Folia Philosophica

42

Redakcja / Editor
Dariusz Kubok

Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
Katowice 2019

Redaktor serii: Filozofia / Editor of the Series: Philosophy
Dariusz Kubok

Rada Redakcyjna / Editorial Board
Dariusz Kubok (Redaktor naczelny / Editor-in-Chef), **Tomasz Kubalica** (Zastępca redaktora naczelnego / Deputy Editor), **Marta Ples-Bęben** (Sekretarz redakcji / Editorial Secretary), **Alicja Pietras**, **Matúš Porubjak** (Slovakia), **Viorel Vizureanu** (Romania).

Rada Doradcza / Advisory Board
Andrzej J. Noras (historia filozofii / history of philosophy), Tomasz Kubalica (ontologia / ontology), Piotr Łaciak (epistemologia / epistemology), Danuta Ślęczek-Czakon (etyka / ethics), Maria Popczyk (estetyka / aesthetics), Krzysztof Szymanek (logika / logic), Wojciech Kaute (filozofia polityki / political philosophy).

Rada Programowa / Program Council
Heinrich Badura (Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien, Austria), Gerhard Banse (Karlsruher Institut für Technologie, Germany), Józef Bańka (Uniwersytet Śląski, Katowice, Poland), Ľubomir Belás (Prešovska Univerzita, Slovakia), Stanisław Borzym (Polska Akademia Nauk, Warsaw, Poland), Christoph Demmerling (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena, Germany), Czesław Głombik (Uniwersytet Śląski, Katowice, Poland), Jan Hartman (Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Cracow, Poland), Adam Jonkisz (Akademia Ignatianum, Cracow, Poland), Andrzej Kiepas (Politechnika Śląska, Gliwice, Poland), Jerzy Kopania (Uniwersytet w Białymstoku, Poland), Christian Krijnen (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, Netherland), Nicanor Ursua Lezaun (Universidad del Pais Vasco, San Sebastián, Spain), Iwona Lorenc (Uniwersytet Warszawski, Poland), Leon Miodoński (Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Poland), Robert Piłat (Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Warsaw, Poland), Jan Štěpán (Univerzita Palackého, Olomouc, Czech Republic), Ulrich Wollner (Univerzita Mateja Bela, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia), Jan Zouhar (Masarykova Univerzita, Brno, Czech Republic).

Zespół Recenzentów / Board of Referees
Iwona Alechnowicz-Skrzypek (Uniwersytet Opolski, Poland), Bolesław Andrzejewski (Uniwersytet Adama Mickiewicza, Poland), Pavel Fobel (Univerzita Mateja Bela Banská Bystrica, Slovakia), Adam Jonkisz (Akademia Ignatianum, Poland), Agnieszka Kijewska (Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, Poland), Leszek Kopciuch (Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Poland), Jan Krokos (Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Poland), Radosław Kuliniak (Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Poland), Anna Latawiec (Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Poland), Vladimír Leško (Univerzita Pavla Jozefa Šafárika v Košiciach, Slovakia), Andrzej Lorenz (Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Poland), Marek Maciejczak (Politechnika Warszawska, Poland), Artur Mordka (Uniwersytet Rzeszowski, Poland), Marek Papuziński (Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, Poland), Zlatica Plašienková (Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, Slovakia), Sławomir Raube (Uniwersytet w Białymstoku, Poland), Marek Rembierz (Uniwersytet Śląski, Poland), Piotr Świercz (Akademia Ignatianum, Poland), Tadeusz Szubka (Uniwersytet Szczeciński, Poland), Włodzimierz Tyburski (Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, Poland), Ryszard Wiśniewski (Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, Poland), Ulrich Wollner (Univerzita Mateja Bela Banská Bystrica, Slovakia), Kazimierz Wolsza (Uniwersytet Opolski, Poland).

Spis treści

Zbigniew Nerczuk: Filozoficzne podstawy antylogiki 5

Janina Gajda-Krynicka: Propedeutyka teorii sądu w filozofii starożytnej. Od sofistów do Platońskiego *Teajteta* 21

Dorota Zygmuntowicz: Kłamstwa i zmyślenia. Epistemiczny potencjał *pseudos* w *Politei* Platona 47

Artur Pacewicz: Platon a klasyczna teoria wiedzy 91

Piotr Świercz: Mit jaskini i Platońska epistemologia polityki 115

Table of Contents

Zbigniew Nerczuk: The Philosophical Basis of the Method of Antilogic . 5

Janina Gajda-Krynicka: The Propedeutic of the Theory of Judgment in Ancient Philosophy. From the Sophists to Plato's *Theaetetus*. 21

Dorota Zygmuntowicz: Lies and Fabrications. The Cognitive Potential of *Pseudos* in Plato's *Republic* 47

Artur Pacewicz: Plato and the Classical Theory of Knowledge 91

Piotr Świercz: The Allegory of the Cave and Plato's Epistemology of Politics 115

„Folia Philosophica". Vol. 42, s. 5—19
Katowice 2019
ISSN 2353-9445 (online)

DOI: http://doi.org/10.31261/fp.8516

Zbigniew Nerczuk
Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika

The Philosophical Basis of the Method of Antilogic

Filozoficzne podstawy antylogiki

Abstrakt: Artykuł poświęcony jest sofistycznej metodzie antylogicznej. Tradycyjne rozumienie antylogiki ujmowanej jako przejaw agonicznych i erystycznych skłonności sofistów i pod wpływem optyki Platona przeciwstawianej dialektyce zostało w ostatnich dekadach, pod wpływem pracy G.B. Kerferda, zastąpione rozumieniem antylogiki jako samoistnej techniki argumentacyjnej, mającej swe własne źródła, istotę i cele. Idąc za interpretacją G.B. Kerferda, wedle której fundamentem antylogiki jest opozycja dwu *logoi* wynikająca ze sprzeczności lub przeciwieństwa, w konieczny sposób związanego ze światem zmysłowym, w artykule dowodzi się, że filozoficznych podstaw antylogiki należy poszukiwać w przedstawieniu poglądów przypisywanych Protagorasowi w Platońskim dialogu *Teajtet*.
Słowa klucze: sofistyka, Protagoras, antylogika

It is commonly accepted that interest in the *logos* as an instrument of persuasion led to the formation of the three basic sophistic methods of eristic, dialectic, and antilogic. The most mysterious, but — as Plato contends in the dialogue the *Sophist* — essentially linked with the sophistic movement is the art of antilogic.[1]

[1] In ancient texts, this method is called the method of "opposed speeches" (*logoiantikeimenoi*, *logoi enantioi*), "two-fold arguments" (*duo logoi*, *amfo to logo*, *dissoi logoi*), "antilogic" (*antilogike*), or "enantiology" (*enantiologia*).

Traditional interpretation of antilogic

The interpretative tradition treats antilogic as an expression of eristic "word juggling," already exposed by Plato and Aristotle. The scarcity of records about this method, the pejorative tone of Plato's dialogues and Aristotle's criticism, as well as the indignation that this method elicited both in the sophists' contemporaries and in later centuries prompted researchers to attribute only rhetorical or eristic significance to the method of antilogic. The dismissive attitude towards antilogic continues to this day, and even insightful scholars succumb to it. The basic objection to antilogic is the belief that it results from the sophists' agonistic rhetoric and its only goal is to defeat one's opponent in a debate without any concern for truth.

Due to this odium that has been weighing on it for decades, the subject of "contrasting arguments" has not garnered adequate attention in studies in the history of philosophy, rhetoric, or logic. Though many researchers have emphasized that arguing for opposing theses is one of the methods proper to the sophists,[2] this has not led to in-depth research on this issue.

The reasons for this state of affairs can be seen in the traditional belief that the main sophistic method is rhetoric, understood as the ability to give judicial, political or epideictic speeches, and eristic, a method of questions and answers aimed at seeking victory in argument by refuting the opponent's position regardless of the truth. According to this traditional belief, both methods — rhetoric and eristic — are in opposition to Socrates's method of "questions and answers," that is, dialectic.

From this perspective, antilogic has been equated with eristic or considered a part of rhetorical education and, as a method aimed solely at victory in a dispute, opposed to Plato's dialectic. An example of this way of thinking is F. Ueberweg's assessment of antilogic; Ueberweg, when he mentions the form of Protagoras's work *Antilogikoi* ("Contradictory arguments"), speaks of "the double-sided pseudodialectic procedure" ("das doppelseitige pseudo-dialektische Verfahren").[3] F. Ueberweg uses

[2] G.W.F. Hegel (G.W.F. Hegel: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, vol. 1.* Berlin 1883, p. 23), contrasting "die Sophistik" with "die Sophisterei," wrote: "*Die Sophisterei ist so schlimm, in dem Sinne*, als ob dies Eigentümlichkeit sei, der sich nur schlechte Menschen schuldig machen. Die Sophistik ist so aber viel allgemeiner; es ist alles Räsonieren aus Gründen — das Geltendmachen solcher Gesichtspunkte, das Anbringen von Gründen und Gegengründen."

[3] F. Ueberweg: *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie des Alterthums*. Berlin 1876, p. 89.

the same term "pseudo-dialektisch" to describe the eristic argumentation of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus presented in Plato's *Euthydemus* ("die pseudo-dialektischen Gaukler").[4] F. Ueberweg's equating of the method of opposed speeches and eristic is significant and reflects the generally accepted view of the time.

A similar perspective also finds expression in many more recent works. Though L. Robin and T. Buchheim[5] are aware of the distinctiveness of antilogic as a specific sophistic method, they primarily connect it with the theme of verbal disputes. L. Robin notes: "Since their (sc. the sophists') object was to prepare the pupil for every conflict in thought or action to which social life might give rise, their method was essentially 'antilogy' or controversy, the opposition of the theses possible with regard to certain themes, or 'hypotheses,' suitably defined and classified. The pupil had to learn to criticize and to argue, to organize a 'joust' of reasons against reasons."[6] L. Robin rightly indicates the main feature of antilogic, which is the ability to argue for both contradictory arguments on any topic. However, like many other researchers, in emphasizing its agonistic nature as a basic feature of the method of contrasting arguments, he only highlights the polemical aspect of the art of antilogic.

It seems that at the root of the way of thinking represented by the above-mentioned researchers lies a belief which developed in antiquity in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C. E. Dupréel indicates this, writing: "Dès l'antiquité, on a voulu comprendre que Protagoras avait marqué son indifférence complete a l'égard du pour et du contre. Nier et affirmer une même chose a la même valeur, dès lors chacun a licence de ne s'attacher qu'à celle des deux propositions contradictoires q'il juge la plus conforme à ses intêrets."[7] Protagoras's antilogical motto, according to which it is possible to argue for and against any thesis, perfectly fit the negative image of the sophist as an unscrupulous manipulator. Combined with the "ethical" interpretation of Protagoras's theorem, "making the weaker argument stronger,"[8] it gave rise to the accusation that the sophists acted solely in their own interest. This interpretation of the *dissoi logoi* method can already be seen

---

[4] Ibid., p. 94.

[5] For example, T. Buchheim: *Die Sophistik als Avantgarde normalen Lebens*. Hamburg 1986, p. 12. regards antilogic as a means of achieving victory in verbal disputes.

[6] L. Robin: *Greek Thought and the Origins of the Scientific Spirit*. New York 1996, p. 140.

[7] E. Dupréel: *Les Sophistes. Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias*. Neuchâtel 1948, p. 38.

[8] H. Diels, W. Kranz. Eds.: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und Deutsch von Hermann Diels. Herausgegeben von Walther Kranz, I—III vols. 13th ed.* Dublin—Zürich 1969. (DK 80 6B).

in early sources, such as Aristophanes's *Clouds*, in which the comedy writer combined the method of "contrasting arguments with the conviction that its goal is to win in unfair trials."[9] A reference to the method of "contradictory arguments" appears in a similar context in Euripides's tragedy *Antiope*, in which *haplos mythos*, contrasted with the sophistic "double speeches," expresses the truth.[10]

This negative image of antilogic was completed by Plato's works.[11] Already in his early dialogues, we find the opposition of sophistic methods and Socratic dialectic, which is expressed by the emphasis Plato puts on presenting the sophists' inefficiency in using the question and answer method.[12] In the late dialogue the *Sophist*, devoted to the search for the definition of a sophist, Plato shows that the most significant feature of a sophist is the connection with antilogic, and the sophist himself is called an "antilogician."[13]

This contrasting of dialectic and the sophistic methods of eristic and antilogic in Plato's works is noticed by R. Robinson, who writes: "Plato constantly has in mind a certain opposite of dialectic, something superficially like dialectic and yet as bad as dialectic is good, something against which the would-be dialectician must always be on guard. He has two chief names for this shadow or reverse of dialectic, antilogic and eristic. By 'eristic,' or the art of quarrelling, he indicates that the aim of this procedure is

---

[9] T.J. Morgan: *Literate Education in Classical Athens*. "The Classical Quarterly New Series" 1999, vol. 49 no. 1, p. 52.

[10] On the "two speech" method in pre-Platonic testimonies, cf. Z. Nerczuk: *Metoda 'dwu mów' w świetle świadectw przedplatońskich*. "Studia Antyczne i Mediewistyczne" 2012, vol. 45 no. 10, pp. 37—50.

[11] E. Schiappa argues that the term "antilogike techne" was "almost certainly" coined by Plato, but "it is reasonable to attribute the origin of antilogike as a practice (if not as a term) to Protagoras" (E. Schiappa: *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric*. Columbia (South Carolina) 2003, p. 164). We know from sources that the term *antilogikos* had appeared even earlier. The earliest text in which the term appears is Aristophanes's *Clouds*, in which the term refers to someone whose profession consists in presenting the opposite opinion. We can assume that this is an allusion to the title of Protagoras's treatise *Antilogiai* or *Antilogikoi*.

[12] Cf. e.g. Pl., *Gorg.*, 466a—467c.

[13] Cf. Pl., *Soph.*, 232b. F.M. Cornford (F.M. Cornford: *Plato's Theory of Knowledge, The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato Translated with a Running Commentary*. London 1935, p. 190) interprets this passage thus: "This passage enlarges the meaning of 'controversy' so as to include the rhetorical Sophists the hunters of Division I, the 'producers of persuasion' (*pithanourgike*) and professors of spurious education in goodness, who were alternatively regarded as salesmen of the soul's nourishment in Divisions II—IV. Protagoras himself will presently be named. Because of this wider sense, 'controversy' is pitched upon as a character common to all the types described in the earlier Divisions (except the purifier of the soul) and as the 'most revealing' trait."

to win the argument, whereas the aim of dialectic is to discover truth. By 'antilogic,' or the art of contradiction, he indicates that it is a tendency to contradict, to maintain aggressively whatever position is opposite to that of one's interlocutor [...]. The more detailed connotation of 'eristic' and 'antilogic' tends to be whatever Plato happens to think of as bad method at the moment, just as 'dialectic' is to him at every stage of his thought whatever he then considered the best method."[14]

According to R. Robinson, in Plato's works antilogic and eristic are set in opposition to the ideal method, which Plato calls "dialectic." The contrast of the sophistic and dialectical methods, so strongly visible in all of Plato's work, is therefore part of Plato's polemical strategy directed against the sophists.

The opinions of F. Ueberweg, L. Robin, and E. Dupréel presented above are the result of an interpretative tradition derived from Plato and Aristotle, which connected the sophists with rhetoric and eristic, and the true philosophy and dialectic with Socrates and Plato. Under its influence, the sophists were associated with the domination of form over content, the prevalence of the eristic and ludic element, and the abandonment of any "philosophical" truth-orientedness. For example, H.-I. Marrou writes in this spirit, noting that Protagoras indeed borrowed his polemical tricks and dialectic from Zeno: "but at the same time he emptied them of their profound and serious content." As H.-I. Marrou continues, Protagoras "kept only the bare skeleton, from which, by a process of systematization, he formulated the principles of eristics, a debating-method that was supposed to confound any kind of opponent by taking points he had himself conceded and using them as a starting-point for further argument."[15]

The new perspective in interpretation of antilogic

The recent decades have brought many changes in the reigning interpretative perspective. Many scholars have pondered the source of common philosophical terms such as "philosopher," "sophist," "rhetor," "dialectic,"

---

[14] R. Robinson: *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*. Ithaca—New York 1941, pp. 88—89.

[15] H.-I. Marrou: *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Trans. G. Lamb. New York 1964, p. 83.

and "antilogic."[16] As a result, there was a growing conviction that certain semantic and interpretational canons established in tradition are unable to withstand closer analysis. Their general understanding is largely determined by one perspective, which is that of the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition.[17]

In this spirit, renewed reflection on the sophistic techniques of argument was also undertaken.[18] Not only were the sophists' rhetorical achievements recognized, taking into account their philosophical foundation, but so was the "element of logical formalism" that lies at the source of sophistic argumentation.[19] This more thorough approach to the sophistic movement led to the distinction of sophistic methods, to the determination of their character and purpose, as well as to a rethinking of Plato's attitude towards them.

G.B. Kerferd's reflections in this area were groundbreaking.[20] In his synthetic work devoted to the sophistic movement, the researcher examines three basic forms of the "art of persuasion" developed by the sophists: dialectic, eristic, and antilogic. Their accurate distinction, and above all the indication of the essence of antilogic, was recognized by G.B. Kerferd as fundamental for understanding "the true nature of the sophistic movement."[21] On the one hand, G.B. Kerferd perpetuated a theme that appeared in earlier literature. The antilogical method understood as setting up contradictory predicates for the same subjects had already been written about, and it was associated with Protagoras and his lost works entitled *Antilogies* or *Art of Eristic* and a fragmentary, anonymous text entitled *Dissoi Logoi* ("Double speeches").

[16] Cf., e.g., E. Schiappa: *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric*, pp. 39—63.

[17] A. Nehamas: *Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato's Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry*. In: *Virtues of Authenticity. Essays on Plato and Socrates*. Princeton 1999, p. 110: "The reason why it is important to remind ourselves of Iocrates's views, crude as they may appear, is that they make it clear that in the fourth century B.C. terms like 'philosophy,' 'dialectic,' and 'sophistry' do not seem to have had a widely agreed-upon application. On the contrary, different authors seem to have fought with one another with the purpose of appropriating the term 'philosophy,' each for his own practice and educational scheme. In the long run, of course, Plato (followed in this respect, and despite their many differences, by Aristotle) emerged victorious. He thereby established what philosophy is by contrasting it not only with sophistry but also with rhetoric, poetry, traditional religion, and the specialized sciences."

[18] M. Gagarin: *Probability and Persuasion: Plato and Early Greek Rhetoric*. In: *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*. Ed. I. Worthington. London—New York 1994, pp. 46—68.

[19] W. Wieland: *Zur Problemgeschichte der formalen Logik*. In: *Sophistik*. Ed. C.J. Classen. Darmstadt 1976, p. 249.

[20] G.B. Kerferd: *The Sophistic Movement*. Cambridge 1981, pp. 59—67.

[21] Ibid., p. 62: "A solution to this question, namely what is the true nature of antilogic, is a matter of some importance and indeed of urgency. It is in many ways the key to the problem of understanding the true nature of the sophistic movement."

On the other hand, however, G.B. Kerferd set new standards. According to this researcher, the image of the sophistic movement that associates it unequivocally with eristic — understood as the pursuit of victory in arguments without any regard for the means used — does not correspond to what can be reconstructed on the basis of testimonies, including those of Plato, which are not so unambiguously critical as was previously thought. According to Kerferd, reducing the discussion between Plato and the sophists to the opposition of two methods, dialectic and eristic, is a great simplification, one of many stereotypes prevailing in the history of philosophy. Their source is superficial interpretation of Plato and the resulting conviction that the philosopher equates antilogic with eristic. Contrary to the "long tradition in Platonic studies of treating the two words as simply interchangeable,"[22] Kerferd argues that Plato's attitude toward antilogic and eristic differs. Eristic is unequivocally criticized by Plato. Etymologically speaking, it is "seeking victory in argument," an art that deals with ways of achieving this goal regardless of the truth. Eristic develops resources helpful in achieving this goal, such as paralogisms, ambiguities, long monologues, and logical fallacies, such as the arguments of Dionysodorus and Euthydemus presented by Plato in *Euthydemus*. As G.B. Kerferd writes: "Consequently as used by Plato, the term eristic regularly involves disapproval and condemnation."[23]

According to G.B. Kerferd, antilogic and eristic differ in both their meaning and in the attitude Plato has towards each of the two methods. Kerferd notes that, although Plato does not regard antilogic as a method of philosophical debate, but develops his own dialectical method (in contrast to antilogic, it refers to an extra-sensual reality and is not limited to stating opposites in the sensual sphere),[24] his approach to it is positive.[25] According to Plato, antilogic is only a technique, in itself neither good nor bad — a method situated between dialectic and eristic. As such, it has its place in Plato's thought. In the early dialogues, it adopts the form of the *elenchos* connected with Socrates, which consists in bringing the interlocutor to a state of aporia resulting from the contradiction of two statements he has made.[26] As G.B. Kerferd summarizes: "This is clearly an application of antilogic."[27]

---

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 63.

[24] Ibid., pp. 67, 103.

[25] Ibid., p. 64. Kerferd emphasizes that Plato sees the danger in the possibility of abuse of antilogic, in particular by young people.

[26] R. Robinson: *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, p. 7.

[27] G.B. Kerferd: *The Sophistic Movement*, p. 66.

In the light of this interpretation, antilogic is one of three basic sophistic methods with its own sources, essence, and goals. As G.B. Kerferd argues, the foundation of antilogic is the opposition of two *logoi* resulting from contradictions or opposites necessarily associated with the phenomenal world.[28] Antilogic, unlike eristic, "constitutes a specific and fairly definite technique, namely that of proceeding from a given *logos*, say the position adopted by an opponent, to the establishment of a contrary or contradictory *logos* in such a way that the opponent must either accept both *logoi*, or at least abandon his first position."[29]

In this view, antilogic encompasses all forms of leading to contradictory or opposing theses in a discussion, including, as G.B. Kerferd emphasizes, the form of *elenchos* so characteristic of the Platonic Socrates.[30] Kerferd's description of antilogic is therefore very broad. It includes all forms of dispute in which one *logos* is set in opposition to another or attention is drawn to an opposition of *logoi* occurring in the discussion or in a given state of affairs. According to G.B. Kerferd, all procedures that rely on emphasizing opposites, not only in arguments but also in entities or facts, are antilogical.[31]

This emphasis on contradictions in Protagoras's method has its own specific quality. According to Kerferd, there is an important difference between the occurrences of opposing arguments in the literature, and Protagoras's method of antilogy, which is that in the case of Protagoras, the "opposing arguments" are made by one speaker, and not by two different people.[32] This feature of Protagoras's method was not always noticed by researchers, most likely due to its paradoxicality. An example of such a misunderstanding is the interpretation of nineteenth-century scholar F.A. Lange, which is worth quoting because it reflects a belief commonly accepted at the time.

