cratylus* were emerging. Of course I may be wrong, but if I were right then we might expect concentrations of the language of doubt and hesitation in sections that belonged to the dialogue as originally conceived and executed. If we add up all the instances of the limiting expressions with εἰκός, οἶμαι, ἴσως, δοκῶ or δοκεῖ in conjunction with μοι, σοι etc., and also ἔγωγε (nom. and dat.) and correlate them with each Stephanus page of the work, we get the following result (table 9):

30 Sedley 2003, 6–16 offers important evidence for the dialogue's revision.

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Tab. 9: Numbers of hesitant expressions for each Stephanus page of *Tht*.

Reference	TOTAL	Reference	TOTAL	Reference	TOTAL
142	1	164	1	188	2
143	1	165	5	189	2
144	1	166	1	190	3
145	6	167	1	191	3
146	4	168	0	192	0
147	2	169	1	193	0
148	4	170	0	194	1
149	4	171	4	195	3
150	1	172	0	196	1
151	0	173	0	197	2
152	2	174	1	198	2
153	1	175	0	199	3
154	4	176	0	200	2
155	1	177	1	201	2
156	0	178	3	202	1
157	3	179	2	203	5
158	2	180	4	204	1
159	2	181	3	205	1
160	2	182	1	206	5
161	1	183	0	207	4
162	2	184	5	208	3
163	1	185	4	209	2

There are some obvious points to be made about the passages where such language is lacking. The introduction (142–3) is known to have had an alternative, drier version, and precedes the debate anyhow. Passing to the main conversation, the introductory pleasantries at 143–4 might also seem unlikely to reveal any epistemological attitudes, though already Theodorus is inclined to judge by personal impression.[31] There are low rates at 150–151 and 155–6 coinciding with the exposition of intellectual midwifery (where Socrates is speaking *for himself* anyway) and the secret materialist flux-and-sensation doctrine respectively

31 Note here that he twice uses the plural δοκοῦσι with μοι (144c3, d2) and he uses the imperfect ᾠόμην + ἂν at 144a5.

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(where he speaks *for others*).[32] Most of the material where Theodorus becomes interlocutor rather than Theaetetus abandons the predominant method of Socratic midwifery practised on a young interlocutor, and strikes me as secondary, particularly the ethical digression (172a–177c). Socrates here argues with increased confidence. Theodorus is interlocutor at 161a–162b, 164e–165b, and 168c–183c, while 166a–168c is where Socrates speaks directly for Protagoras himself. Even so, in the Theodoran sections there are some concentrations of hesitant expressions. Of these that at 171 is unsurprising, employs mainly expressions characteristic of the mature dialogues,[33] and occurs in a brief passage that makes an obvious concession to Protagoras;[34] but 178–81, involving the refutation of Protagoras' ideas as applied to the future and the rhetorical attack on Heraclitean excesses, really does look like material that must have been present in any complete version of the dialogue. Given the low rate of the vocabulary of doubt in 182–3, however, one might consider the possibility that much of this has been rewritten.

While I doubt that 183c8–184a9, where Socrates' rejects Theaetetus' request for an examination of the Eleatics, could have been part of any version of the dialogue written before the *Parmenides*, the return to the examination of Theaetetus at 184b represents a return to midwifery, with the expected increase in the relevant vocabulary up until Socrates spells out the detail of his 'wax tablet' theory at 191c8. Perhaps the straightforward exposition of this kind of theory, like that of the midwifery theory earlier, is simply not such as to attract the doubting and relativist language that we found before. At 195b9 the doubts resume, and thereafter there are no prolonged sections with low rates, and the average rate is about two-and-a-half examples per Stephanus page: almost exactly the same as for 145–160, but double that for 161–177.

32 It is true that this doctrine is strictly speaking confined to 156a–157b, preceded by a little on crass materialism at 155d-e; but at 155c6 one might also note δοκεῖς γοῦν μοι.

33 The passage contains two cases of εἰκός (which we have shown to be characteristic of later dialogues), one of οἶμαι, and one of ἐμοὶ γοῦν δοκεῖ. The addition of γοῦν actually gives this brief response additional certainty, and as *a complete response* the only parallels for this three-word answer are at *Republic* 554b2 and 581a8, *Philebus* 12a5 and 64c4, *Laws* 792b3, and *Alcibiades I** 128a4; the three words are also found in conjunction at *Theaetetus* 202d4, *Hippias Major* 298a9, *Philebus* 62a1, and *Republic* 402a3, 429a7, and 530b5 (cf. 484a5, 527d2). Hence the language is scarcely hesitant or characteristically aporetic.

34 All four examples occur in Socrates' speech at 171c10–d7 and Theodorus' one-line reply. One should note here Socrates' allowance that Protagoras may indeed have been wiser than them, and that they can only treat themselves as the kind of persons they are, and so to always say τὰ δοκοῦντα ἡμῖν. Plato is here making a special attempt, then, to meet Protagoras on his own terms, without really being in the least tentative.

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5 The Vocabulary of *Skepsis*

It has already emerged that the *Alcibiades II* has repeatedly imitated certain expressions of doubt or hesitation common in some dialogues of a broadly 'Socratic' nature, especially perhaps the *Meno* and *Cratylus*, though far from unparalleled in the *Theaetetus*. My claim is that the language is more indicative of Protagorean influence over epistemology than of skepticism. It is not so much that there is never anything to be grasped beyond the personal viewpoint, but that exchanging personal viewpoints is central to discovering anything that might ultimately transcend them. The *Alcibiades II* also displays a striking use of the verb σκέπτομαι at 140a (σύν τε δύο σκεπτομένω), where the participle replaces the Homeric, and equally un-Attic, ἐρχομένω in one of Plato's favourite Homeric lines. The use cannot be said to suggest skepticism proper, but it already draws attention to a particular kind of vocabulary prominent in some Platonic works, a kind of vocabulary that could have been being transformed into an Academic ideal at the time. If we look at the rates of such σκεπ– vocabulary, including all cases of the verb with a σκεπ– root (not σκοπ–) with the verbal σκεπτέος and the noun σκέψις, in the dialogues we find the following (table 10):

Tab. 10: Highest rates of σκεπ– vocabulary

Dialogue	Rate per 1000 words
Hippias Minor	0.67
*Alcibiades II**	0.68
Protagoras	0.72
Sophist	0.75
Philebus	0.84
*Eryxias***	0.92
Crito	0.92
Cratylus	0.94
Theaetetus	0.97
Ion	0.98
Laches	1.25
Charmides	1.31
Meno	1.35
Republic I	1.59

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The *Alcibiades II* has the same predilection for the corresponding compounds with ἐπι– (suggesting *further* investigation) for which the rates, this time including also cases of the verb ἐπισκοπεῖν, appear in table 11:

Tab. 11: Highest rates of ἐπισκεπ– & ἐπισκοπ– vocabulary

Dialogue	Rate per 1000 words	Dialogue	Rate per 1000 words
*Epinomis**	0.313	*Protagoras*	0.443
Gorgias	0.323	*Hippias Minor*	0.444
*Minos**	0.325	*Theaetetus*	0.630
Republic II-X	0.363	*Alcibiades II**	0.678
Euthyphro	0.366	*Charmides*	0.832
*Hipparchus**	0.412	*Cratylus*	0.833

Adding the two groups together we get the following figures of more than one word per thousand:

Tab. 12: Highest rates of combined σκεπ– & σκοπ– vocabulary

Dialogue	Rate per 1000 words	Dialogue	Rate per 1000 words
Philebus	1.050	*Alcibiades* II*	1.357
*Eryxias***	1.107	*Laches*	1.371
Hippias Minor	1.110	*Theaetetus*	1.596
Crito	1.155	*Republic* I	1.693
Protagoras	1.162	*Cratylus*	1.771
Meno	1.347	*Charmides*	2.140

We notice that such vocabulary is found at the highest rates in dialogues that we have supposed relevant to the New Academic view of Plato in other respects, such as *Meno* and *Cratylus*, or, among the hiatus-avoiding dialogues, in the *Philebus*, which had high rates of ἴσως and οἶμαι.[35] It would therefore be interesting to compare where this kind of vocabulary is found in the *Theaetetus*, which appears fourth highest in the combined list (table 13):

35 It can scarcely be accidental that *Philebus* returns to using 'Socrates' as protagonist.

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Tab. 13: Cases of [ἐπι-]σκεπ– & σκοπ– per page of *Theaetetus*

no.	hesitation	σκεπ– & σκοπ–	no.	hesitation	σκεπ– & σκοπ–
142	1	0	175	0	0
143	1	1	176	0	0
144	1	3	177	1	0
145	6	3	178	3	0
146	4	0	179	2	2
147	2	2	180	4	1
148	4	1	181	3	2
149	4	0	182	1	1
150	1	1	183	0	1
151	0	2	184	5	3
152	2	0	185	4	5
153	1	0	186	2	1
154	4	0	187	2	2
155	1	1	188	2	1
156	0	0	189	2	2
157	3	1	190	3	2
158	2	0	191	3	2
159	2	0	192	0	0
160	2	1	193	0	0
161	1	2	194	1	0
162	2	1	195	3	0
163	1	4	196	1	3
164	1	0	197	2	0
165	5	1	198	2	3
166	1	1	199	3	1
167	1	0	200	2	0
168	0	2	201	2	1
169	1	0	202	1	0
170	0	1	203	5	1
171	4	0	204	1	1
172	0	0	205	1	0
173	0	0	206	5	1
174	1	0	207	4	1

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no.	hesitation	σκεπ– & σκοπ–	no.	hesitation	σκεπ– & σκοπ–
208	3	0			
209	2	0			
210	1	0			

While we could never expect a complete match, we can see from this table that there is a general correspondence between the passages rich in the language of hesitation and those using the language of investigation. An alternative would be to view the data rather as a bar chart, in which the numbers 1–69 correspond to the 69 Stephanus pages from 142 to 210 (chart 1):