[28] Ibid. "That Plato himself was aware that his view of the phenomenal world involved antilogic emerges clearly from a famous passage in the *Phaedo* (89dl—90c7) […]."

[29] Ibid., p. 63: "It consists in opposing one logos to another logos, or in discovering or drawing attention to the presence of such an opposition in an argument or in a thing or state of affairs. The essential feature is the opposition of one logos to another either by contrariety or contradiction. It follows that, unlike eristic, when used in argument it constitutes a specific and fairly definite technique, namely that of proceeding from a given logos, say the position adopted by an opponent, to the establishment of a contrary or contradictory logos in such a way that the opponent must either accept both logoi, or at least abandon his first position."

[30] Ibid., pp. 65—66.

[31] Ibid., p. 85. According to Kerferd, antilogic is "the most characteristic feature of the thought of the whole Sophistic period."

[32] Ibid., p. 84. "But the essential feature was not simply the occurrence of opposing arguments but the fact that both opposing arguments could be expressed by a single speaker, as it were within a single complex argument."

Summing up Protagoras's method, this researcher claimed that its characteristic feature is that contradictory judgments are uttered by two different individuals. With this interpretation, however, it would be difficult to talk about any sort of innovation on the part of Protagoras. It trivializes the claim of the sophist from Abdera, reducing it to a simple statement of contradiction occurring among expressed beliefs, i.e. to the judgment that "for every statement someone makes, the opposite statement can be made just as well, as long as there is someone who accepts it."[33]

G.B. Kerferd's theses had such a big impact that a large portion of the mentions of antilogic contained in later studies boils down to a discussion of his reflections, possibly to comments or polemics with his theses.[34] As M. Mendelson aptly put it, the remarks contained in G.B. Kerferd's work on the antilogic have become "the critical standard" of all subsequent reflections.[35]

The philosophical context of the antilogical method

G.B. Kerferd's work did, however, give the impetus to further research on the meaning, source, and significance of antilogic. Although its individual theses had already appeared in earlier works,[36] its synthetic and transparent

[33] F.A. Lange: *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*. Iserlohn und Leipzig 1887, p. 30: "Nun erklärt sich der zweite Satz mit Leichtigkeit ohne Widersinn, sobald man die nähere Bestimmung hinzufügt, wie dies das System des Protagoras verlangt: im Sinne von zwei verschiedenen Individuen. Es fiel Protagoras nicht ein, die nämliche Behauptung im Munde des nämlichen Individuums für wahr und falsch zugleich zu erklären; wohl aber lehrt er, dass zu jedem Satz, den jemand behauptet, mit gleichem Recht das Gegenteil behauptet werden kann, insofern sich jemand findet, dem es so scheint."

[34] A. Nehamas: *Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato's Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry*, pp. 111—115; M. Mendelson: *Many Sides: A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice and Pedagogy of Argument*. Dordrecht—Boston—London 2002.

[35] M. Mendelson: *Many Sides: A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice and Pedagogy of Argument,* p. 45.

[36] Cf., for example, G.A. Kennedy: *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*. Princeton 1963, p. 33: "As we have seen, to many sophists such a confrontation of opposites is the fundamental process of reasoning, and it seems safe to conclude that some of the popularity of antithesis in the fifth century was its compatibility to contemporary logic. Perhaps one

form helped it draw attention to the problem itself and delineated a certain understanding of the antilogical method, later repeated many times in numerous works. It also inspired reflections on sophistic methods (often critical of Kerferd's theses) undertaken in the contributions of A. Nehamas,[37] Mi-Kyoung Lee,[38] E. Schiappa,[39] M. Mendelson,[40] F.D. Walters,[41] and many others, which confirmed the fundamental importance of the antilogical method for the sophistic movement and its relationship with the thought of Protagoras and Gorgias. It also drew attention to the problem of the philosophical context of the antilogical method, of which, in the light of previous research, it had been completely deprived. The rehabilitation of the sophists that took place over the last century has brought only partial changes in this respect. Although the importance of the sophists in Greek culture was recognized and their philosophical achievements acknowledged, a problematic conviction remained dominant, which proclaimed the separation of the philosophical and rhetorical spheres of interest of the sophists; this conviction resulted partly from tradition, partly from the loss of the sources. Even researchers who are aware of the philosophical importance of sophistry have only infrequently perceived the relationship between the philosophical convictions and the rhetorical activity of the sophists. Hence, most texts written before G.B. Kerferd's book discuss the particular elements of individual sophists' thought, without attempting to develop those elements that could connect these areas and which could indicate that the notion of *logos* and above all the method of contradictory arguments arise from a certain view of reality and human cognition.

---

should go further and regard stylistic antithesis as the source of sophistic logic in the same way that judicial procedure may be the source of sophistic epistemology."

[37] A. Nehamas: *Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato's Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry*, pp. 108—122.

[38] M. Lee: *Epistemology after Protagoras: Responses to Relativism in Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus*. Oxford 2005.

[39] E. Schiappa: *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric*, pp. 39—63.

[40] M. Mendelson: *Many Sides: A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice and Pedagogy of Argument*, passim.

[41] F.D. Walters: *Gorgias as Philosopher of Being: Epistemic Foundationalism in Sophistic Thought*. "Philosophy and Rhetoric," 1994, vol. 27, no. 2, p. 145. As F.D. Walters writes, antilogic is a "theory of argumentation that stands in opposition to dialectics, either Platonic or Aristotelian […] a method with its own recognizable philosophical imperatives, a method that resists the totalizing aims of dialectics but is not itself a formless and aimless verbal exercise."

This state of affairs has changed in recent decades. The aforementioned works of G.B. Kerferd, E. Schiappa, M. Mendelson, and M. Emsbach[42] reflect not only on the essence, but on the source and meaning of the art of antilogic in relation to the other elements of Protagoras's thought, namely ontology and epistemology.[43] Each of these studies draws attention to the views attributed to Protagoras in Plato's *Theaetetus* and points to the consequences for antilogic that flow from the project presented in it.[44] Although the message contained in *Theaetetus* certainly cannot completely fill the gap caused by the disappearance of almost the entire sophistic legacy, it still gives us at least some clues regarding the philosophical foundations of the notion of conflicting *logoi*. It seems to us that this controversial method, causing scandal and condemnation in tradition, has a deeper justification, an epistemological or ontological foundation, which researchers have not noticed for various reasons. Admittedly, many researchers pointed to the logical whole consisting of a unity of the sophistic techniques of argument, the view of the world in change and the theory of cognition. But the prevailing opinions were that there was no such foundation, because the sophists were not capable of building philosophical systems.[45]

It is worth subjecting this thesis to verification. In my opinion, the antilogical method is not an eristic trick or a rhetorical exercise. It has its own deep meaning, and at its root lie the fundamental — for sophistry — epistemological and ontological convictions described in *Theaetetus*, which are then repeated by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*, where he criticizes opponents of the principle of contradiction.[46]

[42] M. Emsbach: *Sophistik als Aufklärung: Untersuchungen zu Wissenschaftsbegriff und Geschichtsauffassung bei Protagoras*. Würzburg 1980.

[43] Z. Nerczuk: *Der Mensch als Mass aller Dinge*. In: *Philosophische Anthropologie in der Antike*. Eds. L. Jansen, Ch. Jedan. Frankfurt—Paris—Lancaster—New Brunswick 2010, pp. 69—98.

[44] Cf. Also Z. Nerczuk: *Miarą jest każdy z nas. Projekt zwolenników zmienności rzeczy w platońskim Teajtecie na tle myśli sofistycznej*. Toruń 2009.

[45] G. Striker: *Methods of Sophistry*. In: *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*. Cambridge 1996; G. Reale: *Historia filozofii starożytnej*. In: *Od początków do Sokratesa*, *vol. 1*. Lublin 1993.

[46] Z. Nerczuk: *Koncepcja „zwolenników zmienności" w Platońskim Teajtecie i jej recepcja w myśli greckiej*. "Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej" 2016, vol. 61, pp. 29—40; Z. Nerczuk: *References to Plato's "Theaetetus" in Book G (IV) of Aristotle's Metaphysics*. In: *Thinking Critically: What Does it Mean? The Tradition of Philosophical Criticism and Its Forms in the European History of Ideas*. Ed. D. Kubok. Berlin—Munich—Boston 2017, pp. 65—72.

The significance of Plato's account in *Theaetetus* for the foundations of antilogic

Particularly important for the interpretation of antilogic, about which — despite its importance for the sophists — very few records have survived, is Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*. This text, which outlines the foundations of a certain view of reality and of cognition, whose components are taken from sophistic thought, simultaneously, though indirectly, shows the foundations of the antilogical method, its source and meaning. The theses of "adherents of flux," such as: the adoption of the idea of the subjectivity of perceptions, resulting from the mechanism of perception (so called *metaxy* theory); rejection of the concepts of truth and falsehood; attempts at determining the relationship between language and reality[47]; and granting speech a new, independent role, also lead to a new form of world description with which the antilogical method is associated.[48] In this way, the so-called "secret doctrine" in the dialogue *Theaetetus* presents more than a series of dispersed ideas merged in one theory by Plato (as some researchers maintain), but a coherent project based on the concept of reality in flux and some fundamental epistemological theses, which consequently lead to a new logic and a new theory of language.

Not seeing or disregarding this overall project is a problem that affects most studies on the sophistic movement. Individual elements of sophistic thinking are isolated in these studies: the *homo-mensura* thesis is detached from the concept of "being in motion" and the mechanism of perception, and the entire doctrine of the power of *logos*, which includes the art of antilogic or the famous motto "make the weaker argument stronger," is detached from its epistemic and ontological roots.

A hidden source of this form of interpretation is the conviction we have already mentioned, expressed among others by G. Reale; according to this conviction, the sophists were not able to create any comprehensive philosophical system, and "philosophy" reaches maturity only with Plato.[49] In my opinion, it is a perspective that too simplistically captures the development

---

[47] F.D. Walters: *Gorgias as Philosopher of Being: Epistemic Foundationalism in Sophistic Thought*, p. 152: "The dissociation of logos and things naturally encourages antilogic."

[48] Ibid., p. 146: "To know singularity and not dichotomies is, from the antilogic position, to know nothing by claiming to know all."

[49] G. Reale: *Historia filozofii starożytnej*. In: *Od początków do Sokratesa*, pp. 294—296.

of philosophy from Thales to Plato and Aristotle; it is a perspective that was created by these two philosophers and, because of the great influence of their thought, survived unchanged for centuries.

Arguments for understanding antilogic as a method arising from a broadly understood philosophical project are provided by a whole series of doxographic records, beginning with the earliest mentions of antilogic contained in Aristophanes's comedy *Clouds* and Euripides's tragedies,[50] through the testimony of Plato and fragments of Books IV and XI of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,[51] to testimonies from Late Antiquity concerning the method of "double speeches" (Sextus Empiricus, Diogenes Laertius). All these testimonies attribute to Protagoras a universal postulate to predicate contradictions for the same subjects.

Direction of future studies

Summing up the above reflections, it can be stated that although the use of contradiction was a popular procedure in the Greek literature of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.,[52] it is only among representatives of the so-called sophistic movement that the antilogical method, i.e. the method of arguing for contradictory claims, becomes an expression of the philosophical stance. The importance of the method of contrasting arguments lies in the fact that it is not merely a superficial procedure or a rhetorical trick, but a practical application of philosophical solutions fundamental for the sophistic movement, something comparable in its dimension to what dialectic was to Plato.[53]

Understanding the meaning and purpose of antilogic is therefore conditioned on reconstructing its philosophical foundations. The weakness of

---

[50] Z. Nerczuk: *Metoda 'dwu mów' w świetle świadectw przedplatońskich*, pp. 37—45.

[51] Z. Nerczuk: *Koncepcja „zwolenników zmienności" w Platońskim Teajtecie i jej recepcja w myśli greckiej*, pp. 32—33.

[52] G.A. Kennedy: *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*, p. 34: "The habit of antithesis was deeply ingrained in the Greek character, as is evident from the *men… de* construction, from the fondness of the Greeks for contrasting figures like Prometheus and Epimetheus, and from the structure of most Greek art and literature."

[53] G. Gogos: *Aspekte einer Logik des Widerspruchs. Studien zur griechischen Sophistik und ihrer Aktualität*. Tübingen 1998, p. 21. According to G. Gogos, antilogic is a form of logic formed before the "proper" logic initiated by Plato and Aristotle.

many interpretations lies precisely in failure to take this context into account. G.B. Kerferd's studies need to be developed, and in themselves constitute more of an inspiration for further discussion than a culmination of research. What was outlined in Kerferd's work needs to be supplemented, and often corrected. Future studies of antilogic should focus on reconstructing the philosophical background expressed by the sophistic art of persuasion and, in particular, antilogic. They should also more precisely reconstruct the very complex game Plato plays with his readers, a reconstruction very difficult to conduct due to the loss of most of the sophistic works that constitute the natural context for Plato's discussions. Only such a research program will allow for an in-depth reconstruction of both Plato's and Aristotle's thought, who know about the method of "two-fold arguments" and are trying to go beyond it. Such a program would also allow us to track the transmission of this method, which undoubtedly affected Pyrrho, the skeptical Academy, and — transformed into the doctrine of the equal strength of opposite judgments (*isostheneia*) — was revived in its new form in the skepticism of Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus.

Bibliography

Buchheim T.: *Die Sophistik als Avantgarde normalen Lebens*. Hamburg 1986.

Cornford F.M.: *Plato's Theory of Knowledge, The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato Translated with a Running Commentary*. London 1935.

Diels H., Kranz W. Eds.: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und Deutsch von Hermann Diels. Herausgegeben von Walther Kranz, vol. I—III. 13th ed*. Dublin—Zürich 1969.

Dupréel E.: *Les Sophistes. Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias*. Neuchâtel 1948.

Emsbach M.: *Sophistik als Aufklärung: Untersuchungen zu Wissenschaftsbegriff und Geschichtsauffassung bei Protagoras*. Würzburg 1980.

Gagarin M.: *Probability and Persuasion: Plato and Early Greek Rhetoric*. In: *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*. Ed. I. Worthington. London—New York 1994.

Gogos G.: *Aspekte einer Logik des Widerspruchs. Studien zur griechischen Sophistik und ihrer Aktualität*. Tübingen 1998.

Hegel G.W.F.: *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, *vol. 1*. Berlin 1883.

Kennedy G.A.: *The Art of Persuasion in Greece*. Princeton 1963.

Kerferd G.B.: *The Sophistic Movement*. Cambridge 1981.

Lange F.A.: *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*. Leipzig 1887.
Lee M.: *Epistemology after Protagoras: Responses to Relativism in Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus*. Oxford 2005.
Marrou H.-I.: *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Trans. G. Lamb. New York 1964.
Mendelson M.: *Many Sides: A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice and Pedagogy of Argument*. Dordrecht—Boston—London 2002.
Morgan T.J.: *Literate Education in Classical Athens*. "The Classical Quarterly New Series" 1999, vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 46—61.
Nehamas A.: *Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic, Dialectic: Plato's Demarcation of Philosophy from Sophistry*. In: *Virtues of Authenticity. Essays on Plato and Socrates*. Princeton—New Jersey 1999, pp. 108—122.
Nerczuk Z.: *Der Mensch als Mass aller Dinge*. In: *Philosophische Anthropologie in der Antike*. Eds. L. Jansen, Ch. Jedan. Frankfurt—Paris—Lancaster—New Brunswick 2010, pp. 69—98.
Nerczuk Z.: *Koncepcja „zwolenników zmienności" w Platońskim Teajtecie i jej recepcja w myśli greckiej*. "Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej" 2016, vol. 61, pp. 29—40.
Nerczuk Z.: *Metoda 'dwu mów' w świetle świadectw przedplatońskich*. "Studia Antyczne i Mediewistyczne" 2012, vol. 45, no. 10, pp. 37—50.
Nerczuk Z.: *Miarą jest każdy z nas. Projekt zwolenników zmienności rzeczy w platońskim Teajtecie na tle myśli sofistycznej*. Toruń 2009.
Nerczuk Z.: *References to Plato's "Theaetetus" in book G (IV) of Aristotle's Metaphysics*. In: *Thinking Critically: What Does it Mean?, The Tradition of Philosophical Criticism and Its Forms in the European History of Ideas*. Ed. D. Kubok. Berlin—Munich—Boston 2017, pp. 65—72.
Reale G.: *Historia filozofii starożytnej*. Vol. 1. *Od początków do Sokratesa*, 5 vols. Lublin 1993.
Robin L.: *Greek Thought and the Origins of the Scientific Spirit*. New York 1996.
Robinson R.: *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*. Ithaca—New York 1941.
Schiappa E.: *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric*. Columbia (South Carolina) 2003.
Striker G.: *Methods of Sophistry*. In: *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*. Cambridge 1996, pp. 3—21.
Ueberweg F.: *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie des Alterthums*. Berlin 1876.
Walters F.D.: *Gorgias as Philosopher of Being: Epistemic Foundationalism in Sophistic Thought*. "Philosophy and Rhetoric" 1994, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 143—155.
Wieland W.: *Zur Problemgeschichte der formalen Logik*. In: *Sophistik*. Ed. C.J. Classen. Darmstadt 1976, pp. 248—253.

Zbigniew Nerczuk — dr hab., profesor w Instytucie Filozofii Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

„Folia Philosophica". Vol. 42, s. 21—45
Katowice 2019
ISSN 2353-9445 (online)

DOI: http://doi.org/10.31261/fp.8513

Janina Gajda-Krynicka
Uniwersytet Wrocławski

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5814-6788

The Propedeutic of the Theory of Judgment in Ancient Philosophy From the Sophists to Plato's *Theaetetus*

Propedeutyka teorii sądu w filozofii starożytnej.
Od sofistów do Platońskiego *Teajteta*

Abstrakt: W epistemologii starożytnej ściśle sprecyzowana definicja sądu (*axioma*) pojawia się dopiero w III wieku p.n.e., sformułowana przez Chryzyppa z Soloi, twórcę logiki stoickiej. Analiza postaci wypowiedzi, w jakich obiektywizowała się wiedza od czasów pierwszych greckich myślicieli pozwala stwierdzić, iż kształtowanie się teorii sądu było długim procesem. W procesie tym epistemologia grecka musiała rozwiązać szereg problemów związanych zarówno z przedmiotem sądu — wiedzą, jak i z samą postacią jej obiektywizacji — orzekaniem, jak też z predykatami sądu prawdziwego i fałszywego — z kategoriami „prawdy" (*aletheia*) i „fałszu" (*pseudos*). Pierwszą definicję sądu fałszywego (*logos pseudes*) i sądu prawdziwego (*logos alethes*) odnajdujemy dopiero w późnym platońskim dialogu *Sofista*, który przynosi nam już w dużej mierze uporządkowaną terminologię teoriopoznawczą. Taka definicja mogła jednak być sformułowana dopiero wtedy, gdy epistemologia grecka zredefiniowała znaczenie pojęć/terminów *aletheia* i *pseudos*. Termin/pojęcie *aletheia* był tożsamy z terminem/pojęciem bytu, funkcjonując w obszarze ontologiczno-aksjologicznym, zaś *pseudos* nie oznaczał fałszu w znaczeniu: zaprzeczenia prawdy, lecz coś od niej różnego. Filozofia przedplatońska nie wykształciła jeszcze terminologii, w której można by przekazać orzekanie o czymś niezgodne ze stanem faktycznym — z prawdą. Często dla określenia takiej postaci orzekania stosowano termin: „mówić niebyty" (things which are not). Kolejny problem wynikał z właściwej językowi greckiemu podwójnej funkcji czasownika być/*einai*, która jednoczyła w sobie funkcję egzystencjalną i prawdziwościową. Zgodnie z tym każda postać wypowiedzi, w której funkcję orzeczenia pełnił czasownik *einai* lub jego derywaty *ex definitione* była orzekaniem prawdziwym —

„mówiła byty”. W takiej sytuacji w epistemologii nie zachodziła potrzeba ścisłego definiowania samego sądu, jak też określania warunków, jakie musi spełniać sąd prawdziwy. Problem ten definitywnie rozstrzyga Platon, a pokazuje nam to dialog *Teajtet*, w którym filozof definiuje przedmiot sądu, którym jest wiedza (jakkolwiek nie ustala jeszcze jej przedmiotu), przedstawia projekt weryfikacji wypowiedzi/mniemania, dzięki której mniemanie — *doksa* może uzyskać status sądu — *logosu*.

Słowa klucze: sąd, *logos*, prawda/*aletheia*, fałsz/*pseudos*, mniemanie/*doksa*, referencyjna funkcja języka, predykatywna funkcja języka

In ancient epistemology — in those texts that have survived to the present day — the first precisely formulated definition of a judgment, called an *aksioma*, can be found in the philosophy of the Old Stoa; as Diogenes Laertius relays, it is the work of Chrysippus,[1] the founder of Stoic logic. In this definition, Chrysippus concentrates on its formal and logical aspect, distinguishing a judgment from such utterances as statements, commands, conditional statements, and all statements of emotive nature. According to Chrysippus's definition, a judgment is a full statement[2] preceded by an act of the will[3] (*pragma autoteles*), which results from predicating of something in the form of a full sentence that can in itself be confirmed or denied and may thus be true (*aksioma alethes*) or false (*aksioma pseudos*).[4] Knowledge — the product of cognitive procedures — is objectified in such judgments. The most important criterion distinguishing a judgment from other types of statements is that a judgment may be true or false.

---

[1] Diogenes Laertios: *Diogenis Laërtii Vitae philosophorum*. Ed. H.S. Long. Oxford 1964, from here on cited as DL VII 66; J. von Arnim, Ed.: *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, vol. 2. Leipzig 1903 (repr. Stuttgart 1968), II 132, 5.

[2] That is, a complete statement, containing — from a grammatical point of view — a subject and predicate, and from a formal standpoint realizing both the referential and predicative functions of language; more on this below.

[3] An intellectual act of affirmation (συγκατάθεσισ), which should be identified with an internal act of formulating a judgment with claims to truth. The Stoics formed the term *aksioma* itself from the verb τοάξιουσθαι or άθετεῖσθαι [“to accept” or “to reject”]. “[…] or when you say ‘It is day,’ you seem to accept the fact that it is day. Now, if it really is day, the judgement before us is true, but if not, it is false” DL VII 66.

[4] A judgment is that which is either true or false, or a thing complete in itself, capable of being denied in and by itself, as Chrysippus says in his *Dialectical Definitions*: “A judgment is that which in and by itself can be denied or affirmed, *e.g.* ‘It is day,’ ‘Dion is walking.’” The Greek word for judgment (ἀξίωμα) is derived from the verb ἀξιοῦν, as signifying acceptance or rejection; for when you say “It is day,” you seem to accept the fact that it is day. Now, if it really is day, the judgment before us is true, but if not, it is false. DL VII 66. Trans. R.D. Hicks. Cambridge 1972.

It is interesting to consider why, after Greek thought had already been developing for centuries, it took until the time of the Stoic School to work out a formal definition of a judgment. Of course, we cannot exclude the possibility that such a definition was formulated in older philosophical texts which did not survive to our times. However, an analysis of the forms in which knowledge was objectified from the time of archaic philosophers shows that the Old Stoa's definition constitutes a kind of a summary of the long process of formation of the theory of judgment. In this process, Greek thought solved many problems connected both with the object of judgment — knowledge and its object — and with the form of judgment itself — predication, with the necessity of answering the question of whether language — words — *logos* can reveal the nature of reality, and whether it is possible to predicate of that reality in a way that is inconsistent with its nature, and finally with the problem of "truth" (*aletheia*) and "falsehood" (*pseudos*) as predicates of the form of predication. Moreover, on the long path to working out a definition of judgment, it was only Plato in his late dialogue *Sophist* who precisely established the terminology connected with this definition — in pre-Platonic philosophy, and in Platonic philosophy's Socratic and Middle Academy writings, it is often difficult to determine whether the term λόγος is meant in the sense of story, statement, dialectic procedure, judgment, or simply as "word."

It is therefore worth taking a brief look at the prehistory of the theory of judgment, starting with the beginnings of Greek thought up to the time of Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus*. This area of research may be justified by the fact that *Theaetetus* occupies a special place in Plato's opus. An attempt has been made to demonstrate that this dialogue, on the one hand, serves as a summary of the Platonic critique of the theory of ideas described in the dialogue *Parmenides*, and on the other, as a preface to the next stage of development of Platonic thought, which can be seen in *Sophist*. Moreover, in *Theaetetus* we can find the proper propedeutic of the theory of judgment in a strict sense, with the indication that the object of judgment is knowledge of being.

We must begin by attempting to answer the question of whether, in light of the meaning of the terms—categories *aletheia* and *pseudos*, in the beginnings of Greek thought, a formula defining and differentiating the form of predication through use of the criterion of truth and falsehood — by attributing the predicate of *alethes* or *pseudos* to the predication (*logos*, *doxa*) — could have been created.

We can accept that the first Greek forms of predicating of the nature of reality,[5] formulated by the first philosophers in the form of lectures (*logoi*), laid claim to truth through the form of the utterance itself. Particular visions of reality — the nature of *fysis*, which appear in the conclusions of those *fysikoi*, can be reduced to the form of judgments supported by a line of argument to which may be attributed a predicate of truth or falsehood. We must remember that such procedures, which we necessarily undertake in research on the oldest Greek thought, are part of our modern research methods. However, they can be compared to attempts at including in the specific pattern of philosophizing thinkers who, in fact, philosophized completely differently and objectified their research results differently. Meanwhile, the form of predication on nature was largely determined by the structure of the Greek language available to the first philosophers, and above all, the function and role of the verb *einai* and its derivatives.[6] Of the many functions of this verb, two come to the fore, which can be described as the existential function and the truth function. This verb and all its derivatives (especially participles: *on*, adverbs: *ontos*, substantives: *to on*, *he ousia*) unite two functions of language in their application (in colloquial speech, in poetic language, and in philosophical language): the referential function, when in the act of predication we identify the object we are predicating of; and the predicative function, when we express what we want to say about the predicated object. For, in the act of predication, we are saying something about something. Before the act of predication is formulated, the object of predication must be distinguished, regardless of whether it is an object with objective or subjective being, or even the language itself — its rules or form of expression. This act of distinguishing each object of predication — its identification — is carried out through the referential function of language, which in philosophical predication, or in the philosopher's understanding of

[5] Those whom Aristotle (*Metaphysics* 1000a, 1075b passim) calls "theologians" — poets revealing the truth of the world in stories, or myths — used the authority of the gods to support the veracity of their stories; Parmenides defers to such support when he declaratively relays only the words of a goddess in his poem. The philosopher from Elea does not speak from himself; he does not communicate his findings in a form known from the writings of the philosophers of Miletus and Ephesus, as well as from the Pythagorean treatises, which is in the form of a lecture (*logos*), often addressed to students, such as the letter of Alcmaeon of Croton. Parmenides only intends to convey the words of the goddess, with which she taught him about truth and opinions when he arrived at her headquarters, when he crossed the Path of the search for truth, which only "the knowing" (*eidotes*) enter onto. This fact alone raises him above mortals, because he knows what others cannot know. Parmenides was enlightened; his teaching gains the value of divine knowledge, which is true by definition.

[6] Cf. Ch. Kahn: *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek*. Dordrecht—Boston 1975.

this act of predication, gives the object an ontic status. In turn, we predicate something of this object — here, the predicative function of language is realized. The act of predication is — or at least should be — understood by the recipient of the message. Therefore, the referential and predicative functions of language are also realized in the process of understanding the form of communication that is predication. For if we predicate of something that it is (resp. exists), we identify the object of the predication as being (resp. existing) — as an entity — and we attribute to it simultaneously being in general, being in some place, time, space, or state. All forms of indicative sentences in which the function of a predicate is fulfilled by the verb *einai* or its derivatives can be reduced to such an existential judgment; in *Sophist*,[7] Plato extends this to all indicative sentences in which the predicate, expressed using any verb, can be transformed in such a way that a form of the verb *einai* appears (e.g. "Theaetetus flies," which should be understood as: "There is the flying Theaetetus," or: "Theaetetus is flying," etc.). In pre-sophistic philosophy, this fact determines the form of predication with an absolute claim to truth about all reality, a predication that presents this reality as it is, not as it appears to those who opine. In such predication, still far from the form of judgment that appears in Plato and is later precisely defined by the Stoics, the truth of the predication is contained in the formula of the utterance itself — with the predicate in the form of the verb *einai*, as well as in its modality — it is always an utterance in the indicative mood.

Long before Protagoras ordered Greek grammar, distinguishing and naming modes, the Greeks realized that sentences in the indicative mood express categorical statements.[8] If the verb *einai* served as a predicate in such sentences, these sentences were true by definition, while the verb in a double — referential and predicative — function determined both the

---

[7] Plato: *Sophist* 263a ff.

[8] Language as a system that updates itself in specific acts of speech and is subject to specific rules, and language as a system of signs existed and functioned for centuries before the emergence of rational thought, and all rules and laws governing it functioned efficiently long before the emergence of the first grammar textbook in the history of Western culture written by the sophist Protagoras and the first semiotic directives that appeared in the writings of the sophist Prodicus. The basis of that first grammar must have been careful observation and comparative analysis of many specific acts of speech-messages, especially the relationships between certain forms of messages and verbal modalities. The conclusions of these observations — distinguishing and naming verb modes and assigning them to specific forms of utterances — were an accurate reproduction of the rules governing acts of speech and transferring them to the structure of the language as such. The author of the first grammar therefore put into the rules those language phenomena that had in practice functioned since the inception of language as a tool of communication.

fact of the existence of the object of which it predicated and the truth of the given predication. In addition, this verb determined the stability and immutability of the object of which it predicated. An expression of this are the oppositions that appear in pre-sophistic philosophy: *einai—gignesthai*, which reflects the main theses of the Heraclitean vision of the structure of reality, as well as the oppositions: *einai—phainesthai—doxazesthai* (to seem, to believe that something is) reflecting the Parmenidean notion of being. Therefore, each predicating statement with a predicate in the form of the verb *einai* was, in pre-sophistic philosophy, in intention and by definition a true statement — it "said things which are," regardless of how every philosopher conceived of being. We can thus venture the claim that the earliest Greek philosophers did not need the category of *aletheia* in the epistemological sphere, or the desideratum of "telling the truth" (*aletheian legein*, *ta alethe legein*), or truth as the predicate of a statement (*alethes*, *alethinos*). This thesis is confirmed by an analysis of the terms *aletheia*, *alethinos*, *alethes* and their derivatives in the extant fragments of the writings of pre-sophistic philosophers, and of the contexts in which they appear. The findings of such an analysis allow us to conclude that the category of *aletheia* — truth in the most ancient Greek thought — appears in the ontological and axiological aspect: *aletheia*/truth is an attribute of being, regardless of what the thinker recognized as being. *True* being is real being, therefore truth is identical with being in these contexts, and as an attribute it cannot be granted to what is not being, as well as to such — supposed — forms of being that appear to people as a result of wrong methods of viewing nature: the result of opinion (*doxai*) or succumbing to illusion (*apate*). In turn, an analysis of the contexts in which the category of *pseudos* appears, which is usually mistakenly translated as "false," thus obscuring its proper meaning in the texts of pre-Sophistic philosophers, allows us to state that it does not appear as an antithesis to *aletheia*/truth. *Pseudos* means something that differs from the truth in the sense of: less perfect, worse, or less a being, e.g. an image and its copy.[9]

The functioning of this category in the ontological and axiological sphere, however, inspired philosophical disputes which began during the

[9] For more on this subject, cf. J. Gajda: *Przedplatońskie koncepcje prawdy. Ontologiczny i aksjologiczny aspekt kategorii ἀλήθεια w filozofii przedplatońskiej.* In: *Studia z filozofii starożytnej III, Filozofia XIX*. Ed. J. Gajda. Wrocław 1993, pp. 30—52. This meaning of the term *pseudos* is still found in Plato's Middle Academy writings, when the Philosopher, e.g. in the *Republic* (414b ff.) recommends passing paideutic content to the people not in the form of lectures — strict argumentation, but through *ta gennaiapseude*, i.e. in the form of a myth. Cf. J. Wild. *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*. La Salle—Illinois 1974.

Athenian Enlightenment, about whether it is possible to predicate something differently than it is — falsely — that is, about whether it is possible to "say things which are not."[10] In extant texts, this phrase appears with at least several different connotations. We will necessarily focus on one of the meanings: to speak (predicate) not as it is, i.e. not in accordance with the "truth of things."[11]

Until the time of the sophists, specifically until the time when two works by Protagoras appeared: *On Being* (*Peritouontos*) and *Truth* (*Aletheia*),[12] Greek philosophy did not know the form of a judgment at all, and it can be assumed that this did not present a problem for it. Protagoras accepted that the predicate of being in Parmenides's understanding could not be attributed to perceived things, states, or phenomena — those *chremata* with which humans come into cognitive/intellectual contact. However, we cannot predicate other, sensually-imperceptible forms of reality, such as the gods or the *arche*/principle that determines one necessary and subordinate order

[10] For a more in-depth discussion of this issue, cf. J. Gajda-Krynicka: *Czy można 'mówić niebyty'. Koncepcja sądu fałszywego w 'Sofiście' jako przewrót epistemologiczny w filozofii greckiej*. In: *Kolokwia Platońskie, Parmenides. Sofista*. Ed. M. Manikowski. Wrocław 2003, pp. 101—137.

[11] Other connotations of this phrase include: 1) predicating something that "is" not (*ouk esti*) — i.e. non-being — like Parmenides of Elea, who of course excludes this possibility, because non-being "is not and cannot be," and you cannot predicate what is not; 2) to speak (predicate) of something that does not exist, distinguishing the existence of being from the existence of "things" [*ta pragmata*, *ta chremata*] (such as Chimera, the sea-faring chariot, or a flying man) — like Gorgias of Leontini (Diels FVS Gorgias B 3), who in his critique of Parmenides's ontology presented in the work *On Non-being or on Nature* admits such a possibility; moreover, he accepts, contrary to Parmenides, that what is not — Parmenidean non-being, or non-existent things, can be the object of thought and *predication*, such as things that never happened (Helen's fault, the betrayal of Palamedes), or some first principles—*archai* dreamed up by physicists (*meteorologists*); 3) to speak about states or phenomena that do not actually exist but appear to people as existing, e.g. about coming into being/birth or perishing/death: when we talk about coming into being or perishing, we say "non-being" because, as Empedocles (Diels FVS Empedocles B 8, 4) or Anaxagoras (Diels FVS Anaxagoras B 17, 4) write, there is neither *ex nihilo* coming into being nor perishing into nothingness, a notion unknown to Greek philosophy; coming into being is the mixing of always-present elements, and dying is essentially the disintegration of a thing, state, or phenomenon into its original elements; so when we speak of birth or death, we speak "things which are not."

[12] This is reconstructed mainly on the basis of Plato's *Theaetetus* (152 ff.); from this work comes Protagoras's famous statement: "Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are and of the things that are not that they are not"; however, this statement does not refer to the categories of being and non-being, but to the qualities of specific *chremata* (cf. J. Gajda: *Sofiści*. Warszawa 1989, p. 100 ff.).

of reality, because we are limited in our attempts to reach them.[13] On the other hand, these *chremata* are subject to constant changes, coming about and perishing, mutual mixing and relationships. Therefore, the only source of cognition are the senses, providing individual and subjective perceptions, different to each perceiving subject; moreover, these perceptions change depending on the state of the perceiving subject: his/her health, illness, and sleep- or waking-state.[14] Thus, Protagoras accepts that every perception is true, even when each of e.g. two cognitive subjects perceives the same thing differently. Protagoras is speaking about a statement (*logos*) about something. I think that the sophist, who, after all, wrote the first Greek grammar, distinguishing and naming modes, and formulating the verb modalities according to strict rules, assumed that a statement about something must be formulated in the form of a sentence in which the predicate is always in the indicative mode. We can consider this a prototype of the definition of a judgment, although Protagoras's notion of *isostheneia* — the equal strength of judgments — results, unlike in the later skeptical philosophy, rather from the helplessness of the sophist in the face of the question of whether it is possible to "say things which are not," than from specific methodological and epistemological findings. In addition, the traditional attribution of familiarity with, or even formulation of, a theory of judgment by the sophist is questionable.[15] Protagoras talks about a statement (*logos*) about something, but a statement—*logos* is not yet a judgment—*logos*. In light of Plato's *Theaetetus*, one should rather assume that Protagoras speaks of the equal strength of objectified opinions — *doxai*, which cannot be judgments, because they are only axiologically, not epistemologically, verifiable. Moreover, Protagoras's formula does not concern knowledge, but sensations, i.e. what appears to man (*phainesthai*) in a sensory view. We may consider this a prototype of the definition of a judgment, although in the scant legacy of the philosopher from Abdera this definition has not survived to our time and still raises many doubts. However, regardless of whether we consider Protagoras's form of predicational pre-definition of a judgment or not, there is no doubt that, according to the sophist, false judgments cannot

[13] Cf. the famous passage from Protagoras's treatise (Diels *FVS* Protagoras B 4): "About the gods I am able to know neither that they exist nor that they do not exist nor of what kind they are in form: for many things prevent me from knowing this, its obscurity and the brevity of man's life."

[14] Cf. Sextus Empiricus. Eds. H. Mutschmann, J. Mau. Leipzig 1914; *Adversus-mathematicos* VII 389.

[15] Cf. W.K.C. Guthrie: *A History of Greek Philosophy, vol. III*: *The Fifth-Century Enlightenment*, part 1: *The Sophists*; part 2: *Socrates*. Cambridge 1971; G.B. Kerferd: *The Sophistic Movement*, Cambridge 1981; G. Reale: *Historia filozofii starożytnej. T. I. Od początków do Sokratesa*. Trans. E.I. Zieliński. Lublin 1993.

be formulated, because there is no criterion of truthfulness of expression, which was expressed in the formula *ouk esti antilegein*.

It is Gorgias of Leontini, almost a contemporary of Plato's, who for the first time in Greek philosophy writes about "true" (correct, proper) statements, in which knowledge of facts is objectified, flowing from both experience and logical procedures, and incorrect statements, resulting from ignorance, submission to opinion, and ill will, in two extant epideictic speeches: *Encomium of Helen*[16] and *Defense of Palamedes*.[17] In these speeches, the sophist from Leontini uses the terms *aletheia* and *pseudos* from a gnoseological perspective: "truth" and lie/falsehood as features of speech—*logos*,[18] which are set in opposition to one another for the first time in ancient philosophy. In *Encomium of Helen*, which the sophist himself describes as a joke (*paignion*),[19] he attempts to free from infamy the character known to all Hellenes, demonstrating on the basis of "logical reasoning" (*logismos*) that the widespread belief in Helen's guilt is based on the messages of poets, and they are not true, because they use the power of the word (*logos*) to shape opinions (*doxai*) that are not true. It is man's duty to strive for truth and expose falsehood. Nevertheless, the sophist in *Encomium of Helen* also uses the term *logos* to define all utterances, including epic poems; court, political, or epideictic speeches; and the treatises of natural philosophers, whom he calls "meteorologists."

It is not until the *Defense of Palamedes* that we find the first attempt at defining *logos* as a judgment. In it, the sophist presents a speech apparently made by a mythical hero in his own defense after Odysseus had wrongly accused him of treason against the Greeks and of scheming for the Trojans during the siege of Troy. The listeners of the sophist knew the tragic fate of Palamedes[20] — so they knew perfectly well who "speaks the truth": the accuser Odysseus, out of a desire to take revenge, lies, uttering a false judgment about the non-existent fact of betrayal, while innocent Palamedes,

---

[16] H. Diels, W. Kranz: *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Griechisch und Deutsch*. Zurich 1960. From here on cited as: Diels *FVS*, Gorgias B 11.

[17] Ibid., B 11a.

[18] Gorgias: *Encomium of Helen* 51, 75, 84; *Defense of Palamedes* 27, 29, 30, 168, 188, 212.

[19] At the time of Gorgias, this was a "fashionable" subject of display speeches for entertainment (praise of the infamous heroine of the Trojan War was also the subject of Isocrates's display speech).

[20] Although this character does not appear in the *Iliad*, his fate must have been described by numerous epic poems related to the Trojan War that have not survived to the present day. The Roman mythographer Gaius Julius Hyginus writes about them in his elaboration of the Greek myths *Fabulae*; *Hyginus: Fabulae*. Ed. P.K Marshall. Munich 1993, pp. 95, 2.

claiming that the fact of betrayal did not exist, utters a true judgment. In this speech of Gorgias, we find an interesting epistemological situation created: Palamedes gives his apology before the judges (earlier, as you can guess, Odysseus made his accusation). Therefore, the judges, because of the function they perform, are faced with the necessity of recognizing as true one of two opposing statements/judgments[21] without knowing the facts, and their decision will have important consequences. Here, the sophist formulates a kind of cautionary tale related to the necessity of often ruling about what we have not experienced in life — for the judges took the accuser's statement/judgment as true, condemning the innocent Palamedes to death, thus committing an irreversible mistake.[22]

We can therefore accept that in Gorgias of Leontini we already find articulated the concept of a judgment. It is a statement that can be true, i.e. consistent with what has occurred, or false — inconsistent with the facts. Thus, the category of *pseudos* takes on the meaning of the opposite of truth/*aletheia*, setting itself in the realm of epistemology *sensu stricto*. For the sophist, a false statement is made when the one who formulates it either does not know the facts, because s/he did not see them, did not participate in them, or does not know them from a reliable source, or when the person formulating the statement deliberately distorts these facts. Thus, it is possible to predicate falsely. For Gorgias, judgments—*logoi* only refer to facts; they only reveal the truth or falsehood of words and actions (*aletheia ton ergon kai logon*),[23] and do not refer to the truth of being or truth of the cosmos (*aletheia tou ontos*, *aletheia tou kosmou*).

As mentioned above, the opposition: *aletheia*—*pseudos* did not appear in Greek philosophy until Gorgias. In pre-sophist philosophy, and even in those dialogues of Plato's that were written before *Sophist*, the antithesis: truth—falsehood (on the grounds of epistemology), where one speaks of the form of utterances, predication, or the original form of judgment, has

[21] The drama of the situation is compounded by the fact that recognizing one of two statements/judgments as true will result in either condemning an innocent person to death or releasing him from the charges, as the protagonist himself explicitly states (Diels: *FVS* Gorgias 11a, 226).

[22] A question arises here: what statement/judgment would the sophist Protagoras accept, with his concept of the equal strength of judgments? For the sophist of Abdera, in view of the necessity of adopting a judgment, the deciding factor was whether acknowledgement of a particular judgment would benefit not so much an individual as a group of citizens. In the light of this conception, Protagoras would certainly conclude that Odysseus's judgment should be accepted, due to his future merits for the Greeks in the Trojan War — Palamedes's accomplishments, his inventions for the sake of the Hellenes, took place in the past.

[23] Diels *FVS* Gorgias B 11a 226.

the form: “to speak being” [*ta onta legein*] (resp. to say what is and how it is) — “to speak non-being” [*ta me onta legein*] (resp. to say what is not and not as it is). Accordingly, the predicate *einai* cannot be attributed to what is not (resp. does not exist), and therefore it is impossible to speak non-being — *ouk esti ta me onta legein*. Apart from the sophists, the philosopher chronologically closest to Plato who accepted that *ouk esti ta me onta legein* was Antisthenes, a student of Socrates and the sophist Protagoras.[24] Antisthenes’s argument about the impossibility of false predication can be reduced to the following form: when someone says something, s/he says something that is, i.e. is a being, or has being, understood as “something that is something beyond everything else,” hence s/he speaks being (*to on legei*); if s/he speaks being, in turn, then s/he speaks truth. However, one cannot say what is not or what is not a being, because in the act of linguistic reference one cannot distinguish something that is not as a point of reference (*ouk esti ta me onta legein*), as what is not cannot be transformed into what is. No one speaks about non-being — thus no one tells the “untruth” (resp. predicates falsely). Every predicating statement is also true because Antisthenes assumes that every thing or state of affairs (*pragma*) has its verbal expression (*logos*) in the form of predicating on what it is or is not. Therefore, each term can be assigned to a specific state. If the object of the term was something that is not, there would be a basic contradiction: such a term could not be formulated, because the rule that every thing (*pragma*) has its own definition (*logos*) cannot be reversed; for not every term has a corresponding thing, not every name belongs to its referent, as Gorgias writes in the treatise *On Nature or on Non-being*.[25] For Antisthenes, every statement (*logos*) has its own object, it “says things which are,” and therefore each is true.[26] In Plato’s *Euthydemus*, it is Antisthenes who, behind the backs of the sophists — Euthydemus and his brother Dionysodorus — appears to discuss with Plato’s Socrates the possibility of “saying things which

[24] My reconstructions of Antisthenes’s thought are based on Plato’s dialogue *Euthydemus* 285 d—e.; cf. *Antisthenis Fragmenta. Antisthenove Zlomky*. Eds. A. Kalaš, V. Suvák. Bratislava 2014.