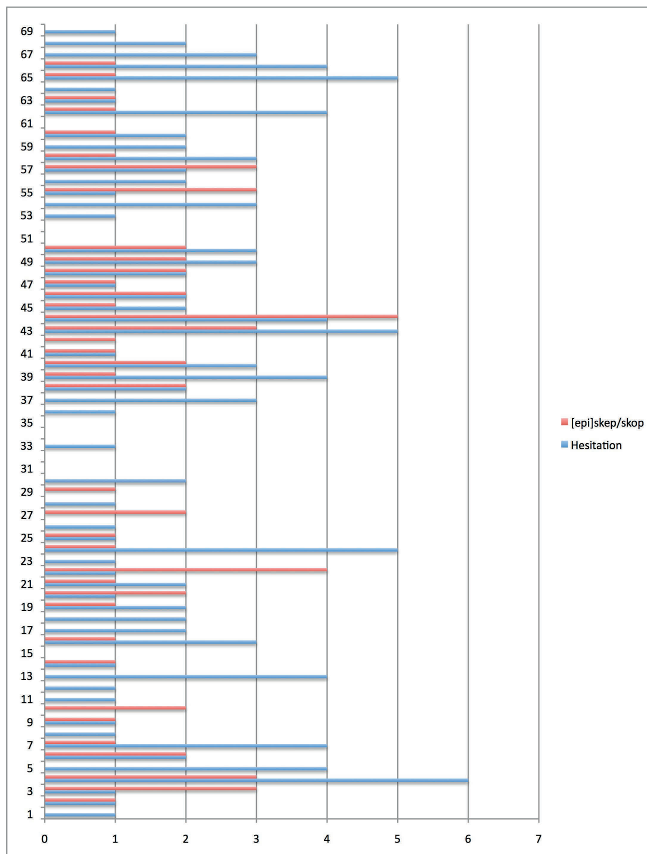

Chart 1: Bar chart showing rates of two vocabulary types over 69 pages

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It will be seen that there are slightly bigger gaps between cases of this investigative vocabulary than between instances of expressions of doubt or hesitation. There are no cases from 30 to 37 (=171–78) or from 51 to 54 (=192 to 195), nor indeed from 11 to 13 (=152–54) or 67 to 69 (=208–210). One has to realise, of course, that some passages (especially at the end) provide little scope for discussing how an investigation should proceed. In general, I should say that the more it is Theaetetus' ideas that are being solicited and examined the more likely this vocabulary is to occur, and therefore that it tends to accompany the practice of midwifery, even if it is not prominent in the actual description of midwifery at 150a8–151d6–or only in two important cases:

> καὶ τῷ τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν τικτούσας ἐπισκοπεῖν ἀλλὰ μὴ τὰ σώματα. (150b8–9)

> καὶ ἐὰν ἄρα σκοπούμενός τι ὧν ἂν λέγῃς ἡγήσωμαι εἴδωλον καὶ μὴ ἀληθές εἶτα ὑπεξαιρῶμαι .... (151c2–4)

As soon as Theaetetus gives his first answer Socrates invites him to participate in the process of cooperative σκέψις:

> ἀλλὰ ... αὐτὸ κοινῇ σκεψώμεθα, γόνιμον ἢ ἀνεμιαῖον τυγχάνει ὄν. (151e5–6)

> σκοπουμένους μὴ λάθῃ ἡμᾶς οὐκ ἄξιον ὂν τροφῆς τὸ γιγνόμενον, ἀλλὰ ἀνεμιαῖόν τε καὶ ψεῦδος. (160e8–161a1)

Hence, in midwifery, σκέψις *follows the interlocutor's answer*. What worries one about the consequences of Protagoras' theory is its exclusion of that very σκέψις:

> μήτε τὴν δόξαν κυριώτερος ἔσται ἐπισκέψασθαι ἕτερος τὴν ἑτέρου ὀρθὴ ἢ ψευδής .... (161d4–5)

Whenever midwifery is explicitly resumed, such as at 157c–d, 160e-161a, and 184a–b, the terminology of σκέψις is present too. Only in the closing references to midwifery is it lacking (210b4–d2), for there is no longer any 'offspring' left to be examined. Of course, there are several uses of this vocabulary that do not relate to the midwife's art, and indeed a cluster of uses precede the introduction of that art. We meet two cases of ἐπεσκεψάμεθα ἄν at 144e3–4, ἀνασκέψωμαι at 144d7, σκεπτέον at 145a1 and d7 and at σκοπεῖσθαι 145b7. These references to examination can hardly be *closely* bound up with midwifery, but their overall effect is to make Theaetetus submit himself to Socratic questioning, and to reinforce the idea that neither of them should take another person's claims on trust. Overall, the concept of σκέψις seems more intimately bound up with the subject matter in

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the *Theaetetus* than in any other dialogue. This does not, of course, make its author a skeptic, but it makes the dialogue itself, and more especially the processes of midwifery within it, a natural refuge for those seeking to use it in support of their reluctance to come to the kind of conclusions that would exclude further examination, particularly if they had welcomed the appellation σκεπτικοί.[36]

6 Conclusion

As for the *Theaetetus* itself, this limited research suggests that, with respect to its use of epistemologically relevant vocabulary, it has a great deal more in common with *Cratylus* and *Meno* than it is usually given credit for, but that not all parts of the dialogue share this feature. It is most in evidence in passages where Socrates is represented as practising his midwife's art upon the young Theaetetus. It is generally lacking in sections where Socrates has abandoned that matter in favour of a more confident discussion with the more senior Theodorus. This points towards at least two rather different layers of material, whose presence can no doubt be explained by more than one theory. I have already argued from both the narratological perspective[37] and from the precise ways of saying 'I said' and 'he

36 The true skeptic, of course, does not merely investigate; he carries on investigating (D.L. IX.70: σκεπτικοὶ [προσηγορεύοντο] ἀπὸ τοῦ σκέπτεσθαι ἀεὶ καὶ μηδέποτε εὑρίσκειν). But perhaps even this persistent searching receives justification from Socrates' on-going examination into how false opinion could arise: σκοπῶ δὴ καὶ νῦν ἔτι διστάζων, πότερον ἐάσωμεν αὐτὸ ἢ ἐπισκεψώμεθα ἄλλον τρόπον ἢ ὀλίγον πρότερον (187d6–8). In these words, the verbs of hesitation (διστάζω: found D.L. IX.70: σκεπτικοὶ [προσηγορεύοντο] ἀπὸ τοῦ σκέπτεσθαι ἀεὶ καὶ μηδέποτε εὑρίσκειν, and key to the ἐπιρρήματά διστακτικά of *Proleg.* 10.8) and of investigation (σκοπῶ, ἐπισκοπῶ) combine with a commitment to ongoing investigation.

37 Thesleff 1982, 83–87; 125–127; 152–157 postulated an early narrative version of this dialogue. I have tested this theory in Tarrant 2010, cf. also Tarrant 2013. The findings were that all sections of the dialogue displayed a mix of function words (the principal "nuts-and-bolts" of vocabulary, such as might be found in any dialogue regardless of subject) more akin to that of the narrative dialogues than to that of dramatic dialogues. In one factor analysis only one section of text, 176c-184b was placed in an intermediate area containing both narrative and dramatic material (pp. 10–11). This suggested to me that *somehow* the narrative voice of Socrates was still controlling the record of the conversation, a control explored by Schultz 2015. Of particular interest is a cluster analysis presented at the conclusion (pp. 14–15) where the final 5 blocks (words 14001-end, beginning 178d) are found to be closer to the first twenty or so pages of the *Sophist* than to other material analyzed, except for block 9 (approximately 190d–196d), which lacked any obvious parallel. This may indicate that a pre-*Sophist* revision had a disproportionate effect on the sections that follow the so-called ethical digression.

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said' that the prologue claims to be avoiding,[38] that Plato was seeking to avoid the more exaggerated narrative apparatus of the *Protagoras* and *Euthydemus* rather than that of the *Republic*. Like the material presented here, that fact too suggested an earlier layer of material, and was compatible with later material being added in the course of a significant revision to facilitate its serving as introduction to the *Sophist–Statesman* sequence.

38 Tarrant 2016.

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Michele Curnis

The Textual Tradition of the *Theaetetus* from Stobaeus to the Medieval Anthologies

1 Introduction

We can partially reconstruct the textual tradition of the *Theaetetus*, starting from the Hellenistic age, thanks to some important papyrological evidence.[1] Furthermore, these fragments can be compared with medieval manuscripts, both those which transmit the complete text of the dialogue and other ones which only offer an anthological version. Thanks to some parameters that can be accurately detected (such as the quantity and textual quality of anthologized pages for different authors and manuscript traditions), study on the circulation of the *Theaetetus* and the reading typologies relating to this dialogue can finally disregard the common distinction between 'direct tradition' *vs*. 'indirect tradition', which has for too long time constituted a methodological simplification of the analysis of ancient texts.[2] The purpose of this paper is to set out with clarity the comparative textual testimony of the *Theaetetus* which derives from anthologies, with the aim of demonstrating the existence of different autonomous textual traditions since Late Antiquity. All these traditions transmit variations or interpolations of the original text which are a function of the new textual typology (the anthologized page referring to a specific context). In addition to single textual variations, the comparison between the different groups of quotations also demonstrates how each one of the anthological choices leads to both a critical and hermeneutical

1 Carlini 1999 edits and comments on the four papyri containing fragments of the *Theaetetus*.
2 On the rigidity and the prejudicial components of the distinction between direct and indirect tradition, especially applied to the transmission of the text of Plato, see Curnis 2011 and 2017. In the editorial history of the *Theaetetus*, the first philologist to feel the complexity of the tradition mediated by authors who transmit large portions of the dialogue was Auguste Diès; his declared limitation of the use of these traditions (and the subseqent scarce result during the phase of *constitutio textus*) forms part of his warnings about critical criteria: 'J'ai naturellement utilisé la tradition indirecte autant qu'il m'était possible [...]. Je ne me suis pas toujours cru autorisé à corriger la lecture de nos manuscrits par celle qu'offrent ces citations. Le texte que nous offre Stobée est, parfois, bien défectueux' (Diès 1926, 154–155). More careful, even in her critical apparatus information, was Hicken 1995.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110715477-016

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result, starting with the general definition of the main content and intent of the *Theaetetus* itself (the dialogue περὶ ἐπιστήμης, in the manuscript indexes).[3]

Among all the Platonic dialogues, it is only in the case of the *Theaetetus* that a fragmentary Greek commentary has survived, dating back to Late Antiquity: the PBerol inv. 9782 (2nd century AD), which returns a small part of a continuous commentary to the dialogue.[4] The Berlin papyrus is of great importance in terms of textual tradition: even if the single readings of the Platonic text tend to coincide with those of the medieval manuscripts[5] (and it is possible to summarize the type and frequency of these coincidences on the basis of distinction in families),[6] the structure of the headwords (*lemmata*) can be compared with other types of tradition mediated by other authors (what is usually called 'indirect tradition'), in particular some anthological collections.

First of all, it should be noted that, unlike other compilers of Late Antiquity or the Byzantine period, the author of the papyrus commentary had to have a

3 In the text and in the footnotes there will be a series of abbreviations of the main manuscript sources (papyri, Platonic codices and manuscripts of the Stobaeus' *Anthologion*) and critical editions of ancient authors: PBerol = PBerol inv. 9782, containing the text of the anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus*, dated to the 2nd century AD (the reference edition is Bastianini/Sedley 1995); **B** = Bodleianus Clarkianus 39, manu Joannis calligraphi, a. 895; **T** = Marcianus App. Cl. IV.1, manu <Ephraem monaci>, saec. X me.; **P** = Vaticanus Palatinus gr. 173, saec. X me.; **W** = Vindobonensis Suppl. gr. 7, saec. XI ex.; **D** = Marcianus gr. Z 1985, saec. XI-XII; **L** = Lobcovicianus VI Fa 1, saec. XIV; **S** = Vind. Phil. gr. 67, saec. X-XIV; **M** = Escur. Σ.II.14, saec. XI-XII; **A** = Par. gr. 1984, saec. XIII; **F** = Neap. Farnesianus III D 15, saec. XIV in.; **P** = Par. gr. 2129, saec. XV; **L**^{f} = Laur. Plut. 8, 22 (Joannis Damasceni *Florilegium sacro-profanum*), saec. XIII. The referenced critical edition of the *Theaetetus*, if there is no bibliographical detail, is Hicken 1995; Clem. = Clemens Alexandrinus (quoted according to the edition of Stählin 1905 and 1906–1909); Eus. = Eusebius of Caesarea (quoted according to the edition of Mras 1954–1956); Stob. = Ioannes Stobaeus (quoted according to the edition of Wachsmuth 1884 and Hense 1894–1912). The chronological succession of the principal authors citing the text of the *Theaetetus* can be summarized as follows: Clemens Alexandrinus = 150–215 ca.; Iamblichus = 245–325 ca.; Eusebius = 265–340 ca.; Themistius = 355 (*Or*. 21); Stobaeus = 4th–5th centuries; Theodoretus = 393–457 ca.; Proclus = 412–485 ca.; Vat. Pal. gr. 173 = 10th century; Matr. gr. 4573 = *post* 1480.

4 'L'unico esempio di commentario a Platone di età medioplatonica conservato in forma estesa, ma anche, probabilmente, uno dei più antichi brani di commentario continuo di qualsiasi genere che ci siano pervenuti' (Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 246).

5 'Il testo contenuto nei lemmi non mostra molte discordanze rispetto alle lezioni conservate nella tradizione manoscritta del *Teeteto*' (Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 244).

6 'Il papiro coincide con T nel 66% dei casi, con B nel 58% e con W solo nel 47%' (Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 246). These statistics partly change the opinions of previous scholars (Diès 1926, 152–153; Carlini 1994, 87), but they do not affect the authority of **W** and the manuscripts of the so-called 'third family'. See also Hicken 1967.

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complete copy of the *Theaetetus* in order to organize his own continuous commentary. This consideration, together with the lemmatic analysis, assumes considerable importance when evaluating the textual quality of its *lectiones*, in comparison with other witnesses (Byzantine anthologies or complete medieval manuscripts). The typological uniqueness of the PBerol commentary — applied to a rather enigmatic dialogue in the development of Platonic thought, as the *Theaetetus* certainly is — has led scholars to attribute to this papyrus an almost paradigmatic value, as obeing the beginning of Platonism as a specific current of study and debate about ideas.[7] Conversely, Stobaeus' testimonies never particularly interested Plato scholars: neither on the level of textual tradition (since it is assumed that his quotations are in any case always interpolated, not very accurate, and therefore unreliable) nor on that of exegesis (since the *communis opinio* is that Late Antiquity anthologists and their Byzantine continuators have done nothing but accumulate blocks of Platonic quotations, without any criteria and in a rather disordered fashion).[8]

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7 See in particular Bonazzi 2013. Certainly PBerol is a very accurate product, also on the editorial level: 'Il *volumen* è stato sottoposto a revisione e corretto in più punti: parole o lettere omesse nella stesura originaria sono state reintrodotte, lettere o parole superflue sono state sostituite con quelle giudicate esatte' (Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 243). For an overall philosophical evaluation of the *Theaetetus*, see at least Sedley 1996 and 2004.

8 An interesting and complex chapter on the textual tradition of the *Theaetetus* can be reconstructed from the quotations in Proclus. Postponing a detailed exploration (especially of the *Commentary on Parmenides*) to a forthcoming investigation, it is enough for the moment to sample some transcripts within the *Platonic Theology*. On many occasions, the commentator refers to the contents of the dialogue, whether citing the title or not; textual quotations can be read in 1.105, 23 (*Theaet*. 150c7–8); in 1.11, 25–26 Proclus cites the κορυφαῖος of 173c7, reporting the title of the dialogue; in 1.38, 9–10 (Saffrey/Westerink 1968–1997, I, 37–38) the reader finds the most extensive quotation (183e3–184a3), with some transposed or modified words. The most significant variant is at 183e7: συνέμιξα **P** (Proclus), **W** (although above the συν it offers the correction προσ) | συμπροσέμιξα **BT** | συνέζη **V** (Proclus). Editors choose either συμπροσέμειξα (Burnet, Diès) or συνέμειξα (Hicken, who however does not mention the Proclus quotation in her apparatus). At 184a1 ἐφάνη, unanimous in the codices of Plato, in the Proclus tradition is ἔδοξε; again, Hicken does not report the data (nor do Burnet and Diès), without realizing that, if she accepts the previous variant, the new occurrence could well be another ancient variant to mention (though certainly not to be preferred for the main text, simply to insert in the apparatus). Two other transcriptions, present in the last book of the treatise, should be mentioned: in 6.6, 4 (Saffrey/Westerink 1968–1997, VI, 24) Proclus transcribes φίλα καὶ προσήγορα ἀλλήλοις (146a7–8 of the dialogue), while in 6.6, 12 (64) he paraphrases the famous passage of 176b1 with οἶμαι καὶ τὸ εὐδαιμονεῖν *ὁμοιοῦσθαι* λέγεται *θεῷ*.

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2 The *Anthologion* of Ioannes Stobaeus

Nevertheless, the study of the Platonic tradition cannot ignore the contribution of the *Anthologion* by Ioannes Stobaeus, since Plato is precisely the author most frequently cited: each chapter of the work contains numerous quotations, many of which are long and come from all the Tetralogies. The chronology of the Stobean collection can be inferred only from the *terminus post quem* of authors the anthologist includes in his work. The last writer quoted in the *Anthologion*[9] is Iamblichus (died c. 330 AD), while the first to speak at length about Stobaeus's work is Photius (about five centuries after) in his *Bibliotheca* (167). Thanks to Photius and the testimony of the Suda Lexicon, we know that the compiler of the *Anthologion* began his work in order to provide a basic and well-rounded education for his son Septimius.[10] It is, however, very difficult to define the cultural thought of Stobaeus, because the anthologist never intervenes either to introduce a quotation or to make a comment; in the unbroken succession of anthologised passages, individual texts are separated only by lemmatic tools, and are grouped into different chapters.[11] The fact that Ioannes is defined as a "shadowy figure" is not surprising: on the contrary, as Denis Michael Searby argues, 'the ideal anthologist is, perhaps, that transparent author whose effects are only to be seen in the choice of selections, their arrangement and the headings under which they are grouped'. The structure of the work, the chapter titles, and the entries of the *Anthologion* 'represent Stobaeus's sole authorial interventions'.[12] As a result of this fact, philological research has so far mainly focused on the relationship between the versions of the quoted texts found within the *Anthologion* and the direct tradition, in those cases where a comparative examination can be made. It has thus been established that the Stobaean anthology is based on different textual sources from the ones from which the surviving *corpora* of Greek authors (the so-

9 With this title transliterated from Greek and deriving from the Item 'Stobaeus' in Suda Lexicon (*iota* 466: see Adler 1928–1938, III 38) scholars refer to the whole work as being by John, set out in four books. The manuscript tradition has, however, conserved the text dividing it into two parts, due to the large size of each book: the first two are known as *Eglogae physicae et ethicae*, the other two as *Florilegium*. Photius, in the *Bibliotheca* (167.112a; see Henry 1960, 149–159), uses other terms to indicate the title of the work: *eklogai*, *apophthegmata*, *hypothekai* (quotations, sentences, precepts, to translate literally a series of technical terms with very precise meaning in gnomological literature; see Mansfeld 1990; Mansfeld/Runia 1997–2018). On the complex editorial history of the *Anthologion*, see Curnis 2008.

10 Piccione/Runia 2001; Piccione 2002.

11 On the complicated problem of the *lemmata* in Stobaeus see Piccione 1999.

12 Searby 2011, 23–24.

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called 'direct tradition') originated in the Middle Ages; consequently, it cannot be reduced to a simple 'indirect tradition'.[13]

Stobaeus proves to be a perfect connoisseur of the entire Platonic *corpus*, whose texts — appropriately selected and arranged — offer arguments and content to the whole encyclopedic structure of the collection. The *Theaetetus* too is present in the four books of the *Anthologion*, although to a decidedly minority extent, if compared to other titles (the most cited, also following the criterion of proportionality, are the *Republic* and the *Laws*). There are fourteen passages in which the text of the dialogue is object of a textual quotation, or an allusion within a scholastic synthesis (not by Stobaeus but deriving from the *Vetusta placita* of Aëtius). The interest of these Platonic quotations is not only quantitative; the contribution deriving from their analysis has a double value. First, the philological one: Stobaeus's text dates back to a facet of the Platonic tradition which is prior to the formation of medieval archetypes; it preserves, as a consequence, important variations, not always as a result of interpolation or modification with respect to the complete text. Secondly, there are many elements that document the main reading interests of Stobaeus applied to the Platonic sources: the different types of selected passages (see Table 14), dislocation through the several thematic chapters (see Table 15) and preference of some thematic contents in comparison to others. Since the *Anthologion* can be considered the most articulated and encyclopedic instrument of the Late Antiquity and Byzantine scholastic education, Stobaeus's choices play a decisive role in the transmission of Platonic thought up to the birth of the Modern age.

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13 It is more appropriate to speak of an 'intermediate' tradition: see Curnis 2011, 71–76. For a different kind of relationship between Stobaeus and another important author such as Plutarch, see Curnis 2019.