[25] Diels *FVS* Gorgias B 3.

[26] Antisthenes could have assumed such a relationship between the name and its referent, because he claimed that only individual things perceived sensually exist, and general concepts are in fact only names that in the order of existence are *post res*; no name — word description — could come about if it did not have a referent. Antisthenes’s belief that “you cannot speak non-being” also derives from the fact that one can only predicate of individual things tautologically — that they are, and that they are as they are. They cannot be defined *per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*; all attempts at defining things are only “a long accumulation of words.” Tautological prediction, on the other hand, must always be true.

are not." In this dialogue arise problems which are not solved until *Sophist*. These can be reduced to the question: can the truth of being (*aletheia ton onton*) be reflected in a statement — in the *logos* (in this dialogue, Plato does not yet use the term *logos* in the sense of "judgment")? After all, we remember that the philosopher often expressed this "truth of being" in a myth,[27] can it also be expressed in the *logos*?

I think we can venture to say that Plato, in his search for the form of being that "truly is," on his way, first to the conception of ideas, then to the conception of principles, is simultaneously looking for tools to predicate of such being. In *Meno*, the first text, chronologically, in which the theory of ideas is outlined, the category *alethes* appears for the first time, but it is not used to describe proper judgment, which the philosopher describes using the predicate *orthos*[28] — meaning right, proper; instead, Plato uses it to describe opinion (*doksa*). What are "true opinions" for Plato? They may be understood as such results of sensory perception (*aisthesis*) that reveal the perceived object as it is, without deforming it,[29] as well as revealing some type of unity in the dispersed multiplicity of things and phenomena, even if it is solely in the intellectual joining into sets of genera and species. Only the opinion that, as Plato later says in *Phaedrus*,[30] can bring the multitude of perceptions "*kata mian idean*," which can distinguish, for example, appearance, deception, or illusion of good from the real good, if only in deeds and actions, deserves the name of "true opinion." "True opinions" can be the basis for formulating right or correct judgments, but are not identical to knowledge. Although right judgments, based on true opinions, can be a source of good and proper conduct, they have impermanent and short-lived power and encompass only a limited set of goods in the phenomenal world, as they lack reference to the form of true being. A correct judgment cannot therefore be synonymous with knowledge.

Let us return to the dialogue *Euthydemus*. In this text, Plato deals with two opponents, as it were: with Antisthenes and his conviction that *oukesti ta me onta legein*, and with the sophists, who base their belief that they are never mistaken because they know everything on Antisthenes's thesis. They

---

[27] Cf. *Gorgias* 523 ff., *Phaedrus* 245C ff., 274C ff.

[28] Plato: *Meno* 97b—c ff.; the Polish translation of *Meno* authored by W. Witwicki translates the term: *orthos* as "true," which may cause confusion; it should be translated as "right" or "correct."

[29] Since the time of Xenophanes of Colophon, the term opinion (*doxa*) functioned as the opposite of knowledge, cf. Diels *FVS* Xenophanes B 35; for Parmenides, "mortal opinions," resulting from fallible sensory perception, were the opposite of truth in its ontic aspect, in the sphere of predicating of being.

[30] Plato: *Phaedrus* 265d.

base their arguments on tortuous dialectic, according to which "knowing anything means knowing everything," because you cannot be both knowing and unknowing at the same time, and what is not an object of knowledge, i.e. predicating with a claim to truth, does not exist.[31] Euthydemus, the sophist, completes this argument by identifying speaking with action and doing something — you cannot do what is not, action must always have an object; thus, no one says what is not — *ta me onta*, or untruth.[32] The sophists' dialectic is admittedly based on the assumption that *ouk esti ta me onta legein*, but without the ontological validation present in Antisthenes. It essentially consists of juggling the meaning of words.[33] The sophists have two opponents in the dialogue: the common-sensical Ktesippos, who demands verification of their knowledge with the actual state of affairs,[34] and Socrates. Socrates is able to refute the thesis of the sophists by referring to their profession: teaching virtue — *arete*. Since you cannot speak untruths, you cannot remain in the power of erroneous beliefs, and thus you cannot be wrong in your actions. Therefore, everyone knows how to act and has no need for the sophists' teachings. But Socrates's arguments are also largely common-sensical — he fights the sophists with their own weapons, because in this dialogue Plato is not yet able to free himself from the pre-Platonic understanding of the relationship between truth and being, and falsehood and non-being.

It is not until *Cratylus* that we perceive the first such attempts, though the problem of whether false statements can be formulated is not the main subject of the dialogue. In it, we find the question of whether it is possible to utter false (*pseudes*) sentences (*logoi*)[35]; therefore, the predicate of falsehood (*pseudes*) was assigned by Plato for the first time in philosophy to statements—predication. The answer to this question is a kind of prototype

---

[31] Plato: *Euthydemus* 293a, 294c.

[32] Ibid., 283c—284d; the sophists' tortuous dialectic is based on the belief that the relationship between *pragma* and *logos* is two-sided, which is already criticized by Gorgias; for Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, everything has a name, which means that each name has a referent; this conviction is not only the domain of "subversive sophistry," as we also find it in many writings of the so-called *Corpus Hippocrateum*, such as the statement that there must be medical art (*techne iatrike*), because it has a name.

[33] Ibid., 292d ff.; in specially and wittily selected examples, Plato's Socrates demonstrates the uselessness and harmfulness of sophist dialectic, which can at most show that Ktesippos is the brother of his puppies; that the happiest person is one who swallows three gold talents; and the father gods can be sold or donated to anyone.

[34] Ibid., 294b: "No, do not say that, he replied: only tell us this one thing more, and propound to us that you speak the truth. Then, if you tell us how many teeth each of you has, and you are found by our counting to have known it, we shall believe you thenceforth in everything else likewise."

[35] Plato: *Cratylus* 385b, 429d.

of the definition of false judgment later formulated in *Sophist*: thus, [the statement] that would predicate of entities that they are, is true, while the one that would predicate of entities that they are not, is false.[36] But in *Cratylus*, Plato is still examining the truthfulness of names (*onomata*),[37] or more precisely, trying to answer the question of whether examining names will allow us to reach the essence of the thing named with a given name. Plato states in *Cratylus* that a name can express an object, as long as it is a sign and an image of the object. There is no doubt that a name has a different ontic status than the named object: the name is not an object. At the same time, names are not completely separate from things — a name is somehow related to the thing it names. The form of this relationship is defined by a concept well-known since Homeric times, or even earlier — the concept of a sign: a name—sign refers to things. Plato specifies the form of this relationship — he calls it an imitation and image. A name expresses and refers, because it is an image of things. For Plato, imitation does not signify a faithful copy in all the smallest details. It would be more precise to talk about a reflection or reproduction, which inevitably has a different ontic status and a different — lesser — value than the original. In the case of a word — sign—name — the sound, the composition of phonemes imitates the structure of things that determines their essence.[38] A name relates to things in the same way that, in the light of Plato's later teachings, a phenomenon relates to ideas. Therefore, the question about the truthfulness of names will not receive a positive answer. A name cannot be true (*alethes*); as an image or imitation it has less of the truth of being in itself. One can venture to say that in Plato's text, it is not written that names are "false" in the sense of the term *pseudes* defined above. As such, they cannot be a sufficient source for coming to know a thing as such, called by a specific name, but they are the only tool given to us to communicate and convey thoughts.

For Plato, language is necessarily a tool for giving meaning and objectification. As such, it is subject to evaluation. Its proper use consists in expressing things as they are, in order to formulate statements which later in *Sophist* Plato calls true judgments: predicating of what exists, that it exists, and of what does not exist, that it does not exist. From this point of

[36] Plato: *Cratylus* 430 a.

[37] Plato: *Cratylus* 385 d.

[38] Plato writes critically about the category of *mimesis* in Books III and X of the *Republic*: distinguishing the degrees of imitation (the idea of a bed, encompassing the essence of a bed; individual beds made by craftsmen modeled on the idea of a bed as an imitation of the first degree; the image or form of a bed, modeled on the bed made by a craftsman; the latter is further away from the idea).

view, in Plato's later writings the problem of the origins of language and of language signs, the proper subject of the dialogue *Cratylus*, fades into the background. Of course — as the philosopher writes in *Cratylus*[39] — it would be incomparably easier if there was an ideal language, if words faithfully reflected the essence of things. But such a language does not exist, most likely never existed, and will never exist. Therefore, the philosopher must use the existing language, common to all and belonging to all, as a tool for expressing his/her thoughts, objectifying experience, and for communication. A philosopher can improve this tool; s/he can make language a tool of truth, because names and sentences are signs, because language as such is a system of signs that refer to something. Even if a name or sentence refers to non-being, according to Plato it is no longer a reference to non-existence, as it is for Parmenides. The non-being to which the name or sentence refers, in which we predicate of non-being, is not Parmenidean non-being, but something different (*thateron*) from being. But language does not only serve the truth: the same language signs that serve the philosopher to predicate truly serve other masters of the word — sophists or speakers, those inept imitators, who do not know what they are imitating — to make false statements, and create inept images and imitations. Thus, these language signs are a double-edged sword that is easily misused; so nothing remains other than to place language in the service of truth — to follow certain rules of usage to language signs: to predicate what is, how it is. What is more, the role of the philosopher who seeks the truth of being is to unmask and reveal the errors or dishonesty of those who, unknowingly or intentionally, for benefits or for power, remaining in the conviction that it is impossible to "speak things which are not," speak what is not with a claim to absolute truth, based — paradoxically — on the belief that no one can say what is not. Although names—language signs understood this way do not reveal the essence of things, merely referring to them, they can be a tool of communication, predication, they can express thoughts. It is not without regret that Plato states that even philosophers cannot use language as a system of signs: if a philosopher wants to convey his/her knowledge, his/her truth in a comprehensible way, s/he must follow the rules governing the language of the community in which s/he lives. In *Sophist*, Plato confirms the arrangements contained in *Cratylus*: language and thought are of the same nature, because both are *logos—statements*, which consist in the proper arrangement and combining of signs—names.[40] The whole language is a system of signs. Names and sentences function as signs in

[39] Plato: *Cratylus* 438d—e.

[40] Plato: *Sophist* 261d—262c.

the semiotic situation determined by the communication, because they refer to something: to things as such, to ideas, to the essence, to concepts, or to states of the soul. Can they, however, refer to non-being?

Therefore, the eternal question of pre-Platonic philosophy returns: can one *speak non-being*? Is a false statement/judgment possible? Can such a statement possess a logical value?

This problem will be definitively solved by Plato in *Sophist*, but a kind of propedeutic of the definition of false judgment formulated in this dialogue (*logos pseudes*) can be found in *Theaetetus*.

I view Plato's *Theaetetus* as a constructive dialogue, pertaining to the epistemological and methodological dimension of Platonic thought, and this is due to the fact that he undertakes a problem that is important not only for his own conception, but for the whole of Greek philosophy: what is knowledge? However, he examines it not so much with a view towards the object of knowledge and its strict definition, but rather due to the form of its objectification, i.e. judgment—*logos*, as well as the form of its verification through dialectical procedures, which Plato also describes as the *logos*.

Both in the relative chronology of Plato's writings and in the sequence of stages of the philosopher's development, Plato's *Theaetetus* must occupy a place between *Parmenides* and *Sophist*, in which we find — for the first time in Greek philosophy — an articulated definition of a judgment — a false judgment and a true judgment.[41] The dialogue *Theaetetus* is therefore propedeutic; it shows us Plato's struggles and work on a clear and precise definition of a judgment—*logos*, understood both as the objectification of knowledge, i.e. statements (or a set of statements) predicating of some object with an absolute claim to truth, as well as establishing the rules to which this statement should be subject, and the research procedures enabling the formulation of such a statement.[42]

It seems obvious to us that knowledge, regardless of its object, can only be objectified in a judgment — true *logos* — that fulfills the criteria of truth. Its opposite can only be a false judgment. Such a view is not accepted and defined by Plato until the dialogue *Sophist*, in which the categories: truth/truthfulness — *aletheia*, *alethes*, as well as false/falsehood — *pseudos*, *pseudes*, acquire new meaning, having been transferred from the realm of ontology and metaphysics to that of epistemology and methodology. In

[41] Plato: *Sophist* 240d, 241a, 263d; cf. J. Gajda-Krynicka: *Czy można 'mówić niebyty'. Koncepcja sądu fałszywego w Sofiście jako przewrót epistemologiczny w filozofii greckiej*, pp. 101—137.

[42] For more on this topic, cf. J. Gajda-Krynicka *Platoński 'Teajtet' — propedeutyka teorii sądu*. In: *Kolokwia Platońskie. Θεαίτητος*. Ed. A. Pacewicz. Wrocław 2007, pp. 93—106.

Sophist, Plato uses already precisely developed epistemological terminology, formulating for the first time in the history of philosophy the definition of the truth of the judgment, as well as the criterion of that truth. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the development of this terminology required a prolonged effort — long dialectical procedures, so vividly illustrated by the author of the autobiographical *Seventh Letter* that has been attributed to Plato. Therefore, I accept that the dialogue *Theaetetus* shows us the philosopher's work on the notion and theory of judgment, these preliminary preparations preceding the articulation of the theory in *Sophist*.

There can be no doubt that all attempts at studying and analyzing Plato's *Theaetetus* in isolation from other Platonic writings, i.e. without the context imposed by relative chronology, must lead to the conclusion that it is not a constructive work — that it is a purely aporetic dialogue and does not bring solutions or answers to the question formulated at the beginning of the letter: what is knowledge—*episteme*?[43] However, if we set it within the relative chronology of Platonic writings before the dialogue *Sophist*[44] and after the dialogue *Parmenides*, I think we can find in it both positive solutions in the form of the propedeutic of the theory of judgment that appears in *Sophist*, as well as an explanation of why Plato cannot yet answer the declarative question of the dialogue concerning what knowledge is.

What justifies attempts at situating *Theaetetus* in relative chronology after the dialogue *Parmenides*, considering all the latter's criticism of the form of the theory of ideas that Plato adopted during the time of the Middle Academy?

Two significant premises point to this. First of all, the fact that in *Theaetetus* there are no references to the Middle Academy theory of ideas, either concerning their ontic status — as the first beings *in ordine essendi* — or in regard to their relationship with things. This is demonstrated (among other things) by the fact that Socrates emphasizes that it is not the object of knowledge that is being reflected on, but knowledge itself[45]; if we cite the dialogue *Phaedrus*, we will see that for Plato during the Middle Academy period, the object of knowledge identical with

---

[43] Plato: *Theaetetus* 145e, 146a.

[44] Cf. Plato: *Sophist* 216a; I do not, of course, consider the declarative reference at the beginning of *Sophist* to Socrates's supposed discussion with Theaetetus and Theodore the previous day as decisive in regard to the relative chronology of *Theaetetus*; a similar reference can be found in *Timaeus*, which refers to the "previous day," when the discussion about the perfect regime of the *Republic* apparently took place. However, this is a kind of sign — a message that Plato himself saw *Theaetetus* as a kind of prologue or introduction to *Sophist*.

[45] Plato: *Theaetetus* 146e.

wisdom—*sophia* was ideas. Within Plato's metaphorical framework, only God could possess such knowledge, while the philosopher remained on a permanent journey in its direction. The ontic status of ideas made knowledge similar to Parmenides's notion of being, while in *Theaetetus*, Socrates clearly emphasizes that one should not accept or assume "Let us stick close to the statement we made a moment ago, and assume that nothing exists by itself as invariably one."[46] The first part of *Parmenides* ends with the conclusion that the theory of ideas should be thoroughly verified by eliminating the aporias inherent in the entire system.[47] A careful reading of *Theaetetus* allows us to find many places in the dialogue pointing to the theory of the five highest types already developed in *Sophist*, especially regarding identity and difference, to which Plato's Socrates confers ontic status,[48] as well as an important mention, contradicting the findings of the theory of ideas, which may refer to the propedeutic of the science of principles — a mention of "two prototypes that stand in the womb of true being."[49]

Another premise is the form of discussion, or rather Socrates's line of argument. Generally speaking, it boils down to formulating a number of hypotheses, which are subsequently challenged in the course of the dialectical procedure. One can venture to say that this is an exemplification of the thesis formulated in *Parmenides*, or rather a postulate concerning the correct implementation of the procedure of the form of dialectic I call hypothetical dialectic. Its first description can be found in *Phaedo*, often called after G. Reale the "second voyage."[50] The older Plato, hiding in *Parmenides* behind the mask of the philosopher from Elea, accuses the younger Plato — Socrates — of being careless in following the procedures of hypothetical dialectic. He did not complete the procedurally necessary step of verifying the formulated *hypotheseis*, which consists in setting a particular *hypothesis* against the opposite *hypothesis*. The strict judge of Plato's theory of ideas demands from Plato verification of the form of hypothetical dialectic he presented in *Phaedo*, when Socrates, formulating a strong assertion of the

[46] Ibid. 153e: Trans. H.N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA/London 1921.

[47] Plato: *Parmenides* 136a—d.

[48] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 185d.

[49] Ibid., 176e: "Two patterns, my friend, are set up in the world, the divine, which is most blessed, and the godless, which is most wretched. But these men do not see that this is the case, and their silliness and extreme foolishness blind them to the fact that through their unrighteous acts they are made like the one and unlike the other" (Trans. H.N. Fowler. Cambridge, MA/London 1921).

[50] Plato: *Phaedo* 99d—e. Cf. J. Gajda-Krynicka: *Między 'pierwszym' a 'drugim żeglowaniem.' Rola przedplatońskiej fizyki w platońskich dowodach na nieśmiertelność duszy.* In: *W kręgu filozofii klasycznej.* Ed. B. Dembiński. Katowice 2000, pp. 24—57.

highest degree of generality, somehow stopped there, failing to consider the consequences that the opposite *hypothesis* would bring about. Parmenides, whose mask an older and wiser Plato dons in the dialogue, and who has since been trained in dialectical sophisms by Megarian dialecticians, demands that the younger Plato allocate each *hypothesis*, regardless of its generality and power, the opposite *hypothesis* and examine each of their consequences, comparing and juxtaposing the conclusions.

In *Theaetetus*, Plato no longer makes the "mistakes of youth." Each *hypothesis* has a contradictory hypothesis assigned to it in the structure of dialogue. Plato's Socrates juxtaposes and verifies them and, often as a result of this verification, rejects them. This form of dialogue may suggest its aporeticity. However, if we treat this apparent aporeticity as a record of hypothetical dialectical procedures, we must acknowledge that the project itself is constructive and has tremendous didactic and cognitive value.

Let us take a look at the *hypothesis* formulated in *Theaetetus* and try to find constructive content in them, keeping in mind that Plato, in his attempts to define what knowledge is, must argue with many opponents: not only with Protagoras and his concept of the equality of judgments, but also with the atomists, Antisthenes, and with himself — a younger Plato, who considered ideas to be the first being and the object of knowledge.

The argument that Plato puts in Socrates's mouth is impressive in terms of its logical order and consistency. If we take as a starting point, as Socrates does with Theaetetus, that the concept of knowledge—*episteme* is not an empty concept,[51] as well as the fact that knowledge cannot be equated with skills (*technai*), or with facts memorized on a given topic,[52] we must recognize that it always belongs to each individual who is "pregnant in thought," acquired by him/her in a specific activity of the senses and reason, which Socrates in the dialogue calls the soul.

To undertake an attempt at defining what knowledge is, one must begin from scratch — from what appears first in the process of cognition.[53] Therefore, we must consider the thesis that knowledge is perception (*aisthesis*).[54] This idea was rejected by Plato during the time of the Middle Academy; in his view, the object of perception was not being, but things — *ta chremata*, changeable and transient, about which one could

---

[51] And this had already been established at the end of the first part of *Parmenides*.

[52] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 147c.

[53] It is worth emphasizing that the author of the apocryphal *VII Letter* shows a different hierarchy of data (the five disclosures of the subject) necessary in dialectical procedures — it starts with the name, through the definition, the object—the thing itself, to knowledge.

[54] Ibid., 151e.

only hold opinions — *doksai*. In *Theaetetus*, however, Plato states that perception somehow concerns being,[55] so it becomes necessary to consider the object of perception — what it is exactly that appears to us in perception. In a multi-faceted polemic — explicit with Protagoras, implicit with Antisthenes — it is established that knowledge cannot be perception,[56] as perception is singular, individual, subjective, of a temporal nature, and depends on the perceiving sense organ.[57] In addition, the image of the perceived thing — *phantasia* — is located in the soul. It is in the soul that the results of a sensory view are segregated and organized based on criteria that are not given to us in this view, such as similarity and dissimilarity, identity and difference.[58] A sensory view can therefore only provide data for reasoning procedures. Only the soul-reason, which performs operations on the results of sensory viewing, can be the seat of knowledge.[59] Perception cannot grasp the truth (*aletheia*) or the essence (*ousia*) of a thing[60] — something that is common to all, that is their principle and beginning, but is not subject to a sensory view.

In his next *hypothesis*, Socrates puts forward the thesis that knowledge should be sought in the activity of the soul that, on the basis of perceptions, after organizing and segregating them (*dianoeisthai*), undertakes an attempt, which Plato calls *doxadzein*,[61] and which results in *doxa*. This term causes much difficulty for those attempting to interpret Plato's *Theaetetus*. Plato's Polish translator erroneously translates it as "judgment,"[62] which has led to misunderstandings and ambiguities. In my view, this term should be translated as "opinion," in accordance with the philosophical tradition (and not limited only to pre-Platonic tradition). Since the time of Xenophanes of Colophon, the term opinion (*doxa*) functioned as the opposite of knowledge, cf. Diels FVS Xenophanes B 35; for Parmenides, "the opinions of mortals," resulting from fallible sensory perception, were opposed to truth in its ontic aspect, in the realm of predicating of being. Plato used the term *doxa* to refer to the results of the sensory view to which the world of things is

---

[55] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 152c: "Perception, then, is always of that which exists and, since it is knowledge, cannot be false" (Trans. Harold N. Fowler).

[56] Ibid., 163b—166b.

[57] Cf. Gorgias of Leontini's treatise *On Non-Being or On Nature*.

[58] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 184e—185d.

[59] Ibid., 186d.

[60] Ibid., 186e. It should be emphasized that Plato still uses the term *aletheia* here interchangeably with the term *ousia*, so truth is identified with being/the substance of things, their principle or principles.

[61] Ibid., 187a.