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Tab. 14: Plato's *Theaetetus* in Stobaeus's *Anthologion*
D = δόξα ***S*** = *sententia* ***r*** = only a reference to the dialogue

Theaet.	Stob. (eds. Wachsmuth/Hense)	Stobaeus' chapter titles
146b5–6	4.11, 13 (IV, p. 340)	Περὶ νεότητος ***S***
152c1–3, 153d8–154b6	1.50, 37 (I, p. 478, 10)	Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ εἰ ἀληθεῖς αἱ αἰσθήσεις
152d2–153d5	1.19, 9 (I, p. 168, 5)	Περὶ κινήσεως
153b5–c1	3.29, 97 (III, p. 659)	Περὶ φιλοπονίας
155d4–5	1.30, 1 (I, p. 239, 4)	Περὶ ἴριδος περὶ ἅλω καὶ παρηλίου καὶ ῥάβδων ***D***
157e1–158a7	1.50, 38 (I, p. 479, 13)	Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ εἰ ἀληθεῖς αἱ αἰσθήσεις
176b1–2	2.7, 3f (II, p. 49, 10)	Περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ εἴδους τῆς φιλοσοφίας ***r***
176b8–c3	3.9, 50 (III, p. 361)	Περὶ δικαιοσύνης
176d1–e1	2.7, 3f (II, p. 49, 22)	Περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ εἴδους τῆς φιλοσοφίας ***r***
179a10–b3, c1–4	1.50, 39 (I, p. 480, 1)	Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ εἰ ἀληθεῖς αἱ αἰσθήσεις
181c6–d6	1.19, 8 (I, p. 167, 24)	Περὶ κινήσεως
183b8–c1	1.50, 40 (I, p. 480, 11)	Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ εἰ ἀληθεῖς αἱ αἰσθήσεις
187e2–3	2.31, 109c (II, p. 220, 25)	Περὶ ἀρχῆς καὶ παιδείας ***D***
202b4–c5	2.4, 16 (II, p. 31, 1)	Περὶ λόγων καὶ γραμμάτων

In reconstructing the presence of the *Theaetetus* inside the *Anthologion*, two fundamental perspectives must be taken into account. 1) The extracts can be analyzed according to the internal order of the dialogue (but at the cost of neglecting the progression of the thematic structure of Stobaeus's work, which through the *Eclogae* and the *Florilegium* presents a meticulous index of *loci communes* arranged with an educational purpose). On the contrary, 2) the extracts can be analyzed according to the internal order of the *Anthologion*, that is, from physical and scientific themes up to ethical and political ones (but in this way the progression of the contents of Plato's dialogue is neglected). So, the most appropriate method for understanding the functionality of the *Theaetetus* (as of any other Platonic dialogue) within the *Anthologion* consists in the joint analysis of the development of the contents of the dialogue in parallel with the development of Stobaeus's *loci communes*. The reader will note that the anthologist is 'reusing' the

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Theaetetus text through four textual typologies: i) a simple *sententia*, ii) an argumentational *doxa*, iii) an isolated passage and iv) a succession of multiple pages.

i) *Sententia* must be understood as an autonomous quotation, capable of forming an *ecloga* (that is to say, a specific selection), endowed with an identifying *lemma*, as happens in the chapter Περὶ νεότητος, in which the anthologist reports the passage of 146b5–6 concerning νεότης.[14] In this case, it is possible to suppose that a lexicographical criterion is the origin of the choice, separated from the properly philosophical contents of the discussion. We are reading a joke by Theodore on the intellectual initiative of youth in general (and of Theaetetus in particular), which the anthologist had probably selected either from a systematic reading of the Platonic dialogue, or from a previous lexicographical/thematic source. Themistius, a careful reader of the *Theaetetus*, cites moreover a similar definition of youth (144a7–b1) in the speech *Costantius or on humanity* (22.17a).

ii) *Doxa* must be understood as a reference to a specific item contained in the Platonic dialogue, but within a scholastic synthesis, which Stobaeus includes in his anthology. The most interesting moment is the great review of philosophical opinions (mostly academic and peripatetic) that the anthologist derives from the *Placita philosophorum* by Aëtius in the second book of the collection, specifically in the chapter Περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ εἴδους τῆς φιλοσοφίας, which contains two references to the *Theaetetus*. Both allusions refer to page 176, where Socrates prescribes the need to get as close as possible (κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) to the nature of god (the ὁμοίωσις doctrine), and blames those who admit their own impiety. Undoubtedly, it is one of the *Theaetetus*'s most important pages, since its intermediate part — on the divinity's justice — is quoted in another chapter too, the Περὶ δικαιοσύνης (3.9, 50), already remembered by Themistius in the oration *For the five years of reign or on the nature of the prince* (4.103c).

iii) The main typology of quotation from the *Theaetetus* is the single passage, in coherence with the preceding and following texts taken from other works (Platonic or not). This is the case, for example, with page 153b5–c1, cited in the chapter Περὶ φιλοπονίας to argue that movement is useful to both body and soul (a short quotation, which had already appeared inside another larger one, including 152d2–153d5, in the chapter dedicated to the movement, Περὶ κινήσεως, 1.19, 9). The good fortune of the appearance of this text in the anthological tradition can be appreciated by looking at the *Praeparatio evangelica* of Eusebius of Caesarea, in which there is a lenghty quotation from 152d–153a concerning movement (see Mras 1954–1956, II, 263, 9–19; see also Table 16).

14 On the relationship between age and philosophical discussion connected with this page, see the interesting remarks of Napolitano 2011, 76.

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iv) The succession of several quotations taken from the same dialogue is another sign of marked interest (but not necessarily evidence of the direct and systematic reading of the entire dialogue). In the case of the *Theaetetus*, in addition to two passages referring to movement — already mentioned as items in the chapter Περὶ κινήσεως — one can distinguish a more substantial block in the chapter Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ εἰ ἀληθεῖς αἱ αἰσθήσεις (1.50, 37–40). It is important to note that the succession of Platonic items occurs within a broader sampling of other Platonic quotations (those of the *Theaetetus* are enclosed between the *Phaedo* and the *Timaeus*). Moreover, the succession of Stobaeus's *eclogae* follows exactly that of the pages of the dialogue, and this suggests a systematic reading, aimed at extracting the passages most pertinent to the problem of perception (in fact, a sort of specific anthology of the *Theaetetus*, within a more general Platonic section).

Tab. 15: Stobaeus's *Anthologion* quotations from Plato's *Theaetetus*

Stob. (eds. Wachsmuth/Hense)	**Stobaeus' chapter titles and corresponding *Theaet.* pages**
1.19, 8 (I, p. 167, 24)	Περὶ κινήσεως = 181c6–d6
1.19, 9 (I, p. 168, 5)	Περὶ κινήσεως = 152d2–153d5
1.30, 1 (I, p. 239, 4)	Περὶ ἴριδος περὶ ἅλω καὶ παρηλίου καὶ ῥάβδων = 155d4–5
1.50, 37 (I, p. 478, 10)	Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ εἰ ἀληθεῖς αἱ αἰσθήσεις = 152c1–3, 153d8–154b 6
1.50, 38 (I, p. 479, 13)	Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν κτλ. = 157e1–158a 7
1.50, 39 (I, p. 480, 1)	Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν κτλ. = 179a10–b 3, c1–4
1.50, 40 (I, p. 480, 11)	Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν κτλ. = 183b8–c 1
2.4, 16 (II, p. 31, 1)	Περὶ λόγων καὶ γραμμάτων = 202b4–c 5
2.7, 3f (II, p. 49, 10)	Περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ εἴδους τῆς φιλοσοφίας = 176b1–2
2.7, 3f (II, p. 49, 22)	Περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ εἴδους τῆς φιλοσοφίας = 176d1–e 1
2.31, 109c (II, p. 220, 25)	Περὶ ἀρχῆς καὶ παιδείας = 187e2–3
3.9, 50 (III, p. 361)	Περὶ δικαιοσύνης = 176b 8–c3
3.29, 97 (III, p. 659)	Περὶ φιλοπονίας = 153b 5–c1
4.11, 13 (IV, p. 340)	Περὶ νεότητος = 146b5–6

Besides the reflections on the contents of the *Theaetetus* within Stobaeus's *Anthologion* in the form of extracts and allusions, it is the direct tradition of some Byzantine manuscripts to provide decisive information on the importance of this dialogue in the Late Antiquity education.

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3 Stob. and PBerol in Comparison

Once the type of selection made by the anthologist has been clarified, it is interesting to analyze the *lemmata* of the anonymous commentary and the anthological extracts of Stobaeus. The Stobean chapters on movement (1.19) and on sensation (1.50) are structured in a similar way, as the editorial restitution of Wachsmuth permits to observe: first, a doxographic section, which summarizes the thought of various philosophers (and deriving from the collection of Aëtius);[15] and secondly, a strictly anthological block, consisting of precise quotations (introduced by a *lemma*) from Plato's dialogues.

Stob. 1.19, 9. The incipit of this sampling coincides with the attack of a PBerol *lemma* (Col. 66. 34–40). On a formal level, however, some Stob. *lectiones* are opposed to the concordance of those of the papyri and medieval codices. Since these variations are not recorded either in the Hicken 1995 edition of the *Theaetetus* or in the Bastianini/Sedley 1995 edition of PBerol, it will be appropriate to note them: 152d2 μαλ' οὐ] μάλα οὐ Stob. | 152d3 καθ' αὑτὸ] καθ' ἑαυτὸ Stob. | 152e1 οὐδέποτ' οὐδὲν] οὐδέποτε οὐδὲν Stob. The passage does not present other variations of this type, but the concentration of three cases in the first lines is a sign of a peculiar origin: in this case, the anthologist's source seems to be a copy of an edition that did not scrupulously avoid hiatus. The data set is too scarce to formulate conjectures on the circulation of Platonic texts stylistically revisited (by the author or — more probably — his editors), as was recently done for the *Republic,*[16] but the observation of other substantial textual variations in the same passage increases interest in the source used by the anthologist. Very probably, it was neither a version similar to the model used by the anonymous PBerol commentator (as the subsequent comparisons will show in a more marked way) nor a side of the tradition that later contributed to the formation of the families of the medieval manuscripts. A few lines later, at 152e2–4, corresponding to the PBerol *lemma* of Col.70. 27–32, Stob. reads ἑξῆς οἱ σοφοί (together with **T**: it is the *lectio* that Hicken adopts in her edition); Eusebius and the rest of the medieval tradition agree on ἐξαίσιοι σοφοί, while the papyrus certainly offers the best *lectio* ἐξαίσιοι οἱ σοφοί. The opportunity to preserve the article is confirmed by the subsequent expression within the text of the *Theaetetus*: καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν *οἱ* ἄκροι (152e4).

15 Gourinat 2011.

16 Dorandi 2019, not surprisingly, dedicates an introductory paragraph to the alternative version of the *prooimion* of the *Theaetetus*, on which the anonymous commentator of PBerol offers information.

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Both in the anthological tradition of Eus. and Stob. (which certainly drew on different sources) and in the medieval one, the text has been simplified, probably because of the diphthong αι (read as if it were η) and the repetition of -οι. In the final part of the quotation, the manuscripts of Stob. are less precise (152e 2–3: συμφέρεσθον of PBerol, shared by a quotation in Eus., is opposed to ξυμφερέσθων, first version of **B** — accepted by Hicken —, while Stob. **FP** have συμφέρονται, and **F**¹ ξυμ-),[17] but this does not necessarily imply a textual source of little value; it is more likely that corruptions are attributable to the manuscript tradition of Stobeus himself. The most interesting discrepancy, however, is another one. At 153a5–10 Socrates defines locomotion (φορά) and rubbing (τρίψις) as two forms of movement, thanks to which both fire and the birth of living beings are determined.[18] The medieval tradition mostly has the dual of the demonstrative adjective, while in **βT** Stob. the dual is replaced by a singular (153a 9–10 τούτω δὲ κινήσεις] τοῦτο δὲ κίνησις **βT** | τοῦτο δ' ἡ κίνησις Stob.). In this case, the reader finds not a *corruption* but a *correction*, since even the continuation of the anthological text presents interpolations ascribable most probably to the source. These interpolations depend on a doubt about rubbing as an authentic form of movement: according to the text of Stobaeus, only fire would be the cause of movement. In commenting on this *lemma* (which was in a lost portion of the support) PBerol specifies the dual value of τούτω (exactly as happens in the *scholia* of **B**, n. 25 in Cufalo 2007, 50), certainly not as a grammatical notation, but as a warning about the correct reading (due to the frequent omission of the *iota mutum* in its own manner of spelling).[19] In any case, Stobaeus's selection continues with consistency, eliminating the subsequent dialogue (Ἦ οὐχ αὗται γενέσεις πυρός; — Αὗται μὲν οὖν, 153a 10–b1), which emphasized the plurality of the origins of fire, and justifying the salvation of physical life with the principle of movement (in the singular form), κινήσεως at 153b6, but not κινήσεων, which is the reading in **βTW**² and in the old printed editions of Plato.

17 The critical apparatus of Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 457 does not include complete manuscript data for this page of the *Anthologion*.

18 'For the hot and fire — it's that which both generates and manages everything else — is itself generated from locomotion and rubbing, and these are a pair of motions. Or aren't these the coming-into-being of fire?' (Benardete 1984, I.16).

19 Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 557–558 also believe that this *lemma* of the *Theaetetus* found favour among the Stoics, as an argument supporting their theory of fire as an immanent divine force. Anyone reading the extract in Stobaeus (in a wider selection than the PBerol lemma) will be able to formulate an additional hypothesis, namely, that the anthologist had a version of the dialogue (or an epitome of it), that was already influenced by a stoic environment, based on precise doctrinal and didactic needs.

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On this page two independent features of the textual transmission are evident: 1) Plato's medieval codices are divided on the number of forms of movement, and some agree with Stob. on the singular; 2) the quotation of Stob. 1.19, 9 removes an exchange of words that would have contradicted the consistency of the previous textual choice (replacement of the dual with a singular). As often happens, the anthologist (or his source) intervenes in the Platonic text, eliminating words of response and moments of dialogue that break the unity of a piece of reasoning or a demonstration. It can, however, be presumed that this very intervention is the consequence of a single κίνησις as the principle of the movement, that is to say, a conformation of the text that was already in circulation in Late Antiquity, in parallel to other versions.[20] Stobaeus himself, in fact, reporting only the lines 153b5–7 in 3.29, 97 (the chapter Περὶ φιλοπονίας), offers the *lectio* κινήσεων in the plural, thus allowing us to suppose that the textual sources on the *Theaetetus* at his disposal were certainly more than one.[21]

The wide page of the chapter on movement still deserves an observation about the quality of the transcription of the original text: if the anthologist (or his source) does not hesitate to expunge Socrates' remark, which emphasizes the plurality of the principle of movement, as being incongruous with the previous and subsequent choice of the singular κίνησις, Stob. remains very accurate in the

20 A recent hand in the **F** codex of Stobaeus restores the originally removed Platonic text in the margin. On the other hand, it is quite unlikely that the text collector, Ioannes Stobaeus himself, voluntarily made an interpolation into the Platonic text in order to give it a new philosophical approach and a different use of the key terms. An attitude of this kind is completely outside of the didactic, encyclopedic and literary objectives that the anthologist had in mind (see, for example, Piccione 2002).

21 Hense 1894–1912, III, 659 comments in the critical apparatus that 'eadem verba supra exhibentur fidelius intra amplius Theaeteti excerptum Stob. I 19.9', due to the fact that, in the first occurrence of the same page of Plato, all the responses and dialogue segments are preserved, while now the text is reduced and agglutinated so as to form a single summary period. The use of the adverb *fidelius* is legitimate if it refers to the complete transcription of each line of the original piece of dialogue; in relation to the quality of the text, on the other hand, in both cases we are dealing with versions that previously suffered an exegetical revision and consequent interpolations. Stob. 3.29, 97 is a short excerpt about ἡσυχία and ἀργία as opposed to the φιλοπονία which constitutes the chapter's title (and hence obeys an antiphrastic criterion which very often determines the textual selections of the *Anthologion*). In any case, since in the second occurrence of Stobaeus the morphological interpolations are more marked, it would be appropriate to differentiate (as Hicken 1995 sometimes does) the indications of these in the critical apparatus; for example, Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 465 generally indicate the opposition 'ὄντων codd., οὐσῶν Stob.' in their apparatus. In reality, the variant only refers to the codices of 3.29, 97, because in 1.19, 9 Stobaeus too, like PBerol and the medieval tradition, has ὄντων.

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transcription of the Homeric quotation of *Il.* 14.201 (302). In addition to the pertinent content of this quotation (in the whole Homeric *corpus* it is the only passage in which a cosmogonic theme emerges),[22] the anthologist confirms the stylistic, literary and pedagogical ambition of his collection, which regurgitates numerous citations from Homer. Such notation is not infrequent, if compared with the lemmatic choices of PBerol, which, by contrast, in no segment transcribes the words included in 152e6–10, *i.e.*, the verse from Homer and the very brief comment that Socrates adds.[23]

Stob. 1.50, 37–40. The subsequent quotation from the *Theaetetus* inside the *Anthologion* (153d8–154b 6) constitutes the direct continuation of the text quoted in Stob. 1.19, 9, with the sole exclusion of the responsive words of 153d6–7. In reality, the 'displaced epitome' the anthologist offers us adequately reflects the partitions of the original text: Stob. 1.19, 9 reproduces the first formulation of the theory of Flux, and concludes with an exalted praise of movement deriving from a line of Homer, while the new passage is available in the Stobean chapter dedicated to sensation, eventually recovering various portions of dialogue concerning the relative or false value of physical perception. These last ones are four extracts, consecutively cut and following the original order of the Platonic text, linked together by clear signs of lexicographic coherence,[24] but not always easy to use at the level of argumentation.

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22 Trabattoni/Capra 2018, 179.

23 Another lemmatic gap – more significant with regard to the interpretation of the Platonic text — is found between 153b3 and 153b 9: in Col.73 the anonymous commentator omits the lines dedicated to the condition of bodies (153b4–8) to take care immediately of the souls. A note on ἡ τῶν σωμάτων ἕξις is therefore missing in PBerol, but the same topic aroused the interest of the anthologist in Stob. 3.29, 97. A little further on, the lemmatic transcription jumps from 153c4 to 153c8, leaving out the examples on rest to go immediately to the colophon of reasoning. At 153c 5 καὶ κατὰ σῶμα, Hicken does not report in her apparatus that the manuscripts of Stobaeus present καὶ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα, with an unnecessary addition of the article; since PBerol. too (Col. 74. 12) agrees with the unanimity of Plato's complete tradition, we can put it down to a trivial dictography in the anthological text.

24 It is very probable that the anthologist, even on this occasion, glued together the Platonic segments from thematic (or lexicographic) materials, which were already at his disposal: the adherence of the passages of the *Theaetetus* to the topic of the chapter — that is, sensations, sensible reality and the truth of perception (Περὶ αἰσθήσεως καὶ αἰσθητῶν καὶ εἰ ἀληθεῖς αἱ αἰσθήσεις, according to the title transmitted by Photius and the *Laurentian Florilege*, which Wachsmuth adopts as the chapter's title in his edition) — can be gleaned through the following lexical traces. 1.50, 37: φαντασία ἄρα καὶ αἴσθησις ... αἰσθάνεται; 1.50, 38: παρακούειν ... παρορᾶν ... παραισθάνεσθαι ... τὴν αἴσθησιν ... τὰ φαινόμενα; 1.50, 39: δόξαν ... πάθος ... αἰσθήσεις ... δόξαι; 1.50, 41: τὸ αἰσθητὸν ... δόξαι καὶ πίστεις γίγνονται βέβαιοι καὶ ἀληθεῖς (this last *ecloga* does not

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The first part of the Stobean citation according to the restitution of Wachsmuth coincides with two distinct *lemmata* of PBerol (Col. 66. 8–11, 43–46); this is a part reported by the codex **L**^{f} alone. The second part of the quotation, by contrast, is also in **FP**, the most important *Eclogae* manuscripts. Since these are three very different supports, in structure and quality, within the tradition of the 1st and 2nd books, the choice of the editor (who joins the two passages together but inserts intermediate points of suspension) would be legitimate only for the purpose of publishing the text of the Florilegium sacro-profanum **L**^{f} (which presents it in full)[25]. In the *Anthologion* manuscripts, in fact, unitary textual samples — which are introduced by a single *lemma*, but are the result of the juxtaposition of passages located in very distant points of the source — are rare (in this case: *Theaet*. 152c1–3 + 153d8–154b6). The fusion of these two passages within the *Florilegium* is coherent, but it is impossible to affirm that it respects the original structure desired by the anthologist in Late Antiquity (Stobaeus or his source) or not. The second part of this quotation, as already mentioned, is attested by the most important manuscripts of the *Eclogae* (**FP**); the beginning does not allow any comparison with PBerol, since Col.75 is very deteriorated in correspondence of the *lemma* (it is not even possible to establish its point of attack).

The *lemma* of PBerol fragment B, corresponding to 157e1–4, coincides in the point of attack with another Stobean quotation transmitted by **FP**, corresponding to 1.50, 38 in the Wachsmuth edition. Once again, it is possible to see the isolation of the *Anthologion*'s *lectiones* from the papyrus and the medieval codices: 157e2 νόσων τῶν τε ἄλλων] νόσων τε τῶν ἄλλων Stob. 157e5–158a1 ὡς παντὸς μᾶλλον ἡμῖν] ὥστε παντὸς (πάντος **FP**) μᾶλλον ἂν ἡμῖν Stob. The belonging, both of the Stobaeus's model and of the text used by the commentator of PBerol, to totally distinct sides of the *Theaetetus* tradition is also confirmed by an exegetical datum: the anonymous commentator, in fact, both at the beginning of the text (Col. 2. 11–21) and in one of the conclusive fragments of the papyrus (fr. D)[26] recalls an ancient Academic school judgment. According to the majority of the Academic interpreters, the *Theaetetus* would be a dialogue on the criterion (περὶ κριτηρίου), while the anonymous commentator reiterates that it is rather a dialogue on knowledge. In none of the surviving chapters of the *Anthologion* it is possible to

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come from the *Theaetetus*, but from the *Timaeus*, 37b, and serves to seal and solve the problem of sense perception as presented in the previous dialogue).

25 The reasons that led Wachsmuth to integrate the text of the Stobaeus codices with the pagan citations attested by the Florilegium Laurentianum are set out in Wachsmuth 1882, 1–44.