[62] English translations usually translate this as "opinion."

subject. The predicates of truth (*doxa alethes*) and falsehood (*doxa pseudes*) may be attributed to opinion, but in what sense?

Thus, knowledge is an opinion.[63] Is every opinion knowledge, however?

Knowledge understood this way must meet an essential condition: it must be a "true" opinion. And here for the first time Plato, through the words of Socrates, admits that there may also be mistaken, or rather false (*pseudes*), opinions. For the first time, the term *pseudos*, *pseudes* is used in an epistemological context and signifies the opposite of truth. False opinions are possible, and Socrates's reasoning reveals the path that the philosopher had to follow in order to recognize the possibility of "thinking things that are not," in the sense of thinking that cannot be reconciled with the truth of being. We must remember, however, that Plato emphasizes that the intellectual action he calls *dianoeisthai*, as a result of which the soul begins to have opinions (*doxazesthai*), and its product — *doxa* — are realized in the soul[64]; it is "the soul's conversation with itself," which is not objectified in speech. Errors, such as assigning existence to what does not exist or a confusion of predicates, can only appear in this sphere of intellectual activity, unless it is subjected to certain rigors. If an opinion is to count as knowledge, it must be a true opinion.[65]

But how can one distinguish between true and false opinions? This question is of particular importance in Plato's time, and not only in the realm of philosophy and epistemology; Socrates recalls examples from everyday life — we need look no further than in the courts, where it is easy, as Gorgias emphasizes in *Defense of Palamedes*, to create false opinions in people using the arts of persuasion and rhetoric. What determines whether thinking — that intellectual activity of the soul — will result in a form of opinion to which the predicate of truth may be attributed?

---

63 Plato: *Theaetetus*, 187b.

64 Ibid., 189e—190a: "As the talk which the soul has with itself about any subjects which it considers. You must not suppose that I know this that I am declaring to you. But the soul, as the image presents itself to me, when it thinks, is merely conversing with itself, asking itself questions and answering, affirming and denying. When it has arrived at a decision, whether slowly or with a sudden bound, and is at last agreed, and is not in doubt, we call that its opinion; and so I define forming opinion as talking and opinion as talk which has been held, not with someone else, nor yet aloud, but in silence with oneself. How do you define it?" (Trans. Harold N. Fowler).

65 Ibid., 200e: That knowledge is true opinion; for true opinion is surely free from error and all its results are fine and good.

Plato views the logos as an instrument for verifying opinions. Another attempt — *hypothesis* — defines knowledge as "an opinion to which the predicate of truth is attributed by virtue of the logos."[66]

Throughout Socrates's arguments several meanings of the term appear. However, the reader does not have to make a choice between them, because they all complement each other harmoniously. In terms of the order of appearances, which is not necessarily identical with the hierarchy of meanings, the meaning comes to the fore, which I will call the objectification of opinion in the form of a statement. An opinion is born and remains in the soul. Spoken—objectified, it becomes subject to certain rules of expression. A statement, as noted at the beginning, must predicate something of something. It is therefore a "composition of names" — *symploke onomaton*, because only a composition of names can be verified and predicate truthfully.[67] A name itself does not predicate anything, and neither truth nor falsehood can be attributed to it.[68] It is their composition in the form of a sentence that constitutes a predication. Therefore, knowledge is possessed by one who can objectify it in the form of a statement that can be confirmed or denied. This is the first pre-definition of a judgment in the history of philosophy, which Plato in *Sophist* will later refer to as the *logos*.

Further attempts at determining the content of the term *logos* can be reduced to establishing what should be included in a statement—objectification of a true opinion. And so, in an unwritten reference to Antisthenes's ideas already criticized by Plato in *Euthydemus*, Socrates will examine predicating something by enumerating its "components" (only to negate such predication), as well as whether predicating or defining *per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*[69] can be considered knowledge. It

[66] This is how I translate the Platonic phrase: *doksaalethes meta logou* (cf. 201c: Theat. "But, my friend, if true opinion and knowledge were the same thing in law courts, the best of judges could never have true opinion without knowledge; in fact, however, it appears that the two are different"; Trans. Harold N. Fowler).

[67] Ibid., 202b—c: "they can only be named, for they have only a name; but the things composed of these are themselves complex, and so their names are complex and form a rational explanation; for the combining of names is the essence of reasoning. Thus the elements are not objects of reason or of knowledge, but only of perception, whereas the combinations of them are objects of knowledge and expression and true opinion. When therefore a man acquires without reasoning the true opinion about anything, is mind has the truth about it, but has no knowledge; for he who cannot give and receive a rational explanation of a thing is without knowledge of it; but when he has acquired also a rational explanation he may possibly have become all that I have said and may now be perfect in knowledge. Is that the version of the dream you have heard, or is it different?" (Trans. Harold N. Fowler).

[68] Cf. Plato: *Cratylus* 385d.

[69] Plato: *Theaetetus* 207a, 208e.

comes as no surprise that Socrates is unable to take a definite position in this matter. As mentioned above, there are many reasons to consider the dialogue *Theaetetus* as a late work of Plato's. During the Middle Academy, the objects of knowledge identical with wisdom were ideas, as the model-efficient causes of things, ideas as general concepts with an ontic status, ideas—first beings. The younger Plato would accept a view of knowledge, whose object would be what is common to sets of things distinguished on the basis of "one idea."[70] The older Plato states that such knowledge can encompass only that set distinguished due to a common feature, but will not take into account the individual characteristics of individual objects. Perhaps it is here that we find an indication of the problem of the principle of individuation, left unresolved by Plato and, I think, by Aristotle.[71] But Socrates also rejects the view of knowledge, whose object would be individual differences in sets of objects.

Does Plato's Socrates, as a master of *techne maieutike*, really fail in the dialogue? Is the final observation that knowledge is not true opinion thanks to the *logos*, that the *epistemon* differs from one who holds true beliefs — *doxasthes* — to destroy the investigation of the whole dialogue?

Due to the time when the dialogue was written, I assume that Plato in *Theaetetus* could not have yet formulated a theory of knowledge objectified in a judgment, because he had not determined what the first form of being is: he undermined the legitimacy of the theory of ideas, while in his research had not yet reached the notion of principles/*archai*. Moreover, in writing he consciously posed the question: "What is knowledge?," knowing that he could not answer it. As mentioned above, this dialogue should be placed at the stage of the development of Platonic thought when Plato himself challenged the form of his theory of ideas, and had not yet worked out the theory of principles as the form of the first being. The object of knowledge can only be something to which the predicate of being belongs, which one can predicate of in the form of *logos* — a true statement, the truth of which will be confirmed by dialectical procedures — *logoi kai logismoi* — synoptic, hypothetical, and diairetic dialectic. Plato, having rejected ideas as the first being *in ordine essendi*, continually seeks the first principles — *archai*, realizing, however, that they can be reached in the process of cognition only by way of the *logos*. *Theaetetus* is essentially devoted to searching for the theory of *logos* as an instrument of cognition,

[70] Ibid., 208e: "Then he who possesses right opinion about anything and adds thereto a comprehension of the difference which distinguishes it from other things will have acquired knowledge of that thing of which he previously had only opinion" (trans. Harold N. Fowler).

[71] Ibid.

as a research procedure, and as a form of the objectification of research results — a judgment.

Thus, in the development of Greek thought, there came a moment when the notion of judgment—logos as a verifiable statement, subordinated to the rules of thinking, that has as its object the knowledge of being, could be formed. As mentioned, such a notion was adopted by Plato in the dialogue *Sophist*, in which he formulated the definition of a false judgment. In this way Plato made a major breakthrough in Greek epistemology, showing that it is possible to falsely predicate being.

Bibliography

Antisthenis Fragmenta. Antisthenove Zlomky. Eds. A. Kalaš, V. Suvák. Bratislava 2014.

Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker. Vol. 1. Eds. H. Diels, W. Kranz. Berlin 1951.

Diogenes Laertios: *Diogenis Laertii vitae philosophorum*. Ed. H.S. Long. Vol. 1—2. Oxford 1964.

The Dialogues of Plato. Translated into English with Analyses and Introductions by B. Jowett, M.A. in Five Volumes. 3rd edition revised and corrected. London 1892.

Early Greek Philosophy. Eds. and trans. A. Lachs, G.W. Most. London 2016.

Gajda-Krynicka J.: *Czy można ‘mówić niebyty’. Koncepcja sądu fałszywego w ‘Sofiście’ jako przewrót epistemologiczny w filozofii greckiej*. In: *Kolokwia Platońskie, Parmenides. Sofista*. Ed. M. Manikowski. Wrocław 2003, pp. 101—137.

Gajda-Krynicka J.: *Między ‘pierwszym’ a ‘drugim żeglowaniem’. Rola przedplatońskiej fizyki w platońskich dowodach na nieśmiertelność duszy*. In: *W kręgu filozofii klasycznej*. Ed. B. Dembiński. Katowice 2000, pp. 24—57.

Gajda-Krynicka J.: *Platoński ‘Teajtet’ — propedeutyka teorii sądu*. In: *Kolokwia Platońskie*. Θεαίτητος. Ed. A. Pacewicz. Wrocław 2007, pp. 93—106.

Gajda J.: *Przedplatońskie koncepcje prawdy. Ontologiczny i aksjologiczny aspekt kategorii ἀλήθεια w filozofii przedplatońskiej*. In: *Studia z filozofii starożytnej III. Filozofia XIX*. Ed. J. Gajda. Wrocław 1993.

Gajda J.: *Sofiści*. Warszawa 1989.

Guthrie W.K.C.: *A History of Greek Philosophy. Vol. III: The Fifth-Century Enlightenment, part 1: The Sophists; part 2: Socrates*. Cambridge 1971.

Kahn Ch.H.: *The Greek Verb 'To Be' and the Concept of Being.* "Foundations of Language" 1966, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 244—261; Idem: *The Verb "Be" in Ancient Greek*. Dordrecht—Boston 1973.

Kerferd G.B.: *The Sophistic Movement*. Cambridge 1981.

Platonis opera. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1900 (repr. 1967).

Reale G.: *Historia filozofii starożytnej. T. I. Od początków do Sokratesa*. Trans. E.I. Zieliński. Lublin 1993.

Runciman W.G.: *Plato's Later Epistemology*. Cambridge 1962.

Sextus Empiricus. Ed. H. Mutschmann, J. Mau. Leipzig 1914; *Adversus mathematicos*.

Stoicorum veterum fragmenta. Vol. 2. Ed. J. von Arnim. Leipzig 1903 (repr. Stuttgart 1968).

Wild J.: *The Philosophy of Karl Popper*. La Salle—Illinois 1974.

Janina Gajda-Krynicka — emerytowany profesor zwyczajny Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

„Folia Philosophica". Vol. 42, s. 47—90
Katowice 2019
ISSN 2353-9445 (online)

DOI: http://doi.org/10.31261/fp.8517

Dorota Zygmuntowicz
Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, Warszawa

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7336-5751

Lies and Fabrications The Cognitive Potential of *Pseudos* in Plato's *Republic*

Kłamstwa i zmyślenia
Epistemiczny potencjał *pseudos* w *Politei* Platona

Abstrakt: W artykule stawiam pytanie: jaką funkcję pełni wątek *pseudos* w całym wywodzie *Politei*, motywowanym wyzwaniem Thrasymacha, który maksymalnie zwięźle zdefiniował sprawiedliwość jako „korzyść silniejszego/rządzącego". W jaki zatem sposób „piękna *polis*" (Kallipolis), oparta na „szlachetnym zmyśleniu" kierowanym zwłaszcza do rządzących, może stanowić dobry kontrargument dla realisty Thrasymacha? Wykazuję, że chcąc dowieść, iż teza Thrasymacha jest zbyt wąskim i pozornie realistycznym opisem rzeczywistości politycznej, Platon jawnie posługuje się tym samym narzędziem, które leży niejawne u podstaw światopoglądu wyrażonego w tezie retora: ideologicznym fałszem. Szpetnej ideologii (korzyści silniejszego) przeciwstawia „szlachetny fałsz" (dogmat miłości), gdyż fałsz jako taki jest niezbywalnym elementem strukturalnym samej *polis*, wynikającym z właściwej ludzkiej kondycji słabości władzy rozumnej. Motyw *pseudos* pełni zatem w *Politei* podwójną funkcję, heurystyczną i strukturalną. Po pierwsze, poprzez jawnie proponowany przez siebie fałsz Platon obnaża niejawny fałsz ideologiczny leżący u podstaw realistycznej tezy Thrasymacha. Po drugie, fałsz przedstawia jako komponent żywiołu politycznego, kompensujący ludzką niewiedzę i wykorzystujący podatność na wdrożenia normatywne i kulturowe.

Słowa klucze: *Politeia* Platona, teza Thrasymacha, „szlachetne kłamstwo", ideologiczny fałsz

> "[…] none, I say, of these will ever learn to the utmost possible extent the truth of virtue nor yet of vice. For in learning these objects it is necessary to learn at the same time both what is false and what is true of the whole of Existence, and that through the most diligent and prolonged investigation, as I said at the commencement" (*Ep. VII* 344a—b)

Introduction: Alethiological Bias

There are names that are more repulsive than the things and phenomena they designate, especially if you are unaware that these objects are referents of those names. These include the terms "falsehood," "lie," "deception," "fabrication" — equivalents of the Greek *pseudos* — all more or less sinister-sounding at the level of both theory and practice. In the first case, they are negative correlates or antonyms of knowledge and truth, in the second — represented by Cephalus in Plato's *Republic* — sins and injustices (*adikemata*), which are punished if not by people, then by gods (I 330e6, 331b1—4).

At the very beginning of the *Republic*, Socrates easily deals with a position that "so simply" (*haplos houtos*, 331c3)[1] identifies justice with telling the truth and giving back what has been taken. It is enough to ask "justice, shall we so simply assert that it is the truth and giving back what a man has taken from another, or is to do these very things sometimes just and sometimes unjust" (331c1—5), to immediately afterwards indicate a situation — for example, an enemy or a mentally-ill friend — in which you should not give him/her a sword and speak "the whole truth." In response, "everyone would surely say" that "speaking the truth" does not define justice (331c5—d2). This example — sufficient for a short refutation of Cephalus's morality, which is grounded in a long cultural tradition — is trivial and known for antilogicalagons.[2] But behind this banality lies the difficult and dangerous

[1] The translations of the *Republic* are by A. Bloom; the *Seventh Letter* by R.G. Bury; the *Cratylus* and the *Symposium* by H.N. Fowler; the *Laws* by T.L. Pangle. Unless otherwise indicated, all cited pagination refers to the *Republic*.

[2] More analogous examples in *Dissoi Logoi* (DK 90, 3.2—9). Cf. Plato, *Leges* XI 916d—e: most people speak of lies and falsehoods with some approval, "but by leaving unregulated and undefined the where and when of the opportune moment (*kairos*), they

thought that truth is not always an intrinsic value, and therefore is not absolute — at least in the field of morality;[3] and since knowledge is part of virtue, neither is it absolute in the field of epistemology. Consequently, a falsehood/lie is not "so simply" a negative value vis-à-vis truth and does have some heuristic value. It is the negation of falsehood's existence that limits cognitive ability and gives access to all falsehood.[4]

In this article, I want to show that the exploration of *pseudos*'s potential in its many meanings of "lie," "fabrication," and "misjudgment" — given below by the more general term "falsehood," which implies that every lie is false, but not every falsehood is a lie — is fundamental to the power of the *Republic*'s message.[5] Therefore, understanding the function that the *pseudos* theme performs in the whole argument helps in interpreting the intentions of the dialogue itself. This theme — initiated in the dialogue's opening scene with Cephalus and emphatically and provocatively stressed at the end

---

inflict many penalties on themselves and others through this saying." That is why Plato's legislator clearly defines when one cannot lie and cheat (916e—922a). He does not specify, however, when one can, though he implicitly acknowledges the existence of such circumstances.

[3] This Platonic thought is also extracted from the *Republic* by Robert Wardy: "Truth is no automatic good"; "encouragement of virtue trumps *mere* truthfulness," with a reference to 378a2—3 (R. Wardy: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology, or How to Assemble Awkward Truth and Wholesome Falsehood*. In: *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Eds. V. Harte, M. Lane. Cambridge 2013, pp. 119—138: at 225).

[4] This is clearly shown by the heuristic pirouette in the *Sophist* 241a—e: proof of the existence of falsehood traps a sophist who, denying the existence of falsehood, negates precisely what he has been caught in: the art of cheating (*techne apatetike*, 240d2, 264d5).

[5] Passages II 382a1—2, e6, VI 485c3—4, VII 535e1—5, where reference is made to all kinds of *pseudos*, allow us to state that for Plato the term *pseudos* has the general meaning of falsehood, specified by him through adjectives and context. The basic diairesis of *pseudos* is conducted in II 382a—b: *pseudos en psyche* (falsehood in the soul, identical to ignorance; for more, see V. Harte: *Plato's Politics of Ignorance*. In: *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Eds. V. Harte, M. Lane, pp. 139—154: at 147, 152—154) and *pseudos en logois* (falsehood in speeches, with an admixture of truth, often translated as *lie*; for more, see M. Schofield: *The Noble Lie*. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's* Republic. Ed. G.R.F. Ferrari. Cambridge 2007, pp. 138—164); the same dichotomy returns, formulated differently, in VII 535e1—3: *akousion pseudos* (the unwilling lie) and *hekousion pseudos* (the willing lie). Throughout the dialogue, Plato uses the semantically-broad term *pseudos*, specifying its meaning through context. I retain this Platonic phraseology, because it clearly echoes not only the main theme of the dialogue — which is not only *lie*, but all the various types of *falsehood* (*pseudos*) — but also Plato's message: with the weak faculty of reason (*logismos*) being proper to the human condition, what becomes essential is the question of what content could harmlessly (for the individual and its community) compensate for the ignorance resulting from this weakness and simultaneously protect that individual and community against harmful content — in a word: how can ignorance be controlled?

of Book III in the motif of the "noble lie" (*gennaion pseudos*, III 414b9—c1) — runs sometimes above, sometimes beneath the surface of the entire argument of the *Republic*, announced as a polemic with "Thrasymachus's thesis" ("the just is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger," 338c1—2; hereinafter abbreviated as TT).[6] As a result, this theme, meandering through ten books, carries a coherent message that serves as a response to Thrasymachus's challenge: the inability to see falsehood and recognize the conditions of its dual function — heuristic in the process of obtaining knowledge and therapeutic in the process of shaping moral and political order — can be an equally large threat to the moral and intellectual condition of man as are absolutizations of the truth.

This thesis requires two comments. The first to soften the possible impression of absurdity, caused by the connection of any falsehood (*pseudos*) to truth and knowledge (*episteme*); the second — to link the "noble falsehood" with TT from the outset, because although both issues attract the attention of many commentators, they are usually discussed independently of each other. However, according to the interpretative perspective presented in this article, the motif of the "noble falsehood" takes on its proper meaning when read within the context of the problem situation presented in the books immediately preceding it, especially in "Thrasymachian" Book I.

Concerning the first comment, it is necessary to cite later dialogues in which Plato proves the existence of falsehood. This evidence is the main weapon in polemics with sophists who deny the existence of falsehood and, consequently, recognize that everything is true.[7] To prove that not everything is true, Plato in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* justifies the possibility of false judgments. In the *Philebus*, to prove that not every pleasure is good, he justifies the possibility of false pleasures. In the *Cratylus* (408c5—8), he indirectly states that the human world is an entanglement of falsehood and truth:

> Well, the true part is smooth and divine and dwells aloft among the gods, but falsehood dwells below among common men, is rough and like the tragic goat; for tales and falsehoods (*hoi mythoi te kai pseude*) are most at home there, in the tragic life.

The hope that you can live outside of this tragic scene is dispelled in the myth/fairy tale of the *Statesman*: a god who is always the same and unchanging cyclically departs from the changing world (269d—270a, 272e), and then man has to take care of himself. The cycle without god is political life (274d—275a).

---

[6] On its historical credibility, see fn. 18 below.

[7] *Sophist* 241a; *Euthydemus* 286d (see fn. 4 above).

In this context of the late dialogues, less astonishment is elicited by the *Republic*'s exposure of the indispensable fact and functionality of falsehoods (lies and fabrications) used in the process of creating moral and political order, than by the logical course of Plato's investigations, where in the *Republic* he first exposes human susceptibility to *pseudos* and in subsequent dialogues proves its existence.

The second remark is to reject, by linking TT to the *pseudos* theme, the possible accusation of anachronism that may arise in the context of Malcolm Schofield's comment that, "it was Augustine, not Plato, who was the first notable champion of what we might call the absolutist position on the morality of lying: holding that all lying is wrong, and forbidden by God as sinful."[8] Attributing the intention of warning against absolutizing the truth to Plato then seems unreasonable, especially because, "in treatments of lying by Greek and Roman authors before Augustine there is not much to suggest that it even occurred to people that absolutism was a serious option."[9] The option that Plato opposes, therefore, needs to be specified in accordance with 5th/4th century reality, as Thrasymachus's attitude in Book I, which gives the polemical impulse to the entire further line of argument, fits into that framework. It is an attitude that is equally absolute in its claim to explain reality as is Augustine's, with the difference that the place of absolute truth is occupied by a description of factuality, pretending to a thesis adequate to reality, of the following content: "the just is *nothing other than* the advantage of the stronger" (emphasis D.Z.), where the stronger is whoever happens to be in power, regardless of the type of system (338e6—339a2). True or false? Over the course of the ten books of the *Republic*, Plato will emphasize several times that the answer to this question determines whether our life will pass well and happily, or badly and unhappily[10]; he will also recall Thrasymachus several times, as a reminder that he (Plato) has Thrasymachus's thesis in mind the whole time.[11]

In opposing Thrasymachus's realism to Plato's idealism, it is implicitly recognized that Thrasymachus condensed a description of reality into his

---

[8] M. Schofield: *The Noble Lie*, p. 146.

[9] Ibid.

[10] I 344e5—6, I 352d6, I 354c1—3, VIII 545a6—8, IX 578c6—7.