26 After a suggestion by Tarrant, Sedley 1997 hypothesizes that this fragment must be related to the *lemma* 157c7–d2, and therefore is to be inserted between fragments A and B.

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read any citation relating to the pages dedicated to critical capacity (for example, 150b3, 160c8, 178b6–e3, *etc*.). Perhaps this is not enough to exclude the Academic provenance of Stobaeus's textual source; however, the possible Stoic origin of the interpolation of 153a5–10 is another indication that excludes the potential propensity of the anthologist to select the pages of the dialogue according to an Academic interpretation.

Tab. 16: Plato's *Theaetetus* in Eusebius's *Praeparatio evangelica*

Theaet.	Eus. (ed. Mras)	Eus. *Praep. ev.* chapter titles
151a5–b1	12.45, 1 (II, 134, 16–18)	Ἔτι περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ (Ἔτι περὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ὑποδειγμάτων, 12.44)
151d2–3	13.13, 21 (II, 204, 10–11)	Ὡς καὶ Κλήμης ὁμοίως τὰ καλῶς Ἕλλησιν εἰρημένα σύμφωνα τυγχάνειν τοῖς Ἑβραίων παρίστησι δόγμασιν. Ἀπὸ τοῦ ε Στρωματέως
152d7–153a3	14.4, 1–2 (II, 263, 9–19)	Ὅπως ὁ Πλάτων τοὺς πρὸ αὐτοῦ διαβέβληκεν
161c-162a	14.20, 3–4 (II, 316, 11 - paraphrasis)	Πρὸς τοὺς περὶ Μητρόδωρον καὶ Πρωταγόραν, μόναις δεὶν πιστεύειν ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι λέγοντας. Ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ
173c6–177b7	12.29, 2–21 (II, 119, 25–124, 10)	Περὶ τοῦ καθαρῶς φιλοσοφοῦντος
173c6–174a1	13.13, 20 (II, 203, 22–204, 8)	Ὡς καὶ Κλήμης ὁμοίως κτλ.
179d1–181a3	14.4, 3–7 (II, 263, 21–265, 15)	Ὅπως ὁ Πλάτων τοὺς πρὸ αὐτοῦ διαβέβληκεν

Ultimately, in 13 passages it is possible to find a discrepancy between the *lectiones* of PBerol, Stob. and the medieval tradition of the *Theaetetus*: in all these cases, the text of Stob. always diverges from that of PBerol; in 10 cases (76,9 %) Stob. is isolated from PBerol and the complete set of manuscripts in presenting a *lectio singularis*; in only one case does Stob. agree with **T** (against PBerol and the other codices), in only one case does he agree with **BD** (against PBerol and the other codices), and in only one case does he agree with **BDT** (against PBerol and the other codices).[27]

27 In a single passage it is possible to find a complete divergence between different sides of the manuscript tradition (Stobaeus excepted), but it is not very significant: 151a8 ταύτην τε PBerol | τ. δὲ **BDTW** | τ. δὴ Eus. (see Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 419). Referring to 181d2, in addition to the *lectio* ἀλλοιῶται of the medieval codices, the variant ἀλλοιοῦται is also present in Stob. and **L**

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4 The codex Vat. Pal. gr. 173 (P): *Theaetetus* scholia and excerpta

If the Berlin papyrus is the oldest programmatic commentary of a Plato dialogue, the first Platonic anthology of direct tradition is found in a Byzantine manuscript of the 10th century, famous for presenting the texts in a different order than the Tetralogical one.[28] In 1994 Antonio Carlini published a study dedicated to two important sources for the textual tradition of the *Theaetetus*: PBerol and the Vat. Pal. gr 173 (**P**, in the Platonic philology).[29] After having taken up again the question of the alternative prologue to the *Theaetetus*, of which the anonymous commentator gives notice,[30] Carlini centered the second part of his article on the textual comparison between the surviving *lemmata* of PBerol and the text *excerpta* of the dialogue, which can be read in the second section of the Vatican codex,

(according to the collation of Menchelli 1992, 78). A possible link between Stob. and the Lobcovician codex (**L**) can also be found at *Theaet*. 201d3–203e8 — that is the portion of text that in **W** corresponds to a lost *folium*, replaced by W3 (a recent hand of **W**) — because of the addition of *marginalia* that were originally in **L**: the lost page of **W** only in part corresponds to the quotation of Stob. 2.4, 16, where the text of the *Anthologion* does not present any discrepancy with respect to **W** (see Carlini 1992, 20–28; Menchelli 1992, 75).

28 'Di fatto P è la prima 'antologia' platonica, in tradizione diretta, che presupponga l'intero corpus, compresi gli spuri dell'*Appendix*' (Menchelli 2014, 172). On the manuscript contents see Menchelli 1991, 96: 'Il Palatino contiene delle opere platoniche per intero *Apologia di Socrate* (ff. 1–11), *Fedone* (ff. 11v–39), *Alcibiade I* (ff. 39–52), *Gorgia* (ff. 52–86), *Menone* (ff. 86–98), *Ippia Maggiore* (ff. 98v-108v)'. The reader then finds a section of *excerpta* and *scholia* which concerns the text of the *Theaetetus*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, *Protagoras* and *Republic*. The codex ends with a third section, of shorter *excerpta*; in the description of Menchelli 1991, 106: 'Il Palatino presenta dunque di seguito *Parmenide*, *Filebo*, *Carmide*, *Protagora*, *Ippia Minore*, *Ione*, *Eutidemo*, *Liside*, *Lachete*, *Rivali*, *Ipparco*, *Menesseno*, *Clitofonte* e *Repubblica*; questa successione appare vicina all'ordine, perturbato rispetto alle tetralogie, che presenta W (e i codici a lui affini) nella sua seconda parte. [...] L'innovazione rispetto all'ordine tetralogico sarebbe allora anteriore a W; anche nella parte degli excerpta si conferma la dipendenza di P dalla fonte comune della terza famiglia, resta da valutare la relazione con W'.

29 Codicological description and detailed contents of the Vatican codex can be found in Menchelli 1991, 94–97 and 1996; Cufalo 2007, cxxviii–cxxix (on the *scholia*); Vancamp 2010, 39–42; Menchelli 2013, 172–177.

30 'Non è impossibile che l'Anonimo abbia realmente visto un'edizione del *Teeteto* con il proemio alternativo, ma con il φέρεται δὲ καὶ ἄλλο egli sembra prendere le distanze da questa diversa redazione, [...] il proemio alternativo per lui non poteva essere una «variante d'autore», una prima redazione ripudiata da Platone' (Carlini 1994, 84). Unfortunately for the purposes of our investigation, the quotation closest to the beginning of the dialogue that Stobaeus (in 4.11, 13) presents is equivalent to 146b, that is to say, in an area of the text far from the prologue.

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and he concluded by emphasizing the textual importance of **P** within the so called ‘third family’ of the Platonic manuscript tradition of the first Tetralogies. The scholar reported the analytical data on the first seven passages from the *Theaetetus* (since only that portion of the text could be found in the *lemmata* of the papyrus), to conclude that the *lectiones* of **W** in agreement with PBerol are not Byzantine scholars’ recoveries or conjectures. **P**, in fact, being prior to **W**, allows us to go back over time, up to the forefather of the third family, “portatrice di lezioni antiche” (Carlini 1994, 91) and therefore indispensable for Plato’s *constitutio textus*.

Tab. 17: *Theaetetus* quotations, *lemmata* and *scholia* in Vat. Pal. gr. 173 (**P**)

Exc.	Anthological quotations		Lemmata and scholia
1	143e8–144b6 οὐκ ἔστι … διαπράττεσθαι (f. 109v)	1	143c7 οὐδέν γε ἀπὸ τρόπου + sch. 7 Cufalo
2	146a2–3 ὁ δὲ ἁμαρτών … ὄνος (f. 109v)	2	143d6 ἐπίδοξοι + sch. 9 C.
3	146b5–6 τῷ γὰρ ὄντι … ἔχει (f. 109v)	3	161e4 δημούμενον λέγειν + sch. 65 C.
4	149a1–c7 εἶτα … τῶν ἄλλων (f. 109v)	4	162a1 διωλύγιος φλυαρία + sch. 66 C.
5	150b6–151a1 τῇ δέ γ’ ἐμῇ … ἀμαθεῖς εἶναι (f. 109v)	5	164e4 προπηλακίζομεν + sch. 80 C.
6	151a 5–b1 πάσχουσι … δύναται (f. 109v)	6	166c7–8 οὐ μόνον αὐτὸς ὑηνεῖς + sch. 86 C. (f. 110r)
7	151b8–d3 προσφέρου … θέμις (f. 109v)	7	166d5 πολλοῦ δέω τὸ μὴ φάναι εἶναι + sch. 89 C. (f. 110r)
8	155e3–7 ἄθρει δὴ … οὐσίας μέρει (f. 109v)	8	172e6 τὴν ἄλλως + sch. 122b C. (f. 110r)
9	161c9–d1 οὐδὲν βελτίων βατράχου γυρίνου (f. 109v)	9	179d3–4 διακρούοντα + sch. 158 C. (f. 112r)
10	172c4–177b8 οἱ ἐν ταῖς φιλοσοφίαις … διαφέρειν [*λόγος μείζων*] (ff. 110r–112r)	10	181a5 τοὺς ῥέοντας + sch. 166 C. (f. 112r)
11	183d8–9 ἱππέας … ἀκούσῃ (f. 112r)		
12	186b11–c5 τὰ μὲν εὐθὺς … παραγίγνηται; (f. 112r)		
13	191c8–e1 θὲς δή μοι … ἐπίστασθαι (f. 112r)		

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Exc.	Anthological quotations	Lemmata and scholia
14	195b 9–10 δεινόν τε ... ἀδολέσχης (f. 112r)	
15	210b 8–d2 ταῦτα μὲν ... ὅσοι καλοί (f. 112r)	

As for the modalities and the result of the textual selection of the *Theaetetus*, Carlini noted that 'è caratteristico del modo di lavorare del nostro scriba-filologo intervenire consapevolmente sul testo di Platone, eliminando p. es. le battute responsive o rendendo autonomo un passo che contenga riferimenti a quanto, detto prima, non è stato trascritto' (Carlini 1994, 89. The elimination of responsive words or statements lacking philosophical content is not always applied: see Table 4, *excerptum* 11). In reality, as demonstrated by the examination of some Stobean samples, this way of working is typical of an anthologist more than a 'scriba-filologo'. Indeed, the partial transcription of a text within a new context, characterized by other purposes than those of the original one, is precisely what presupposes an anthological working method.[31] Carlini points out that the compiler of **P**, by eliminating the series of questions and answers of 149a3–5 and 149a9–b 3, behaved like Iamblichus, when he composed the *Protrepticus*, that is, destroying the dialogic structure of Plato's text to transform it into a flat and uninterrupted discourse. The reference could not be more appropriate, since only Iamblichus reports, exactly as in **P** (see Table 17, *excerptum* 10), the digression dedicated to the practice of philosophy in the city.[32] As already stated, Iamblichus is the philosophical antecedent closest to Ioannes Stobaeus, the compiler of the *Anthologion*; and this collection presents some text samples from the *Theaetetus* analogous, or identical, to those which readers find in **P** (see Tables 17 and 18).

Unlike what happens in a typical Greek anthology, not in all the selections does **P** present real *excerpta*, since it also adds numerous isolated words (one or more words taken from the dialogue), accompanied by some *scholia* (marginal

31 See especially Piccione 2003.

32 In *Protrepticus* 14 Iamblichus transcribes Socrates' entire λόγος μείζων on the philosopher: 173c8–177b7 που ἐκ νέων πρῶτον ... (δια) φέρειν (Place 1989, 100–105). The critical apparatus of des Places allows us to understand that the *lectiones* of the Iamblichus codex (Florence, BML, Plut. 86, 3) tend to agree with the complete set of Plato manuscripts, more than with the variations attested by the Christian anthologists (Clemens, Eusebius, Theodoretus); on the other hand, it presents singular variants (like Stobaeus), which denote a distinct tradition. At the end of the quotation the author of the *Protrepticus* comments: εἰ δὴ ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχει, καὶ ὁ βίος θειότερός τε εἶναι καὶ εὐδαιμονέστερος φαίνεται τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διαγόντων.

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or, more frequently, inserted into the text, in a drafting very similar to that of **BD**).[33] The alternation of the original text of Plato and lexicographical material led scholars to place this manuscript in the "cultura di raccolta", typical of the Byzantine book production of the 10th–12th centuries, in this case aimed at the packaging of a Plato anthology for the personal use of the scribe (Menchelli 2014, 173). Over and above lexicographical and scholastic interests, however, the *Theaetetus* anthology present in **P** offers a selection which derogates from the most exquisitely philosophical problems of the dialogue (the dialectic between opinion and knowledge, the nature of ἐπιστήμη), because it focuses on the philosopher's ethics (172c4–177b8). This is precisely that part of the text which Platonic exegesis of the 20th century has always considered a 'digression', or even an undue interruption of the main topic.[34] In addition to transcribing the full text of what Socrates defines as a λόγος μείζων with respect to the previous part (see *infra*), the overall *Theaetetus'* selection by **P** opens and closes with the identification of true beauty, which is the attitude of those whose aim is philosophy. *Excerptum* 1 opens with the physical definition of Theaetetus (οὐκ ἔστι *καλός*, it is said, as he resembles Socrates), while the last selected page (*excerptum* 15), coinciding with the words of Socrates, returns *in extremis* to the midwifery — *Leitmotiv* of the initial part of the dialogue — addressed to the young nobles and to those who are beautiful (τῶν νέων τε καὶ γενναίων καὶ ὅσοι *καλοί*). The beauty and nobility of the practice of philosophy, therefore, circumscribe all the quotations from the *Theaetetus* present in **P**. Once again, the modalities of selection deserve to be analyzed, so that their profound motivations can emerge: midwifery constitutes the main topic of the selection in the first part of the dialogue (*excerpta* 4–7); in the same way, *excerptum* 12 is significant, because it concerns experience (πολλὰ πράγματα) as a source of knowledge about existence and what is useful

33 On the specificity of the scholiastic *corpus* of the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Alcibiades* see Cufalo 2007, xliv–lxii. In the last section of the *excerpta* of the Vatican codex **P** (ff. 148r–160r), lemmatic indications relating to the dialogues are of a different nature, since they are placed in the margin, with the title or with a thematic indication (these differences may mean that the further section comes from a different source than the previous ones; moreover, in the same pages there are large sequences of *scholia*, in an order that does not respect either the Tetralogical one or that of the dialogues present in the first two parts of the manuscript). This concluding section, however, presents neither quotations nor *scholia* relating to the *Theaetetus*.

34 Brisson 2011, 96–98 dedicates some very acute reflexions to the philosophical historiography of the 20th century on the digression, 'that could be a condensation of the *Philosopher*, the dialogue, which was never written' (96). Brisson maintains that the underestimation of the digression is the consequence of prejudicial exegetical assumptions by modern readers. Much more balanced and respectful of the predilections of the ancient tradition was, for example, Festugière 1973, 155–157.

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(οὐσία καὶ ὠφέλεια), something more important than the sensations deriving from the natural faculties. If we consider that *excerptum* 11 has a purely dramatic value (among the selected pages it evinces a stylistic-literary aspect, but not a thematic one), it is evident that the anthologist wanted to connect the whole representation of the philosopher to a conclusion on experience and existence. All these observations lead us to conclude that the Platonic material collected in **P** may be the result of two phases of aggregation: a cohesive and coherent anthological choice (with regard to the *Theaetetus*, of course), which probably dates back to an earlier age than that of the packaging of the codex, and a lexicographical and scholastic choice that interposes itself among the pages of the dialogue, enriching the Platonic selection with a tone of scholarship.[35]

Tab. 18: The *Theaetetus' loci paralleli* in the anthological tradition

Theaet.	**Clem. Alex. *Strom.***	**Eus. *Praep. Ev.***	**Stob.**	**Vat. Pal. gr. 173**	**Matr. gr. 4573**
143e8–144b6				excerptum 1 νῦν δὲ … διαπράττεσθαι	f. 149v εὖ ἴθι … ῥέοντος = 144a1–b5
146b5–6			4.11, 13 τῷ γὰρ … ἔχει	exc. 3 τῷ γὰρ … ἔχει	
151a5–151b1		12.45, 1 πάσχουσι … δύναται		exc. 6	
151b8–d3		13.13, 21 ἀλλά μοι … θέμις = 151d 2–3		exc. 7 προσφέρου … θέμις	f. 150r οὐδεὶς θεὸς … οὐδαμῷ θέμις = 151d1–3
152d2–153d5		14.4, 1–2	1.19, 9		

35 'Per il codice P, se l'attribuzione paleografica intorno alla metà del secolo X colloca il manoscritto nella temperie degli excerpta costantiniani, una connessione con ambienti eruditi dediti anche all'insegnamento, pur con la dovuta cautela, potrebbe forse meglio spiegare la costituzione di una antologia di studio, o d'uso, quale appare lo stesso codice Palatino' (Menchelli 2014, 173–174). Menchelli's conclusions are undoubtedly convincing; they would be even more so, if one considers **P** the result of an assembly of two distinct moments: the textual anthology, probably deriving from a Late Antiquity support, and the lemmatic-scholiastic set, coming from the Byzantine tradition.

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Theaet.	Clem. Alex. *Strom.*	Eus. *Praep. Ev.*	Stob.	Vat. Pal. gr. 173	Matr. gr. 4573
		ἐκ δὲ διαφορᾶς [sic] … γενέσθαι = 152d 7–153a 3	ἐγὼ ἐρῶ … κάτω πάντα 3.29, 97 ἡ τῶν σωμάτων … σῴζεται; = 153b5–7		
155e3–7	6.6, 33, 4–5 Ἄθρει δὴ… μέρει			exc. 8	
161c2–162a3		14.20, 3–4 (paraphrasis)		exc. 9 οὐδὲν … γυρίνου = 161c9–d1	
172c4–177b8 (*λόγος μείζων*)	1.5, 14, 98, 5–8 Λέγωμεν δή … ἐρευνωμένη = 173c8–174a1 2.18, 80, 5 κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν … γενέσθαι = 176b1–2 2.21, 131, 5 δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως εἶναι = 176b1–2 2.21, 133, 3 Διὸ καὶ … γενέσθαι = 176a8–b2 2.21, 136, 6	12.29, 2–21 Λέγωμεν δή … διαφέρειν 13.13, 20 Λέγωμεν δή … ἐρευνωμένη = 173c 8–174a 1	2.7, 3f (allusion to 176b1) 3.9, 50 θεὸς … περὶ τοῦτο = 176b8–c2	exc. 15 οἱ ἐν ταῖς φιλοσοφίαις … διαφέρειν (the complete *λόγος μείζων*)	f. 150r ἀλλ’ οὔτ’ ἀπολέσθαι … γενέσθαι = 176a5–b3 θεὸς οὐδαμῶς …ἐκφυγεῖν = 176c1–e1

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Theaet.	Clem. Alex. *Strom.*	Eus. *Praep. Ev.*	Stob.	Vat. Pal. gr. 173	Matr. gr. 4573
	τὴν ἐξομοίωσιν … γενέσθαι = 176b1–2				
	6.7, 52, 2 ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γίνεσθαι = 176b2				
	6.11, 97, 1 δίκαιος καὶ ὅσιος μετὰ φρονήσεως = 176b1–2				
(179a10–180b1)		14.4, 3–7 προσιτέον … τἀναντία = 179d2–181a4	1.50, 39 μετρίως … γίγνεσθαι + πολλαχῇ … ἀληθεῖς = 179c10–b2 + c1–5	διακρούοντα = 179d3–4 = sch. 158 Cufalo	f. 150r ἀτεχνῶς … ψυχαῖς = 179e6–180b1
187e2–3			2.31, 109c κρεῖττον … περᾶναι		f. 150r κρεῖττον … περᾶναι + ὅταν μὲν … ἐπιστήμην ἔχειν = 202b8–c5
202b4 -c5			2.4, 16 ὀνομάτων … ἔχειν		cf. supra

In the first column on the left, Table 18 shows the references to the *Theaetetus*' pages according to the larger quotation that can be read in one (or more) anthological source (the words of the original text that delimit this quotation can be read in the other columns). When the sources present only one portion of this

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quotation, we have added the words of the original text that delimit it and the equivalence to the precise page of the *Theaetetus*. This table has a synoptic function, so it reports only those passages that appear in at least two anthological sources.[36] Re-reading these data in the light of the content discussion on the dialogue, as does for example Sedley 2004, the reader realizes that the passages that most interested anthologists, in addition to the definition of midwifery, was the first criticism of Protagoras (161b8–168c7). What Sedley then restricted to the topic 'God' (coinciding with the chapter concerning 176a2–177c4 = Sedley 2004, 74–80), corresponds both in Socrates' words and in the entire anthological tradition to the λόγος μείζων relative to the philosopher. The English scholar insisted on the idea of relativism to define the section of doxographical confrontation on knowledge, with the demolition of the Protagoras' opinions: this same attitude of cultural relativism seems to accompany most of the quotations of Christian authors (from Clement to Theodoretus, regardless all the problems about respective sources and models).[37] In fact, facing the problem of knowledge and ethics, they must compare the Greek philosopher, representative of paganism, with the Christian philosophy of the new era, through an argumentative elaboration that very much recalls Socratic midwifery. The main indication of this doxographical and argumentational formulation is the special insistence, within the *Stromata*, on the passage concerning ὁμοίωσις at 176a8–b2.[38]

The last column of Table 18 shows an anthology of the *Theaetetus* dating back to the late Humanistic age, proceeding from a manuscript belonging to (and almost totally transcribed by) Constantine Lascaris, the codex Matritensis gr. 4573 of the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid. Ff. 1–148, by the hand of Lascaris, offer the

36 Some textual comparisons are particularly interesting: in the passage related to Stob. 3.9, 50 (176b8–c3) it is possible to note some discrepancies thanks to the parallel testimony of **P** (*excerptum* 10); with respect to δικαιότατος οὐ καὶ αὐτῷ ὁμοιότερον, so transcribed by **P** as well, $\mathbf{A}^{ac}$ of Stob. has αὐτό. After the second δικαιότατος **P** marks a higher point, with a punctuation that is completely discordant with that of Stob., whose *ecloga* ends with περὶ τοῦτο after δικαιότατος. Finally, the last word is the most affected by variations in the manuscript tradition: τούτου **PBT** | τοῦτον **A** | τοῦτο **SM** Iambl. Eus. Theod.