[11] V 450a5, b3, VI 498c8, VIII 545a8, IX 590d2—3, with a clear allusion to Thrasymachus in VI 493a9—c8 (cf. the description of Thrasymachus in the *Phaedrus* 267c7—d4). Ralph Wedgwood (R. Wedgwood: *The Coherence of Thrasymachus*. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 2017, vol. 53, pp. 33—63: at 54—61) and Merrick Anderson (M. Anderson: *Socrates' Thrasymachus' Sophistic Account of Justice in Republic I*. "Ancient Philosophy" 2016, vol. 36, pp. 151—172: at 151) also emphasize that Thrasymachus plays the role of Socrates's main opponent in the *Republic*, with whom the latter polemicizes throughout the dialogue.

thesis — an overwhelmingly realistic description, while Plato in his counter-proposal constructed a utopian model of political order based on a "noble falsehood," subordinated to normative, eternal patterns — a sublimely ideal model. The reconciliation of the "noble falsehood" with the eternal truths referring to those ideal entities is a task involving many interpreters; one made all the more difficult the more epistemic prejudice against falsehood there is. It is undoubtedly grounded in all those dialogues in which epistemological themes appear that allow for the reconstruction of a relatively coherent concept of Plato's epistemology. With the awareness that "nowhere in Plato's writings does he articulate and unequivocally endorse a theory or definition of knowledge,"[12] in elaborations of this theory, the following aspects are generally emphasized: 1) knowledge (*episteme*) is expert knowledge, which allows one to give a rational explanation of a given thing, including knowledge of its causes, and maintain it after checking its logical consistency and explanatory power in crossfire questions (*elenchos*); 2) the objects of knowledge are extrasensory, unchanging entities (*ideai*), whereas the objects of sensual cognition are the domain of true opinion (*alethe doxa*); 3) the process of reaching knowledge is a kind of recall (*anamnesis*); 4) the method is a two-way dialectic, bringing the multiplicity of things up to a generic unity (*sunagoge*) and breaking this unity down into a multiplicity (*diairesis*). Undoubtedly, what constitutes each of these aspects is truth (*aletheia*), which is opposed to falsehood (*pseudos*) as a wrong judgment about what is and why it is. As an antonym of knowledge so understood, it does not belong to the set of epistemological terms; it is not an epistemic good.

Thus we return to the starting point: why Plato, accepting Thrasymachus's challenge, which lays claim to a perfectly adequate explanation of reality through the phrase "is nothing other than" (*einai* […] *ouk allo ti e*, I 338c1—2), constructs in response a moral-political model also not only the line between truth and falsehood is blurred, but also truth and falsehood coexist so harmoniously that they result in a just, "beautiful *polis*" (*Kallipolis*). For, in the beginning, he bluntly states that this model is founded on the "noble falsehood," which he recommends instilling into, "in the best case, even the rulers" (III 414c1—2), only to emphasize the love of truth and aversion to all falsehoods harbored by philosopher-kings strongly and repeatedly later in the dialogue (from V 475e). In other words: how can falsehood, though placatingly specified and embedded into the argument with complete openness and honesty, be not only a convincing, but

[12] M. Lee: *Epistemology (Knowledge)*. In: *The Bloomsbury Companion to Plato*. Ed. G.A. Press. London—New York 2015, pp. 167—169: at 167.

also — without denying the aspects of epistemology distinguished above — a definitive counter-answer to Thrasymachus.

Let us track the subsequent stages at which Plato tactically incorporates the *pseudos* theme into the *Republic*'s line of argument, and — in uncovering the structure of this composition — let us specify the function that this motif plays in the polemic with TT. After all, functionality in the refutation of theses about reality does reveal some degree of epistemic potential of whatever it is that makes the refutation effective.

Pseudos as a structural element of the *polis*: painful truths

Speak and view differently (I 327a—339a)

In Socrates's and Cephalus's conversation on justice at the beginning of the dialogue, the value of truth is relativized and thus limited: one need not always give back others' possessions and tell the whole truth. The ease with which Socrates accomplishes this — it was enough to provide him with one example (I 331c6) — along with the complete omission of the question of truth in his further discussion with Polemarchus and Thrasymachus, and the introduction of the *pseudos* theme in his conversation with Plato's brothers, gives the impression that truth is both ethically and politically marginalized in the argument.[13] This allows other values to come to the forefront. Thus, when Polemarchus, son of Cephalus and heir to his material and moral estate, defends the morals of his father with the support of Simonides's wisdom — since Cephalus also leaves his son continuing the discussion with Socrates as part of his inheritance — he completely bypasses the duty of telling the truth, and focuses only on the duty of giving everyone what he/she is due: harm to one's enemies, advantages to one's friends. Polemarchus's defense is ineffective, for a series of elenctic blows by Socrates also refutes this understanding of justice: justice cannot bring anyone harm (335d11—336a3). Although the reader of the dialogue may conclude that the category of advantages is more closely related to

[13] Glaucon also omits the truth when he names three types of goods in II 357b5—d2.

justice than are telling the truth and giving back what is due to others,[14] and therefore that falsehood and fraud can somehow be morally advantageous, for now he or she must deal with this alone. Plato ends Socrates's discussion with Polemarchus with a negative conclusion typical for elenctics: justice is not what the decent Cephalus thought in accordance with the tradition of wise poets; Cephalus — the current testator for Polemarchus and potential testator for Plato's generation, which — after the demoralizing Peloponnesian War that exposed the face of justice as advantages for the stronger party[15] — wants to redefine it, with a look to its own moral and political advantages.

In this delicate situation of inheritance, negative conclusions are more desirable than assertions. They have the power to distance one from the convictions imperceptibly instilled with one's culture and thus reduce the pressure of the duty to accept one's inheritance. This potential makes sense of the remaining entirety of the dialogue in its logical and dramatic dimension. In this doubly-complementary sense, this power is expressed in Socrates's question ending his conversation with Polemarchus: "what else would one say they (i.e. justice and the just) are? (*ti an allo tis auto phaie einai;*)" (336a10). In the logical dimension, the critical significance of this question lies in the fact that it contains a twofold methodological hint, which conditions the achievement of the *Republic*'s heuristic goal. Within the context of Polemarchus's inherited morality, based on someone else's wisdom (on the words of poets and sages, 331d5, 334b4, 335e8—9), it reads: to understand what justice is, one must *speak differently* than before; in the further part of the dialogue, allegedly motivated by Thrasymachus's adequate observation, it will take the form of an incentive to *look differently*, maintained in its notorious suggestions to broaden one's view (*skopein*, *skepsesthai*, *theasasthai*) through the end of the dialogue.[16] But why should a difference in speaking/looking be advantageous and for what purpose? What could cause us to look at reality differently? Is falsehood an

[14] The pseudo-Platonic *Clitophon* (409c2—3) confirms that Socrates's students defined justice in terms of advantage: *to sumpheron*, *to deon*, *to ophelimon*, *to lusiteloun*; Plato's Socrates does not reject this view (*Republic* I 337c9—10). Cf. I 336c6—d2, where, ridiculed by Plato, Thrasymachus forbids Socrates from using these concepts, although he himself soon describes justice as *to sumpheron*.

[15] Thucydides provides evidence from various parts of the Greek *oikoumene*, especially in his Melian dialogue (V 89—107, 116); for more on this topic, see: W.K.C. Guthrie: *The Sophists*. Cambridge 1971, pp. 84—88, 92.

[16] Beginning with I 337c9, through optical facilitation (II 368c—d), a view of the highest subjects of science (VI 504d7), encouragement to look at the image of paideia as a cave (VII 514a—b), to Er's story of what he saw "in the other world" (*ekei*, X 614b7—8).

acceptable and effective tool for widening one's field of vision and changing one's way of speaking and thinking?

The starting point for these questions is embedded in the dramatic aspect of the dialogue's overarching question — "what else would justice be?" — formulated in such a way as to elicit the anticipated reaction from Thrasymachus and, in a caricatured exaggeration of the features of this well-known figure, to emphasize the real problem that motivates Plato's further investigations.

After hearing the question "what else would one say they (i.e. justice and the just) are?," Thrasymachus — an outstanding rhetor, whose ability to manipulate his listeners' feelings impressed Plato; a great explorer in the field of rhetoric whom Aristotle put on par with Teisias; master of agonic rhetoric admired by Dionysius of Halicarnassus for his composure and conciseness, precision and clarity of thought; teacher and orator praised by Cicero for his political wisdom[17] — emotionally aroused as if viewed in a distorting mirror of Plato's humor, is no longer able to refrain from intruding in on the conversation. Roaring like a wild animal (336b5—8) and demanding from Socrates a clear and precise answer (*saphos kai akribos*, 336d2—3) — though he is well aware that Socrates will not give it to him per his custom — Thrasymachus gives "another" (*heteran*) and "better" (*beltio*) definition of justice on his own (337d1—2). Though the content of his thesis may be a slogan based on Thucydides's account, already reflected in or in the process of being grounded in the views of, among others, Antiphon, Critias, Polos, and the mysterious Callicles from the *Gorgias*, in the version Plato attributes to Thrasymachus, famous for his precision and brevity, it has such distinctive qualities that one can assume that Plato sharpens what is most intriguing to him personally in his caricatured distortion.[18] In response to Socrates's open question containing the phrase "what else …" (*ti allo* …), the closed answer "nothing other than …" (*ouk allo*

[17] Respectively: Plato: *Phaedrus* 267c (DK B6); Aristotle: *Sophistic Refutations* 34 183b29—33 (DK A2); Dionysius of Halicarnassus: *Isaeus* 20 (DK A13), *Demosthenes* 3 (DK B1), *Lysias* 6 (DK A3); Cicero: *De Oratore* III 59.

[18] There are no non-Platonic testimonies allowing us to attribute the views of Plato's Thrasymachus to the historical Thrasymachus. It is not known, therefore, whether Thrasymachus of Chalcedon preached and professed views falling under TT. There are nonetheless testimonies about the style of his rhetorical presentations, which — despite Plato's application of caricatured distortion and exaggeration — allow us to reconcile it with the style of Plato's Thrasymachus. I discuss this issue of the authenticity and coherence of Plato's Thrasymachus, which has been widely debated in the literature, and especially the way in which Plato ridicules the historical Thrasymachus by constructing his character on the stage of the *Republic*, in the article *Thrasymachus of Chalcedon on the Platonic Stage*. "Journal of Ancient Philosophy" 2019, vol. 13 (1), pp. 1—39.

ti e …) is given, and the slogan resounding in the 5th/4th century in various versions is maximally concise: "… the advantage of the stronger." The rhetor Thrasymachus does not refer directly to the truth. He calls his categorical thesis "a very fine answer" (*apokrisis pankale*, 338a7), and with the limiting "nothing other than" assures readers of its perfect adequacy. The concise, but substantive description of political and moral reality that he gives to illustrate the accuracy of his thesis (338e—339a4) carries a strong suggestion that this is how one ought to look at reality. If you do not want to harbor naive illusions, there is no choice: either you will be in power and make decisions about law and justice that are advantageous for your rule,[19] or under threat of punishment you will be obedient to justice so established.

But is this option the only real one, or only one that determines our way of looking and thinking, which — after such guidance — becomes the factuality condensed into the adequate TT? If reality can be viewed differently, Thrasymachus's alternative will become only one of many aspects whose omission would lead to a realistic description narrowing the field of vision and limiting the potential of understanding despite the value of its realism. If we recall now the thought summarizing the entire dialogue, that the art of skillfully choosing a way of life is man's most important skill (X 618b6—c6), then Socrates's need expressed at the beginning of the dialogue to find out whether Thrasymachus is telling the truth (I 339a5) can be understood as an expression of the necessity to expand our field of vision to allow for more options. This need is justified by the existential weight of the matter — it concerns our happiness or unhappiness (I 354c3). Only a multitude of options allows you to make a good and thoughtful choice.

The way in which Plato checks the availability of other points of view is gradually revealed throughout the course of the *Republic*'s entire line of argument: it begins with Thrasymachus's *only* option and ends with the account of Er about souls who are faced with the choice of *numerous* options for a better life (X 618a2—3: "far more than" the number of the choosers). Between this mundane beginning and the eschatological ending lies the long instruction of looking and reasonable evaluation, during which the stimulus to look and think differently is caused by a peculiar tension between falsehood and advantage. It will cause a distinct spark in Book III in the form of the "noble falsehood"; however, identifying what it sheds new light on requires specifying the current *status quo*.

[19] Plato directly states what is advantageous for those in power in the *Laws* IV 714c3—4: staying in power.

The determining power of realism and description (I 339b—II 366b)

At this stage, we have Thrasymachus's *only* option before us. Despite the fact that it is allegedly "different," Socrates verifies its truthfulness in the old way, the way he usually does (both in early dialogues and in conversation with Polemarchus) — he uses the elenctic method. However, it is of little avail in its clash with the descriptive power of the valiant Thrasymachus's thesis. Even if Socrates did win individual battles fought at the higher level of "precise speech" (*akribes logos*), which Thrasymachus — himself admired by Dionysius of Halicarnassus for *akribeia* — had referred to under threat of being knocked out (I 340e1—341b10), at a lower level of description the power of TT has not been reduced (see Thrasymachus's next display of "descriptive ability" in I 343b1—344c8). There can be no doubt about this — in a moment it will be demonstrated by Plato's brothers, who play the role of Thrasymachus's advocates; for in their opinion, Thrasymachus too quickly gave up on further discussion with Socrates (II 358b2—3). They have a reason to think so: Socratic elenctics are barren in this case, since Socrates not only does not know himself what justice is anymore (I 354b9—c1), but he also did not convince either Thrasymachus — who still harbors no naive illusions about what he sees and describes[20] — or even Plato's brothers of another option (II 357a5—b4, 358b3—4). This is a serious problem, because after distancing himself from Cephalus's heritage of the wise poets of old, the only remaining alternative to Socratic ignorance — ridiculed by Thrasymachus as "that habitual irony of Socrates" (*he eiothyia eironeia Sokratous*, I 337a4—5), which is nothing new — is "this" (*houtosi*, I 343d2) view, which Thrasymachus advertised as "different" and "better."

For those who need a clear and precise direction, this can be a tempting proposition. They are represented by a group of young people who are listening in to the conversation and who, as we know from elsewhere, did

[20] The historical Thrasymachus — most likely a patriot from Chalcedon, since his grave will be there (Athenaeus: *Deipnosophists* 10 454F = DK A8) — knows well the political morality of imperial Athens manifested towards weaker *poleis*, among them Chalcedon. As demonstrated by Stephen White, the longest extant fragment of Thrasymachus's writings, i.e. the "Proem for a Speech in a Political Crisis" relayed to us by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Dem*. 3 = DL B1), is a testimony to the Chalcedonian's political engagement on behalf of the political autonomy of his native *polis* (S.A. White: *Thrasymachus the Diplomat*. "Classical Philology" 1995, vol. 90, pp. 307—327). In this context, Thrasymachus could not have been an advocate for the thesis Plato attributes to him, campaigning of behalf of its advantages; he would more readily resemble a disillusioned diagnostician who, knowing how things really are, supports the weaker side.

not choose Socrates as their teacher.[21] The fact that these particular people were placed in a dialogue that took place somewhere near the end of the Peloponnesian War (before 404bc) is intriguing from the perspective of the knowledge of the first readers of the dialogue, which was published approximately 25 years later. They know what its characters could not know. As Lysias — another of Cephalus's sons, who is listening in to the conversation — will report, in 404 BC his family became the victim of a purge carried out in the name of law and justice by the authorities at the time, aristocratic oligarchs: Polemarchus is killed; Cephalus's great estate is confiscated[22]; Niceratus, who for some reason is mentioned by Plato in the company of Polemarchus and Adeimantus, is also killed then (I 327c2); things are no better for Socrates: in the year 399, the democratic authorities in power condemn him — this time in the name of (their) justice — to death.

The ignorance of the dialogue's participants about these facts of the future — which demonstrates that although TT can be rebutted at the dialectic level, it will still work in reality — is compensated for by observations made by Plato's two older brothers, which are of a general-moral and general-cultural nature and transcend the level of historical events. The first is made by the younger, but "most courageous in everything" Glaucon (II 357a3), who conducts two thought experiments in the field of moral psychology: using the experiences with the Gyges ring and simulating the fate of a just man who is widely regarded as unjust, and an unjust man who is regarded as just. In both cases, the conclusions confirm TT. In the first experiment, making us invisible to others — "no one […] would be so adamant as to stick by justice" (360b4—5); only "fear of suffering injustice" at the hands of the other (stronger) party forces the consensus that the law punish all unjust acts (360d5—7; with a reference to 358e2—359a4); in the second — "it's no longer hard […] to complete the speech by a description of the kind of life that awaits each" (361d7—e1). Glaucon does not give the causes of this state of affairs: in supporting TT, which refers to political

[21] Clitophon chose Thrasymachus, because the rhetor says concrete things, while Socrates either does not know or does not want to share his knowledge (*Clitophon* 410c—d); likewise Niceratus, who, having the opportunity to study with Socrates, prefers other teachers (*Laches* 200c—d); Charmantides II chose Isocrates — though it is debatable whether in *Republic* I 328b7 Plato is naming his contemporary Charmantides II (so S. White: *Thrasymachus the Diplomat*, p. 326), or the latter's grandfather Charmantides I, a contemporary of Cephalus (so D. Nails: *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*. Indianapolis 2002, pp. 89—90), it is certain that Charmantides I's grandson belonged to the group of those who were looking for a teacher, but who did not see one in Socrates.

[22] Lysias 12.5.

realities, he merely supplements it with behavioral facts that are simpler and more primal than those at work in the political reality. On their basis, he shows that injustices committed in secret are more beneficial to their perpetrators than justice is. The question of whether these facts result from nature or culture is not asked, but the answer will be given shortly along with a blurring of this dichotomy, which the sophists so strongly emphasize. It is the possibility of its blurring that gives potential to the *Republic*'s entire line of argument, as it will reveal a critical point in TT, diagnosed later in the dialogue as the *pseudos* indispensable to political life and used in this indispensability as a tool that Socrates will ultimately employ against TT. Moreover, having undermined TT with its own strength, he will not put this tool aside, but will improve it and change its purpose. It is little wonder, since to this day, no one has yet confirmed that you can create a political order without an admixture of *pseudos*,[23] though many defenders of truth are likely outraged at *pseudos*. But what truth? — we should ask not just after Karl Mannheim,[24] but after Plato himself.

The answer given in the *Republic*, set within a context outlined by Plato's brothers, lies somewhere at the intersection of culture and nature, truth and falsehood — an intersection imperceptible in the concise TT. For now, no participant in the dialogue seems to show awareness of the fact that the main problem posed by the rebuttal of TT and conviction of the opposite option lies in the indispensability of *pseudos* in ethical and political life. One can doubt whether Thrasymachus himself is aware of this. Plato awakens it in the reader gradually, and the breakthrough comes in the blurring of the line between nature and culture that has just occurred.

It is done by Adeimantus, Plato's eldest brother, who — in accordance with the fashionable method of antilogic — wants to supplement Glaucon's argument with its opposite, the praise of justice (II 362e2). Thus, when Glaucon demonstrated injustice on the basis of behavioral facts, Adeimantus, to demonstrate justice, presents cultural facts. However, he is unable to create an antilogy. It turns out that the antitheses of culture—nature and justice—injustice are unsustainable, since Adeimantus, in describing cultural models that praise justice, uncovers the norms and beliefs motivating unjust behavior. He starts from the very beginning: from fathers' instructions to their children (from 362e4); then he mentions what shaped the fathers themselves and will further shape their children as participants

---

[23] By substituting the modern term "ideology" for *pseudos*, Wardy demonstrates this impossibility well (R. Wardy: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology*, pp. 120—124, 132—138), referring approvingly to Schofield's interpretation (M. Schofield: *The Noble Lie*).

[24] See K. Mannheim: *Ideologie und Utopie*. Frankfurt am Main 1929 (esp. chap. 2).

in public life, i.e. the opinions about the gods passed down from generation to generation by Hesiod and Homer (363a6—c2); he then pointedly describes the widespread Orphic beliefs about the afterlife and atonement to the gods (363c3—e4); he ends with the words of poets and non-poets alike, who all speak "with one tongue" (364a1): justice in itself is beautiful, but since the opinions others have of us are the measure of our value, injustices unseen by others (i.e. ones that do not lessen their opinion of us) are more advantageous, that is more effective in satisfying our desire for more (*pleonexia*). Thus, Adeimantus, in incorporating the contemporary norms that are forced upon everyone from childhood to old age into a synoptic outline — moreover, describing the real human behavior that results from them (365d1—366b2) — leaves no doubt as to why people think and behave as they do in Glaucon's experiment.

He does not even have to say explicitly that TT results from a specific cultural reality — one that is total and determines human behavior; that as such it is an apt description of what is; that it is an abbreviation of content based on cultural and behavioral foundations, which has not been clarified by Thrasymachus with his famous concise style. He also lessens the surprise as to why Socrates's elenchus only scratches the surface of this content, wanting but unable to grasp the reasoning that justifies it. There is no logical argument in descriptions; there is only a picture of variously motivated events and unavoidable mechanisms. Regardless of the sharpness and scope of the description, as well as Socrates's elenctic efficiency, an image (*eidolon*) and an argument (*logos*) alone do not yet give an understanding of reality — as we read in a famous passage of the *Seventh Letter*, which reveals an awareness of Platonic methodology: "But it is the methodical study of all these stages [i.e. all disclosures of things], passing in turn from one to another, up and down, which with difficulty implants knowledge" (343e).

It is at this moment in the dialogue, when TT has gained a firm grounding in reality thanks to Plato's brothers, that he suggests a way to confront it: one must come down to its level and identify those motivations and mechanisms. Thus, without questioning the fact of cultural norms, he diagnoses what these norms really are: "what is said" (*legomena*) about virtue and vice, people and gods (II 365a5; b5). We can draw the conclusion ourselves: since the beliefs implemented since childhood create a moral and political reality through words, TT's realism is based on some kind of "idealism" ("idealism" is understood colloquially here as referring to a certain ideology dealing with hidden things).

If Plato's Thrasymachus, in formulating the allegedly "different" and "better" definition of justice, was unaware of its ideological foundation, he is unlikely to be credible as a teacher, regardless of the extent of the

descriptive potential of his teaching. What is more, in accusing Socrates of being naïve for having contrary beliefs (I 343a2—9), Thrasymachus may be even more naïve if he thinks he can see things as they are without succumbing to any illusions. It now turns out that his "different" and "better" thesis is simply an expression of a ubiquitous ideology prevailing from ancient times — going all the way back to the poems of Homer and Hesiod — which during the Peloponnesian War found its full expression in the realities falling under Thrasymachus's definition of justice. Interpreting the *Republic* from the perspective of an antinomy between "Thrasymachus's realism" and "Socrates's/Plato's idealism" is therefore the wrong way to go.

Reset: Is morality without ideology possible? (II 366b3—378e)

When Adeimantus, summarizing his description of cultural reality and encouraging Socrates to meet the TT once again at this level of implemented standards, asks: "After all that has been said, by what device, Socrates, will a man who has some power — of soul, money, body or family — be made willing to honor justice and not laugh when he hears it praised" (II 366b7—c7) — he really expects Socrates to show that the ideology presented is "false" (*pseude*, c4), though with real results: it is due to them that most people are not "willingly just; but because of a lack of courage, or old age, or some other weakness" (366d1—2), for example the fear of punishment emphasized by Glaucon. He thus suggests that Thrasymachus grasped real human behavior with his thesis, but proceeded from false beliefs about the gods, people, and the afterlife. At the root of this suggestion lies the assumption that it is not only possible — though "there is not one who has ever" done it (366e3) — to talk about justice and injustice outside of a theological and utilitarian context (367e1—5), but also that these matters can be spoken of completely without falsehood. Is this not another instance of naïveté — this time on the part of Plato's brothers, which is pointed out by Plato in the *Republic*?

It certainly was not the quality of their uncle Critias, whose shadow — that of Polemarchus's and Nikias's assassin standing at the head of the Thirty — darkens the setting of the entire dialogue.[25] Glaucon's description of both people's behavior under the influence of the Gyges ring making

[25] Friedrich Schleiermacher recognized the allusion to him in II 368a1—4, where a fragment of an elegy praising Plato's brothers — probably authored by Critias — is quoted (as cited in: J. Adam: *The Republic of Plato*. Cambridge 1902, p. 90).

them invisible, as well as the conventionality of law, is significantly convergent with the description of the human condition in Critias's *Sisyphus* (DK B25): although the people made punitive laws, they committed injustice secretly (v. 11). Then a wise man invented the immortal gods, so that by their omniscience they would elicit the fear of punishment. "With this story he presented the most seductive (*hediston*) of teachings, concealing the truth with lying words (*pseudei*)" (v. 24—26).[26]

In this context, Critias's vision of reality, in which the motif of "the most seductive" falsehood about the gods is an indispensable element of political order, the task Plato bids his brothers to set before Socrates gains importance. He is to present a speech that is "different" and "better" not only than TT, but than all the previous speeches — including, we can assume, the writings of Critias. Adeimantus even threatens: if it does not replace the current cultural norms implemented "from the beginning" and "from youth" (367a1—2), he will say that Socrates agrees with Thrasymachus (367c2). However, the fact that on the stage of the *Republic* Plato's brothers believe in the possibility of speeches (moral and cultural content) free from falsehood and the dogma of punishing gods does not mean that Plato holds the same beliefs. What does he do with the faith of his brothers?

Because the task Socrates faces is to "defend" (*boetheia*, 368c1—5) justice against prevalent cultural norms and opinions instilled and continuing to be instilled since childhood — culminating in TT — Socrates, to check whether it is possible to inculcate alternative content in an entire community from childhood and, above all, whether and why any content should be inculcated at all, must first suspend the "bindingness" of the existing content — execute a sort of "worldview reset." It will succeed if one adopts a point-of-view that will free the mind from thinking in the categories of this content. It is possible to do so by looking at it as an element of a broader structure and in relation to other elements, i.e. in its political and social role. Socrates uses this method to respond to Thrasymachus's challenge for a second time, that is, after his unconvincing elenchus in Book I. In accordance with this method, he first logically dissembles the political structure and goes back to its *arche* (in the sense of both a logical beginning and the principle sustaining the political in its existence). To paraphrase Plato's illustrative language: he encourages us to look at how a *polis* is generated from the outset and gives us hope that by observing this process, we will glimpse what we are looking for; as Plato says: if we see "its justice coming into being, and its injustice" (369a5—b7), we will be

[26] Translated by W.K.C. Guthrie (*Sophists*, p. 243).

able to say, “what each in itself does to the man who has it — whether it is noticed by gods and human beings or not” (367e3—4). Therefore, tracking the process, i.e. analyzing what is happening at the gignetic level, has heuristic value. In line with the stated purpose of the dialogue, it is to reveal that the cultural content grounding TT is false (see 366c4).

Socrates notices the principle/beginning (*arche*) of the *polis* immediately, in the first step (369b5). In the process of recreating the logical genesis, it must — since it is a logical beginning — clearly impose itself on thought as the basis of the political from the very outset. This principle is the insufficiency of each individual human being, i.e. the indispensable need that motivates our thinking and action. Observed in its necessary growth, beyond the categories of good/evil, “our need” (*he hemetera chreia*) creates the *polis* “from the beginning” (*ex arches*) (369c9—10). At this most fundamental level, this process is inevitable and automatic; the only thing that depends on us at our current level — that of observers — is either the willingness to see and discover the mechanisms of this process, or the lack of such willingness. Responding positively to Socrates’s renewed encouragement to look and seek (369a1—7, 372e2—8), we gradually notice that the *polis* “quite necessarily” exceeds the “boundary of the necessary” (373d10—e1) and requires, in addition to many other resources serving to satisfy its necessarily increasing unnecessary needs, poets and teachers (373b7, c2), i.e., according to the description given by Plato’s brothers, those who convey cultural norms to the community. Swollen and sick from its excessive needs, the *polis* also needs doctors (373d1); immediately afterwards we see the genesis of war — refraining, as Socrates suggests, from assessing whether war is good or bad (373e2—6), since it is part of an inevitable process. The first evaluation is carried out along with the need for a group of soldiers. Because they must defend what the *polis* possesses and acquire what it is still in need of (374a1—2) — it can be judged that this is the most important group for being or not being a *polis* (374d8), and therefore its members require unique, appropriate natures (374d8—e4) and a proper upbringing (376c7—8). At this logical stage in the development of political life, we see a moment of possible interference in this necessary process, at which moment this particular possibility becomes an expression of that necessity. Plato emphasizes it by switching the roles of Socrates and his interlocutors: from passive observers revealing their needs, they become interactive viewers, because they are responsible for the selection and education of soldiers/guards, carried out in accordance with the mechanisms of the political process discovered thus far (374e6). But this change of roles is simply the next stage in the necessary process of growing needs, played out on the stage of the *Republic*. If the *polis* is to continue to exist — and

the condition of its being or not being are guards who are good, i.e. adequate to its needs — then at this stage of its development it is *necessary* to interfere in these guards' condition — in their individual inclinations and needs — directing them towards preserving the *polis*'s existence. Paideia is such an interference. Therefore, someone else — a non-guard — must undertake the selection and education of guards appropriate to the needs of the *polis*. Without this, the observers will lose the object they are observing, i.e. the *polis*. This does not mean, however, that from the moment of this intervention into a necessary process Plato is already "designing an ideal state."[27] He continues to guide the reader down the gignetic route — we are constantly observing the *polis*'s process of coming into existence — and the moment when he calls the *polis* emerging before our eyes "a pattern" in heaven "for the man who wants to see and found a city within himself on the basis of what he sees" (IX 592b2—3) constitutes *only* another structural stage in the emergence of the *polis*, preceded by the equally necessary phase of degeneration of the "just *polis*" (from VIII 545d1).[28]

It is at this moment in the dialogue, after the basic structure of the political — which is in fact an inexorable logic of needs — has been revealed, generating, in turn, the need for involvement in the paideutic process, when Socrates reveals two phenomena, resulting from this structure and closely related to one another, that will determine the course of his commitment, consistent with the logic of the needs that fund political life. Using an interpretative abbreviation, but with Plato's phraseology preserved, let us call them the phenomena of "canine philosophy" and "noble falsehood." Though both terms seem to be mysterious thought constructs or even bizarre hybrids, on closer inspection it turns out that the mechanisms they designate are just as indispensable and striking in their

[27] This phrase is borrowed from Giovanni Reale, who states in a peremptory tone: "The only correct perspective for interpreting the *Republic* that remains is the one indicated above: *Plato wants to know and form a perfect state in order to know and form a perfect man*" (English translation after the Polish edition of G. Reale: *Myśl starożytna*. Trans. E.I. Zieliński. Lublin 2003, p. 201).

[28] If we think that in the *Republic* Plato has risen to the level of an "ideal," or immutable state, which has achieved its goal, we lose sight of what Plato wants to show us when he broadens Thrasymachus's perspective. The heuresis of reality, provoked and initiated by the deterministic and categorical vision of reality condensed into TT, is still taking place. It also continues at the level of the necessary mechanisms of the political, with the difference that from here on in — after Plato has already introduced the reader to the paideutic and cultural level — these are mechanisms resulting from the plasticity and susceptibility of social tissue to necessary cultural and normative implementations. In other words: to tackle the possible "falsehoods" underlying TT, Plato shows the moment and scope of possible interference into the necessary process of the political.

reality as the basic needs mentioned thus far: from food and clothing to war (from II 369d1 to 373e2).

It cannot be denied that soldiers/guards should be dangerous towards their enemies and gentle towards their own, i.e. embody a basic feature confirmed in its reality by nature in thoroughbred, well-behaved dogs (375e2—4). And since it manifests itself in the dog's dislike of someone it does not know ("although it never had any bad experience with him") and gentleness towards one it knows ("even if it never had a good experience with him") — this is a "truly philosophic" quality (376b1). Such a dog "distinguishes friendly from hostile looks by nothing other than by having learned (*katamathein*) the one and being ignorant of the other […]. And so, how can it be anything other than a lover of learning (*philomathes*) since it defines what's its own and what's alien by knowledge and ignorance? […] but aren't love of learning (*philomathes*) and love of wisdom (*philosophon*) the same?" (376b3—b9). Regardless of why Plato emphasized the attribute of *philosophon* using an entertaining play on words under the guise of reasoning,[29] it is undeniable that even if he ascribed a noble attribute to a condition considered trivial and mentally limited from the point of view of Socratic philosophy — since from the former it follows that a "dog philosopher" does not love what he does not know and treats what he does not know as foreign and hostile[30] — the ability to be gentle with his own and

[29] The play on words refers to the fact that a dog likes (*philein*) what it has come to know well (*kata-mathein*, also meaning "to learn"), and is therefore a lover of what it knows (*philo-mathes*). The example of dogs, often highlighted later in the dialogue (see fn. 45 below), may be an allusion not so much to Cynic philosophy (see J. Adam: *The Republic of Plato*, p. 108), as to the mental condition of the Spartiates recognized in the guards, famous for their hostility towards foreigners (*xenelasia*), which Plato ironically calls "canine" wisdom (cf. a critique of this attitude in the *Laws* 950b and in the *Protagoras* 342c). But it may also refer to the trivial circumstance that one or both of his brothers bred or liked dogs, in reference to which Plato constantly makes jibes, adding a vividness to the presence of the brothers on the *Republic*'s stage, especially if the brothers could be the first readers of the first versions of the *Republic* (they were probably still alive in 382; for information on the dating, see: D. Nails: *The People of Plato*, pp. 2—3, 154). This point does not contradict Jacob Howland (J. Howland: *Glaucon's Fate: Plato's* Republic *and the Drama of the Soul*, "Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy" 2014, vol. 29.1, pp. 113—136; Idem: *Glaucon's Fate: History, Myth, and Character in Plato's* Republic. Philadelphia 2018): following a conjecture by Mark Munn (M. Munn: *The School of History: Athens in the Age of Socrates*. Berkeley—Los Angeles—London 2000, p. 239) that Glaucon died at the side of Critias "The Tyrant" in 403, he proposes to read the *Republic* as a memorializing of Plato's brother and "the tragedy of Socrates' unsuccessful struggle" to save him.

[30] Cf. the description of philosophers given by Diotima, the woman who taught Socrates philosophy: those who love "are prepared to have their own feet and hands cut off if they feel these belongings to be harmful. The fact is, I suppose, that each person does

fierce with his enemies is the primary condition for the survival of the *polis*. Maintaining this basic ability serves the process of selecting and educating guards: it is undeniable that a situation in which guards would become hostile to their fellow citizens would be destructive not only to the *polis*, but also to themselves (see 375c1—4: brave and strong by nature, they would kill one another). The urgent question, then, is how to develop and maintain this ability; what paideutic content can be so effective at the outset — because it is already clear that it is not TT, made manifest in the battles of the Peloponnesian War pitting Greeks against Greeks. The issue of the truth or falsehood of this content is irrelevant in the face of what is at stake at this level of the logical genesis of the political — the being or not being of the *polis*, which depends on the effectiveness of the guards'/soldiers' paideia.

At this point in the political process, in which — after revealing the logic of needs, initiated by Socrates's invitation: "Come, now […] let's make a city in speech from the beginning. Our need, as it seems, will make it" (369c9—10) — Socrates has become an active participant, this invitation is reformulated: "Come, then, like men telling tales in a tale (*en mytho mythologountes*) and at their leisure, let's educate the men in speech" (376d9—10). But just as he directed the first — accenting what influences us, i.e. nature — at Glaucon, who proved himself to be an expert on behavioral mechanisms, he directs the second — accenting what we influence, i.e. culture — at Adeimantus, who presented the cultural basis of the content of TT, which describes these behaviors as *concisely* and categorically as possible. This change of interlocutors is as significant for understanding Plato's argument as is the earlier change in roles from passive to interactive viewers. It was Adeimantus who finally put Socrates on the task of defending justice against TT and prompted him on how to do so: it must be demonstrated that the cultural content upon which TT is built is false (see II 366c4 once again). Looking now at the origins of the *polis* from the *maximally broad* perspective outlined above, it is reasonable to doubt whether knowing that something is false is enough to deprive it of value and contrast it with the victorious truth.

Very quickly, since already at the very beginning of the demonstration of the paideutic process, Socrates dispels this noble veritative illusion of Adeimantus. He draws Adeimantus's attention to a phenomenon that he probably looked at often, but did not see in it what is now crucial for the defense of justice against TT. It is the nature of the paideia, which under the complexity of its layers and parts hides falsehood like a stone fruit — in

not cherish his belongings except where a man calls the good his own property and the bad another's; since what men love is simply and solely the good" (*Symposium* 205e5—206a1).

other words, precisely what Adeimantus suggested to consider a disqualifying attribute of TT. The paideia consists of two parts: "gymnastic for bodies and music for the soul" (376e3—4); music includes speeches (*logoi*), of which one kind is true and the other is false/fabricated (*pseudos*). In consequence: "Must they be educated in both, but first in the false (*en tois pseudesin*)" (377a1—2). Adeimantus, who had previously shown a great deal of knowledge of cultural norms and their impact on social morality, is — at this basic, elementary stage — probably shocked by this conclusion: "I don't understand how you mean that" (377a3). The confusion passes quickly when Socrates replaces the term "falsehoods" — which is repulsive to Adeimantus, as it probably is to many of us — with the synonymous "myths/fairy tales": "Don't you understand […] that first we tell tales (*muthous*) to children? And surely they are, as a whole, false (*pseudos*), though there are true things in them too" (377a4—7). Just as reason does not allow us to deny that a good guardian is dangerous to enemies and gentle to his own, we likewise do not deny that children's first contact with culture is through fairy tales, which, speaking to a large extent about what does not exist, combine truth with falsehood in an attempt to get their intended message across. Thus, *pseudos* reveals its functional presence at the very base of social and political life that is raising children. Therefore, it turns out that from the perspective of the genesis of political life, the task that Adeimantus put before Socrates is wrongly formulated: it is not enough to prove the falsehood of beliefs underlying TT to refute this thesis, since it is highly probable that a political order based on the opposite thesis must also refer to some falsehood/fabrication at the paideutic starting point.

Plato leaves no doubt as to this question. The first step in taking on TT must be to perceive the ineradicable rootedness of falsehood in political life. The next question concerns the content of this falsehood. Since the souls of children are the most flexible and susceptible to any implementations that have "a tendency to become hard to eradicate and unchangeable" (378e1), the quality of these implementations subordinated to a specific paideutic goal is vital for paideia. If they are to be contrary to content resulting in TT's "realities," it is necessary to pass fairy tales and inventions (*pseude*) on to children other than those by Hesiod and Homer about the gods, resulting in a different "reality." Hesiod and Homer, lying "not prettily" (*me kalos*, 377d9; 381d5, e1—e3), passed down "the biggest lie about the biggest things" (377e6) — i.e. about fights between the gods, patricide, castration, deceit, family hostilities, and many others, which make a great excuse or model of behavior for people, especially the strong, who, with an eye toward their own advantage, dictate the rights of the weaker. If "we are somehow going to persuade them that no citizen ever was angry with

another and that to be so is not holy" (378c6—8) — despite TT[31] — then the guards should be educated with the help of other myths. Because if you cannot replace the "ugly myths" with beautiful myths, TT will retain its power and timeliness. Either we accept the ugly *pseude* underlying TT, or some alternative *gennaion pseudos* (noble falsehood).

Is there a third option? Is the category of truth — paradoxically — an apparent tool for overthrowing the *pseude* underlying TT? Why cannot falsehood be eliminated with truth? In the further part of the dialogue, Plato strips readers of the illusions contained in what is assumed by the question in regard to the purely veritative value of cultural content, thus revealing the ideological foundation of the supposedly realistic TT. By not arming himself with the weapon of truth to fight falsehood, he allows us to discover the truth about political reality.

Taming *pseudos* (II 378e—III 388e)

Plato demonstrates the indispensability of falsehood in moral and political life within a theological context — in this respect in accordance with Critias's *Sisyphus*. Listing the "biggest lies" and demonstrating their "ugliness" in existing theological myths (i.e. those concerning "the biggest things," 377e6—7), and on the other hand by contrasting "beautiful" theological patterns (*hoi tupoi peri theologias*, 379a5—6), Plato — though he calls them laws (*nomoi*, 380c4—7, 383c7) — not only does not refer to truth, but disarming the repelling power of the word *pseudos* and assigning it the attribute of therapeutic utility, he does not exclude the *pseudos* component from those beautiful patterns/laws.

While Plato's "beautiful patterns" can be reconciled with the dialectically uncovered "reality of ideas"[32] — according to which combining the concept of god with the concept of evil (in all its various Homeric and Hesiodic exemplifications: mutual battles and hatred of the gods, lies and deceit, etc.) is a dialectical contradiction — and therefore given

[31] Cf. I 343c1—344c8: a concrete illustration of the consequence of TT that justice, as the advantage of the stronger, is harmful and misfortunate for the weak, which as a result places happiness among the advantages of the stronger.

[32] So Y.-J. Sun: *Lies in Plato's* Republic*: Poems, Myth, and Noble Lie*. "*ΠΕΓΗ/FONS* II" 2017, pp. 87—108: at 93—98 — what constitutes the criterion for rejecting the falsehoods of the gods is not utility, but "fixed relations between notions," or truth as compatibility with intelligible reality.

a veritative value, the fact remains that in separating the concept of god from the concepts of evil and lie/falsehood, Plato joins both to our human reality: "the god is not the cause of all things, but of the good" (380c8—9); "the demonic and the divine are wholly free from lie (*apseudes*)" (382e6); and since "the things that are good for us are fewer than those that are bad," therefore god is the cause of few things (379c2—7). Analogously, moving god away from falsehood — in the radical form of the myth in the *Statesman*: away from the political element in general — results in leaving rich layers of evil and falsehood at humans' disposal, with the suggestion that in order to minimize the former, the latter should be reasonably used. That both layers are not synonymous, and can therefore be opposed to one another, becomes clear when freeing the god from all falsehood, leaving falsehood to human beings.

This process is accomplished through diairesis of *pseudos* in passage 382a1—e6, which constitutes part of the theological argument. In the initial, semantically-broad concept of *pseudesthai* (382a1) two meanings are distinguished and specified; these, in accordance with the correctness of the diairetic method, exhaust its denotation: 1) true falsehood (*to hos alethos pseudos*, 382a4; a synonym for *to onti pseudos* — "the real lie," 382c3), which is "the ignorance in the soul" (*he ente psyche agnoia*), despised by "all gods and human beings" (382a5—b4); 2) mixed falsehood (*ou panu akratos pseudos*), which is to be found "in speeches," is "a kind of imitation of the affection in the soul, a phantom of it that comes into being after it" (382b8—c1).[33] By repeating and categorically stating that "the real lie," i.e. that "in the soul," is hated by gods and human beings (382c3—4), Plato moves it out of the area of discussion, focusing solely on "the lie in speeches." However hermetic the above description may sound, let us leave it this way — in accordance with Plato's methodology — until it gains a clear meaning at the appropriate stage of the argument. For the order that the reader who follows Plato's argument is working out is one of the vehicles for the argument's heuristic and persuasive power. At the current stage, along with the question: "When and for whom is it [i.e. falsehood in speeches] also useful, so as not to deserve hatred?" (382c6—7) — this kind of *pseudos* is introduced into the center of political argument, which, motivated by the desire to learn "whether Thrasymachus is telling the truth," goes on — for now — without any reference to truth. In other words, in

[33] Cf. V. Harte: *Plato's Politics of Ignorance*, pp. 146—7, n. 22, who interprets this passage not through the prism of the diairetic division, but through the different grammatical voices of the verb *pseudesthai* — in a fluid transition from the middle voice in 382a1 to the passive voice in 382b2.

order to know how things really are, Plato proceeds to study the utility of falsehood.

The banality that exposes the weakness of Cephalus's truth-referencing morality appears again: "the lie in speeches" is useful against enemies or crazy friends like a medicine (*pharmakon*, 382c10) that has the effect of averting or reversing (*apotrope*, 382c9) a destructive phenomenon. After talking to Thrasymachus and revealing the cultural (ideological) foundations of his thesis, Plato adds another function of *pseudos* that should not surprise or outrage the already prepared reader: "because we don't know where the truth about ancient things [i.e. the oldest gods] lies," we liken "the lie (*pseudos*) to the truth as best we can" (382d1—3). Thus, both needs — that of treating illnesses and of talking about things that we do not really know about (the gods) — are indispensable needs of the human condition, in contradiction to the concept of god. For god has neither enemies or crazy friends, nor ignorance. Thus, only he is "wholly free from lie[s]" (382e6), because he has no need for falsehood. Regardless of the protests of truth advocates, those who closely follow the process of the *polis*'s emergence with Plato's Socrates must state that at a certain stage, for a certain purpose, a person needs "the lie in speech."

This need is clearly demonstrated in the passage on eschatological beliefs. People tend to believe that certain things exist, especially the house of Hades (III 386b). Without knowing anything about him, they think his house is terrible, and depict this judgment graphically in myths. These, in turn, by taking root in people's souls, influence human behavior and through it create reality.[34] In view of this state of affairs, Socrates the educator, who takes factuality into account, does not deny the *need* to talk about hidden and unknown things, but recommends filling these speeches with other, more useful content.[35] Beautiful content, on account of its usefulness, would sound as follows in the form of a basic *tupos*: Hades is not

[34] See III 377b, 391e: theology shapes people's character.