37 In the *Graecarum affectionum curatio* there are ten textual quotations from the *Theaetetus*, but according to Raeder 1904, *ad indices*, Theodoretus is recovering in all the cases previous quotations, either from Clemens Alexandrinus or from Eusebius.

38 See Faye 1906, 174–200. Also in the final page of the *Protrepticus* (12.122, 2 = Stählin 1905, 86) Clement of Alexandria quotes from *Theaet*. 176b2 (δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως), which is the famous passage on the similarity of man to divinity, a page to which he alludes very often in the *Stromata* (see Table 18). On the relationship between Platonic heritage and paganism in Byzantium, see Siniossoglou 2011, 173–179 (on the quotations of the *Theaetetus* by Gemistus Plethon), and 293–312.

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complete text of the *Republic* and *Letters*, while the ff. 149–157 present a series of short excerpts from the following dialogues: *Timaeus*, *Phaedo*, *Parmenides*, *Philebus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Cratylus*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Alcibiades*, *Rival Lovers*, *Theages*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Meno*, *Hippias minor*, *Halcyon*, *Eryxias*, *Republic* (I–III, V–VII), *Laws* (I, III–IX, XI–XII). Andrés 1987, 51, attributes the *excerpta* section to the hand of Philip of Rhodes; it should be noted that the autograph *subscriptio* of Lascaris, dated Messina 1480, is read at f. 148, so that the remaining Platonic anthology was added later, in order to complete the volume (probably between 1480 and 1494, when the manuscript passed to the cathedral library in Messina).[39] Although it is a very late collection, among the nine extracts from the *Theaetetus* present in the Lascaris manuscript[40] it is interesting to observe that six of them were already attested by the Late Antiquity anthological tradition (Eus. and Stob.) or in the medieval one (**P**), confirming a series of thematic interests that substantially remained unchanged for many centuries.[41]

5 The λόγος μείζων on the Philosopher and the School Tradition

One of the most important manuscripts of the Platonic tradition is Oxford, Bodleian MS. E.D. Clarke 39 (**B**), the copying of which was finished in the year 895 by the scribe John, who in the subscription (f. 418v) refers to himself as *kalligraphos*.

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39 It is unlikely that the chronological context of this section can be the 16th century; maybe a content analogy with the anthological materials of the manuscript London, British Library, Royal Mss. 16 C 25 produced this hypothesis; whatever the case, the model for both selections could be the (non-anthological) codex Florence, BML, Plut. 85, 9 (see Joyal 1998, 33–34).

40 The general structure of the compilation reflects that of Stobaeus's anthology: at the beginning of each dialogue we have an extensive lemmatic reference (in the case of the *Theaetetus*: ἐκ τοῦ διαλόγου οὗ ἡ ἐπιγραφή, Θεαίτητος, ἢ περὶ ἐπιστήμης f. 149v) and, as introduction of each extract, the lemma ἐκ (τοῦ) αὐτοῦ διαλόγου. The passages of the *Theaetetus* copied in the ff. 149v–150r are the following: 1) 144a1–b5 εὖ ἴθι … ῥέοντος; 2) 151d1–3 οὐδεὶς θεὸς … θέμις; 3) 155d3–4 μάλα γὰρ … ἢ αὕτη; 4) 171a6–b2 ἔπειτα γε … ἀληθῆ εἶναι; 5) 176a5–b3 ἀλλ' οὔτ' ἀπολέσθαι … γενέσθαι; 6) 176c1–e1 θεὸς οὐδαμῶς ἄδικος (om. οὐδαμῇ) … ἐκφυγεῖν; 7) 179e6–180b1 ἀτεχνῶς … αὐτῶν· ψυχαῖς; 8) 187b9–c3 εἂν γὰρ … τοιοῦτος; 9a) 187e2–3 κρεῖττον γὰρ … περάναι; 9b) 202b8–c5 ὅταν μὲν … ἐπιστήμην ἔχειν (9a and 9b are transcribed without interruption and introduced by a unique *lemma*).

41 On Eusebius' library see Carriker 2003.

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The codex contains half of the Platonic *corpus*, equivalent to the first six Tetralogies, and is accompanied by numerous *scholia* and marginal annotations. In addition to the quality of the Greek text, the manuscript has always attracted attention because it was assumed that the precious marginal notes were from the hand of the buyer, bishop Arethas of Caesarea. But the latest studies have shown convincingly that all the heritage of this marginal information (rich in significant textual variations) dates back to the Late Antiquity antigraph from which **B** derives. And it is precisely a *scholion* to the *Theaetetus* that reserves the most interesting surprise, useful in proving both the antiquity of the model and the fundamental role of this dialogue in ancient and Byzantine education. On the left margin of f. 96v, corresponding to *Theaet*. 172b8–c 2, there is a note that prescribes the learning by memory of the passage. Maria-Jagoda Luzzatto defines the style of this note as «a very elegant inverted triangle calligram, concluded by *paragraphos* and a heart-shaped leaflet» ('un elegantissimo calligramma a triangolo rovesciato, concluso da *paragraphos* e fogliolina cuoriforme').[42] The text of the *scholion* is the following:

> ἐντεῦθεν μέχρι τῶν ἑξῆς σελιδίων ΙΔ ἀποστηθίζειν χρή
>
> from here until the next 14 *selidia* it is necessary to learn by heart.

The term σελίδιον indicates a very narrow writing column, like those of the astronomical tables of the *Mathematikḗ sýntaxis* of Ptolemy (the *Almagest*). In any case, it is not possible that the term refers to the large columns of the Clarkianus codex, equivalent to fourteen full pages to be learned by heart. As Luzzatto has shown, these columns to be memorized perfectly correspond to the subdivision of the text present in the Late Antiquity model, undoubtedly a manuscript in which the single *folium* was organized into four columns of writing, in accordance with a typology of '*corpus* codex' widespread between the 4th and 5th century (*i.e.*, the same period as the first drafting of Stobaeus's *Anthologion*). The annotation could either be coeval with the writing of the main text or go back to the 5th–6th century. The verb ἀποστηθίζω is in fact typical of the 6th century: literally it means 'to get out of the chest / from the heart' (exactly like in the English expression 'to learn by heart'), and it is used as a technical verb for the repetition and learning of scriptural passages; it appears for example in the *Prolegomena philosophiae* of the Aristotelian commentator David (5.22).

42 Luzzatto 2010, 105.

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To which textual portion of the *Theaetetus*, then, do the fourteen columns of the ancient model of **B** correspond? There is no similar marginal note in the Clarkianus that marks the end of the discourse to be learned by heart, but Plato himself makes it clear. In 172b–c Socrates warns Theodorus that "a bigger speech is taking possession" of the conversation, surpassing the less important one: if the λόγος ἐλάττων is the theory of knowledge according to Protagoras, the λόγος μείζων that starts here is the famous portrait of the philosopher, and his inadequacy in civil and political situations. This famous characterization extends for many lines, and clarifies the fundamental difference between two types of men (slaves of the world and philosophers) and two paradigms of existence, the divine and supremely happy one, coinciding with justice, and the atheist and supremely unhappy one, coinciding with injustice. At the end, it is Socrates himself who decides to return to the previous discourse (τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς λόγον, 177c1) and to put an end to a series of πάρεργα (177b7); this last term should not be understood in the sense of 'secondary, marginal' speech or argumentation, because that would contradict the qualification of λόγος μείζων. The meaning of πάρεργος here is 'incidental', since the second argument was interposed — precisely because of its importance — within the discussion of the original theme.

The culture of Late Antiquity could select an ample piece of the *Theaetetus*, important enough for it to recommend its memorized learning, and it is a passage which does not concern the theory of knowledge but the nature of the philosopher and the divine παράδειγμα which inspires him even in his life in the *polis*; its teaching is thus ethical and political rather than epistemological. And it is significant that this 'interlude of the philosopher' is cited in other pages of Stobaeus, in many points of the *Discourse* 21 of Themistius, in the Vat. Pal. gr. 173 (**P**), but especially in the *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus and in the *Praeparatio evangelica* of Eusebius. In these treatises, each one independent from the other, the μείζων λόγος appears transcribed in its entirety, and ends with the words of 177b 7 (ὥστε παίδων μηδὲν δοκεῖν διαφέρειν, when Socrates puts an end to the digression):[43]

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43 "Nella tarda antichità e proprio in contesti di tipo scolastico e didattico come il *Protrettico* di Giamblico e la *Praeparatio Evangelica* di Eusebio, il lungo e famoso passo del *Teeteto* viene citato per intero e finisce proprio, in ambedue i casi, con le parole di *Theaet*. 177b già da noi citate: ὥστε παίδων μηδὲν δοκεῖν διαφέρειν. Due fonti tardoantiche indipendenti una dall'altra e riferibili per di più ad ambiti culturali del tutto diversi ci testimoniano che quel brano del *Teeteto* veniva citato e memorizzato entro i precisi confini indicati da Platone stesso. A conferma della sua grande notorietà nella cultura tardoantica stanno gli estratti letterali da questo famoso 'intermezzo del filosofo' nell'*Orazione* 21 di Temistio, che si aspettava naturalmente che i suoi dotti uditori riconoscessero ed apprezzassero nei minimi particolari le sue allusioni" (Luzzatto 2010, 107). *Excerptum* 10 of the **P** codex, as we have seen, also ends with exactly the same words as

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another argument proving that up to this point the reader either of the Clarkianus codex or of the anthological tradition had to study it by heart.

close the extract in Iamblichus and Eusebius, which confirms the accuracy of Luzzatto's calculations regarding the writing columns to be memorized. Finally, the anthological interest of **P**'s compiler towards the philosopher's interlude is a further indication in favour of a Late Antiquity chronology of his model.

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