[35] In III 386b10—c1, Socrates calls popular judgments about the terrible Hades untrue and useless. This does not mean, however, that in speaking of Hades, Socrates is referring to truth. Hades falls into the category of "ancient" objects that man does not know about, but has a need to speak of (II 382d1—3). Since the word "truth" is used here in the context of an appeal to poets and myth makers, it may have a rhetorical meaning: to strengthen the compatibility of the myth's content with the basic *tupoi* (ideological norms), identified with the laws (383c7); similarly in III 391e1. Heroes, such as Achilles, are another example of things that people need to believe exist. In this case as well, Socrates the educator does not dismiss the need itself, because in its necessity it is a fact around which a myth emerges, but directs the response to this need using nicer — because less harmful — content than Homer's myths (III 390e—391e).

terrible. Unless — Socrates adds — someone will persuade us "with another and finer one" (III 388e3).[36]

Pseudos as a heuristic factor: Therapeutic lies

How is *gennaion pseudos* implemented? (III 389a—415b)

In tracking the process of the *polis*'s emergence, one can perceive many necessary mechanisms, hidden on the surface of the finished, static construct. Thus, we see that it develops in time with the necessary answers to both necessary and unnecessary needs (see 373d10—e1); we also see that some common beliefs shaping the mentality of the entire community are actually false, and we learn about the functionality of falsehood. The falsehood indispensable in the phase of the *polis*'s disease[37] is an apotropaic drug (*pharmakon*) with a double function: it both prevents destructive behavior and replaces destructive theological *tupoi* with useful ones. The roots of this medicinal herb grow from a place where nature (an automatic response to necessary needs) intertwines with culture (the more or less thought-out creation of patterns, *tupoi*, in accordance with which this response is formulated) — like *apeiron* and *peras* at the level of ontology. On this maximally large scale of political history, the perspective focused in TT as the only correct one (cf. I 343d2: "this is the way you must look,"

[36] Ernst Cassirer's strongly emphasized view that Plato is fighting myth and excludes it "from his *Republic*, that is to say, from his system of education" (E. Cassirer: *The Myth of State*. New Haven 1946, p. 77), seems to be the result of abstracting from a problem situation internal to the dialogue. According to it, Plato justifies the necessity of myths in social and political life to fight the ugly myth — i.e. the one that shapes the cultural mentality reflected in the factuality condensed in TT. He clearly states his goal in a paideutic and cultural recommendation: "We'll forbid them to say such things [i.e. like Thrasymachus, that "justice is someone else's good," see fn. 38 below] and order them to sing and to tell tales (*mythologein*) about the opposites of these things" (III 392b4—6). This passage leaves no doubt that Plato treats the beliefs, whose advocate he made the political realist — Thrasymachus, as a mythology that maybe other myths can oppose. That the current conversation will also be a myth, is directly stated by Socrates in II 376d9.

[37] The education of the guards takes place during the stage of the diseased *polis*: 372e8, 399e6, 404e—408e, 410a.

skopeisthai houtosi hre) turns out to be not only a limited option, but also one that conceals previously unrecognized layers of falsehood contained in related theological and anthropological content under a façade of realism.[38] And just as during the short conversation with Cephalus the *pseudos* theme easily overthrew the traditional understanding of justice, so now, in a long response to Thrasymachus's challenge radicalized by Plato's brothers, this motif reveals itself as a tool that can deal with TT using its own potential. Socrates uses an overt falsehood to uncover the falsehood hidden at the base of TT's description. Thus, he puts us before a choice different from Thrasymachus's alternative of strength and happiness, or weakness and misfortune. The new form of the alternative is: since Thrasymachus's ugly falsehood can be opposed to a beautiful falsehood, which of these falsehoods would we prefer to harbor if harboring a falsehood was necessary; at the same time, the category of personal advantage that is key for Thrasymachus is retained in Socrates's new alternative: in III 392c1—4 he confronts us with the task of considering what is more profitable "by nature" (*phusei lusiteloun*).[39] The moment of decision is preceded by long instruction on looking and thinking, which covers such a broad perspective that the concise TT appears in it as a dependent aspect. But although the choice between ugliness and beauty may seem easy, the key question is whether beautiful falsehood can be implemented at all, because it is already obvious that the ugly falsehood easily filled human minds. The chances of overthrowing TT hinge on this possibility.

Before Socrates proposes the content of a beautiful, "noble" (*gennaion*) falsehood — and assesses the chances of its implementation — he commits a surprising act. As quickly as he revealed the necessity of falsehood in political life, he again hides it under the lining of political fabric: he declares that the guards must value the truth "above all else" (*peri pollou*, III 389b2). It is no wonder — because since falsehood is a *pharmakon*, which can heal as well as poison, it can be used only by doctors who know how to use it. In the sick *polis*, these "doctors" are those in power; "while all the rest must not put their hands to anything of the sort" (389b2—9). The sick patient cannot lie to the doctor. Thus, the *pseudos* in its useful function is now revealed as the hidden core of the *polis*, visible and accessible only to those in power. Thrasymachus noticed that the rulers tell the ruled to call their own advantage "justice" and use the power of law to punish

[38] So that there is no doubt that Plato has TT's ideological assumptions in mind the whole time, he directly recalls one of its versions: "justice is the other man's good" (III 392b3—4), literally quoting Thrasymachus (I 343c3), who had also been quoted by Adeimantus (II 367c2—3).

[39] Cf. fn. 14 above.

what is incompatible (cf. I 338e4—6); Socrates, in turn, recognizes that the rulers must order the ruled to call a lie a "sin," and an even greater one than a sick person's lie to the doctor (*meizon hamartema*, III 389c2) — and they must then, in consequence, punish liars (389d4).[40] But for us, engaged observers, this prohibition is a sign that under the threat of punishment lies something critical for the survival of the *polis*.

In addition to the false content,[41] there is another political determinant — the form of this content (*lexis*, 392c6) — which also requires careful attention and assessment (*skepteon*, 394c8). Before Socrates the educator proposes an alternative falsehood to the falsehoods of his contemporary Thrasymachian culture, he takes preparatory steps in the face of the undoubtedly risky task of replacing existing falsehood with new falsehood. 1) First, he bans citizens from using false content. 2) Then he evaluates the forms of transferring cultural content in general (III 392c—402d), since not only "what must be said" (*ha lekteon*), but also "how it must be said" (*hos/hopos lekteon*, 392c7—8, 394c7—8, 398b7—8) shapes their mental condition and political reality.[42] 3) He also reminds us[43] that the new form and content — the context allows us to add: an alternative falsehood to the falsehood contained in TT — must be tailored to the good and beautiful (*kalos kagathos*, 396b11—c1) guard who obeys the beautiful mythological standards established as law (see 398b) — let us add: *tupoi* opposed to the ugly *tupoi* from TT. 4) He also mentions that in a situation when reason (*logos*) would come with age to a guard obedient to the implemented *tupoi*, the latter "would take most delight in it" (402a3).[44] What he will then do with the falsehoods that have hitherto shaped him, we will find that out when the argument reveals another political need — the rule of the philosopher-kings. 5) For now, Socrates reveals the other qualities of the guard, corresponding

---

[40] The legislator in the *Laws* also prohibits citizens from any falsehood (counterfeiting, lying, fraud, 916d6—7), although he implicitly recognizes the circumstances in which it may be right (*orthos*, 916e1). See fn. 2 above.

[41] Passages II 377a, 379a—b, 382d, III 386a—392c allow us to call that mythological and theological content "ideology."

[42] III 395d2—3: the content we repeat since childhood "become[s] established as habits and nature, in body and sound and in thought"; similarly in 400d11—e3. 401d—e: a participant in societal life does not even know that it is culture that shapes his attitude towards beauty and ugliness from an early age (this knowledge constitutes the basis of the paideia proposed in the *Laws* II 653a—c).

[43] In the meantime, Socrates cautiously states that he himself still does not know, "but wherever the argument, like a wind, tends, thither must we go" (394d7—9) — in contrast to Thrasymachus, who categorically declares that "this" (*houtosi*) is how the matter should be considered (I 343d2).

[44] This is repeated in the *Laws* II 653b.

to the current needs of the *polis* (from III 403b) — once again comparing him to a purebred dog (404a10)[45]; among these qualities he lists a balance between passion (*thumoeides*) and a love of wisdom (*philosophon*), and crowns them with the ability to care for the *polis*, emphasizing that there is no care without love (411e4—412d2). He does not have to repeat that these are the qualities of a "dog philosopher" (cf. II 375a—376c). And though this term may still seem surprisingly paradoxical to us, Plato no longer leaves any doubt that this "dog philosopher" is an alternative to Thrasymachus's stronger party, for whom justice is whatever is most advantageous to him (*sumpheron*). He rhetorically asks:

> And wouldn't he surely love something most when he believed that the same things are advantageous (*sumpherein*) to it and to himself, and when he supposed that if it did well, he too himself would do well along with it, and if it didn't, neither would he? (412d4—7)

The Thrasymachian motif of advantages has not lost its relevance: since the principle (*arche*) of the *polis* is the need (*chreia*) of every human being, advantages are only the satisfaction of this need. This motif is only changed by one vector — Socrates's stronger party, the "dog philosopher," cares about what advantage will *also* be his advantage; "and if it didn't — to the contrary" (*me de, tounantion*, 412d7), i.e. he does not care about it. This is how the dogma of love (*dogma*, 412e6) is formulated, which must be guarded by the *polis* guard if TT is not to be realized in it. But how to implement this dogma?

The demonstration of this primary process is preceded by an act already known to us from the ban on lying imposed on all non-rulers: the devaluation of falsehood (cf. 389b—d). Reflecting on how to protect the dogma of love (412e-413a), Socrates distinguishes two circumstances in which people reject beliefs: false ones — willingly, true ones — unwillingly, and calls the *second situation*, identical with "being deceived about the truth," evil (*to men epseusthai tes aletheiaskakon*), and the *first*, identical with "hav[ing] the truth" — good (*to de aletheuein agathon*, 413a6—7). But after recalling, from the theoretical level, the category of truth (good) opposed to falsehood (evil), Socrates, returning quickly to the practical, gignetic level, uses a category in which this opposition is blurred — "dogma." And so, having conducted this basic diairesis, he concentrates only on the second situation and

[45] The analogy of the dog and the guard appears strikingly often: in III 416a4, IV 422d5, IV 440d2—6, V 451d4, V 459a2, V 466d1, V 469e1 (cf. the milder description of this same behavior in II 376a5—8), VII 537a7. Other cynological references and analogies: III 397a7, VII 539b6, VIII 563c6, X 607b6; cf. fn. 29 above.

lists the circumstances in which people "are unwillingly deprived of true opinion" (413a9—b2). Though this classification is probably borrowed from Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen* as an "anti-Gorgianic" reference — constituting, as Robert Wardy interprets it,[46] an expression of Plato's belief that it is possible to bring up psychologically-strong individuals who, unlike Helen, will maintain an unchanging dogma — Plato, in the spirit of Gorgias, does not make the truth a constant reference point. Even if his Socrates wants to set the love of the unfaithful Helen in opposition to the love of faithful guards, he makes dogma, not truth, the object of their faithfulness. And we have no reason to believe that for Plato loyalty to dogma is synonymous with loyalty to truth and that both mental states are reached in the same way. If we accept, after Wardy, that Plato is convinced that it is possible to instill an unchanging dogma into individuals, this does not mean that it is possible to prevent them from inadvertently abandoning the truth. The effectiveness of the first act may be evidence of the ineffectiveness of the second. This thought will be expressed in the description of the process of the degeneration of the *polis* based on "noble falsehood": the guards will still believe in their noble origin, even though they will lose their nobility and launch the process of destruction of "the best *polis*" with this belief (VIII 546a—547a). What exactly is Plato trying to raise awareness of in the *Republic*, when he so clearly exhibits the credibility of ideological falsehood, which at the current stage of the argument/emergence of the *polis* is therapeutic, but at a further stage — destructive? It becomes crucial to recognize the features that distinguish these stages.

The antithesis of truth/falsehood, which corresponds to the antithesis of good/evil, appears only for a moment, and Plato quickly — during the short passage 413a1—c6 — erases it and, almost imperceptibly in the rush, replaces it with dogma: the best guards are to guard the dogma of love (413c5—7); the perfect guard guards the dogma of love (414b1—6). Therefore, we can say that a guard is required to have the same attitude towards dogma as towards truth. The fulfillment of this requirement is easier the more faith the falsehoods supporting this dogma elicit. This diagnosis is evident in the connection — as rapid as the prior connection of falsehood to evil — of dogma with falsehood, which is presented as a tool to implement and consolidate this dogma:

> Could we […] somehow contrive (*mechane genoito*) one of those lies that come into being in case of need, of which we were just now speaking, some one noble (*gennaion*) lie to persuade, in the best case, even (*malista*) the rulers, but if not them, the rest of the city? (414b8—c2)

[46] R. Wardy: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology*, pp. 128—9.

Plato's striking honesty with his readers, a testimony to the fact that "much of his politics is realist rather than idealist,"[47] contrasts significantly with the smooth transition from truth to a falsehood that is hidden to those in whom it is instilled. It is precisely this contrast that reveals what Plato is showing us: the most effective way to combat a strong opponent is to use his/her own weapon. Thus, if we want to fight against ugly ideology — whose universal effectiveness attests to the susceptibility to ideology — we must use a different ideology. The weapon of truth is not always reliable against falsehood. The impression of this remedy's paradoxicality diminishes when we embed it within the context of the previous argument.[48]

Recall that Socrates's task is to find a way (*mechane*) to get one "who has some power — of soul, money, body or family" to want "to honor justice" (II 366c1—3) — despite the stronger party from TT, who makes justice conditional on his own advantage. If we agreed, following the process of the genesis of political life, that in certain circumstances falsehood in speeches (*en logois*) is useful (*chresimon*, 382c6—7), then at the current stage of the argument, constantly motivated by the logic of needs, it is difficult not to admit that our current need for rulers loyal to the dogma of love is satisfied in using the kind of lie "of which we were just now speaking" (III 414b9, i.e. a useful lie in speeches). Because myths passed down from childhood most effectively shape the social mentality — which we also already know (cf. II 376e—382d) — this lie takes the form of a myth with a double content and function: on the one hand, it shapes the identity of the ruling guards, convincing them that they are the children of Mother Earth and other citizens are their brothers, thus obliging them to care for their mother and brothers (414d—e); on the other hand, it implants in them a sense of difference from the rest of the citizenry, telling them that god created people with admixtures of various metals and, giving them the most perfect admixture of gold, obliged them to protect the purity/perfection of their race. In order to make this content more credible, Socrates the educator uses typical religious motifs: he calls it a "commandment from god" (415b3—4) and creates an oracle (415c5). In this way, the abstract dogma of love is translated into concrete mythical content that can easily be internalized in the mentality of the rulers with the use of this illustration.

The ambiguous name of this lie — *gennaion* — reflects three basic features ensuring its usefulness: 1) good and beautiful (*gennaion*), it is

[47] Ibid., p. 132, with the assessment that this is "a fact too often ignored."

[48] Cf. M. Schofield: *The Noble Lie*, p. 153: "It is of course a paradox that the one specific mechanism he proposes for generating a motivation that is supposed to be rooted in unshakable true conviction is a lie."

opposed to the ugly lies of Homer's and Hesiod's myths, which underlie TT; 2) directed primarily (*malista*) to "the strongers" (the rulers) to instill in them the conviction of a noble birth, it carries a message about their pedigree (*gennaion*); 3) due to the scope and power of its social impact, it is outstanding and great (*gennaion*).[49] But in these three meanings, there is one more thing: colloquially, *gennaion pseudos* is "'a true-blue lie,' i.e. a massive, no-doubt-about-it lie."[50] It is this rather trivial sense that gives proper weight to the entire dialogue. Who, like Glaucon, has been "talked deaf by Thrasymachus and countless others" (II 358c7—8) faces a choice: whether s/he prefers to live in a *polis* that bases political order on the realism of TT, which obscures its false mythical contents and ultimately praises injustice, or in one that is supported by an overt falsehood inculcating the dogma of love and ultimately promoting justice.

Plato does not leave him alone with this choice yet. He continues to teach him to look[51]: at the current stage at what is happening in the *polis* with noble falsehood, about which a thinking person at some stage of his paideia learns not only that it is a falsehood, but that it is noble falsehood because it is useful. Let us therefore extract and concisely present — from Plato's long instruction on viewing the dynamic nature of the political — those two moments of *anagnorisis* that allow us to glean the structure of Plato's argument concerning the potential of *pseudos*, which, as a *pharmakon*, may heal in some circumstances and poison in others.

Gennaion pseudos as *pseudos* (III 415b—VII 521c)

1. **(III 415b—IV 424e)** Even before presenting the content of the "noble falsehood," Plato emphasizes that hardly anyone will believe it (414c—d); shortly afterwards he mentions that with time, a lie may lose the features

[49] See K. Carmola: *Noble Lying: Justice and Intergenerational Tension in Plato's* Republic. "Political Theory" 2003, vol. XXXI 1, pp. 39—62: at 40 (with a cross-reference from Y.-J. Sun: *Lies in Plato's* Republic, p. 106, n. 49); C. Rowett: *Why the Philosopher Kings Will Believe the Noble Lie*. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 2016, vol. L, pp. 67—100: at 67.

[50] G.R.F. Ferrari. Ed., T. Griffith. Trans.: *Plato: The Republic*. Cambridge 2000, p. 107, n. 63 (as cited in M. Schofield: *The Noble Lie*, p. 138).

[51] Through the frequent use of terminology connected with looking and discovering, the description of Plato's methodology in IV 420b—e emphasizes the heuristic function of the dialogue, which strives to expose rather than instruct.

of a lie and evoke faith in subsequent generations (415d1—2).[52] Is this an expression of hope or a historiosopher's irony? Undoubtedly, it expresses a bitter truth: the easiest, if not the only way to arouse the love of rulers for the ruled is by way of a therapeutic, ideological falsehood relayed through an appropriate educational program.[53] If such a program is not created, the community — especially the rulers/stronger party — will *still* absorb some falsehood, but there is no guarantee that this falsehood will be noble.[54]

The "noble falsehood's" credibility can replace the power of fear of punishment — awakened by eschatological theology and constituting, in Critias's view, a remedy for secret injustice — with the power of love.[55] Without fear or without love, strong and powerful rulers are a threat to the ruled: they embody TT, as Glaucon confirmed in the thought experiment with the Gyges ring. Socrates, of all people, proposes the option of love: guards must be forced to believe (*anankasteon poein*, 421c1) in the "noble falsehood." Instilled during the stage of paideia, it shapes the nature of a guard who, in turn, promotes the cultural norms that have been passed on to him and perpetuates them throughout the *polis* as the only correct cultural norms (424a—b). Thus, in the interweaving of nature and culture, the *polis* will roll around the *gennaion pseudos* like a developing cycle (*kyklos*, 424a5). And this is not contrary to the nature of the individual, since this nature is flexible: changes in music[56] influence a change in habits; the latter influences relationships; these, in turn, influence the laws and political system; and the system influences private and public life (424d7—e2). Because an individual's nature is not outside this chain, it abolishes the sophistic antithesis of nature and culture. Thus, it justifies, on the one hand, the *natural* absorbency with which the community assimilates ideologies,

---

[52] In one version, it elicits faith in Plato's contemporary Athenians, as evidenced by the toposes of *eugeneia* and "mother Earth" in the *epitaphios logos* in the *Menexenus* 237b—238a. Schofield perceives them as an expression of the strong need for ideology in the 4th century to justify the indigenous nature of the Athenians (M. Schofield: *The Noble Lie*, p. 161). On the strong need for reconciliation and brotherhood after the Peloponnesian war, see N. Loraux: *The Divided City. On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens.* Trans. C. Pache, J. Fort. New York 2002, pp. 197—213.

[53] Harte calls it a "medical lie" (V. Harte: *Plato's Politics of Ignorance*, p. 144).

[54] Cf. *Laws* 691c—d: in time, being in power fills ruler "with the greatest sickness, namely lack of intelligence."

[55] Not yet having the tool of "noble falsehood" at his disposal, Socrates also stated at the beginning of the debate with TT that those who, according to his criteria, are true rulers, undertake just rule not for the sake of some good (*ep' agathon*, 347c7), but only for fear (*deisante*s, 347c5) of those who would otherwise rule them.

[56] Cf. II 376e—377a: in music, understood as the education of the soul, there are the most falsehoods.

and on the other, the need and possibility to control the content of these ideologies *within the framework of culture/paideia.*

2. **(IV 424e—434e)** In the middle of Book IV, structural elements and political mechanisms are spread before us, whose *arche* (principle and beginning) is *chreia* (a need arising from the individual's lack of self-sufficiency). Along with the increase in needs, a just *polis* was established (427d): the guards it needs are faithful to the dogma they need, instilled in them as color is applied to well-prepared wool, whose colors will not fade (429c—430b). One could trust that the ugly TT will not find confirmation in them. But we must be cautious with that trust — the *Republic* itself is a gradual widening of the field of view, and we still see too little; we have not yet discovered all that Plato has to show us, ever expanding upon Thrasymachus's perspective.

Again, aided by phraseology associated with looking (*skopein*, *idein*), discovery (*heurein*), and inquiry (*zetein*), Plato leads us to what was "in our hands" the whole time and which we did not see. And this is no longer about ideological falsehoods that we can have rationalized in our heads, unconsciously harboring them in a sense of truth, but about the principle of justice itself: "to do one's own" (*ta hautou prattein*, 432d—433a), at work since the beginning of the *polis*'s emergence (cf. II 370a4), however unnoticed. This is the second Critian theme, next to "the most seductive" falsehood (*hediston pseudos*, DK B25, v. 24—26).[57] The dramatic circumstances of the dialogue — especially the misfortune Cephalus's family, who hosted Socrates and his interlocutors in Piraeus, suffered at the hands of the tyrant Critias, whose bloody terror made the rule of the stronger/better a reality in the name of justice — cause readers to remain vigilant when following what Plato is really showing us.[58] Undoubtedly, there is a close relationship between the noble falsehood that imbues guards with a sense of racial distinctness, and Critias's principle of *oikeiopragia*: the noble falsehood helps to make the principle of justice a reality in the *polis* (434a—c). If this is not to be the justice of the tyrant Critias — a bloody exemplification of TT — this rule must contain content that was misunderstood not only by the interlocutors at the beginning of the dialogue, but also by Critias. In that case, Plato would have made a double modification of Critias's "political wisdom": changing "the most seductive" falsehood to a "noble falsehood," and giving the *oikeiopragia* principle a different meaning than the one motivating the actions of this tyrant. The preserved source material does not allow us to know how Critias understood it — we know how he carried

[57] Critias, the tyrant, defined *sophrosyne* as "doing one's own," cf. *Charmides*, especially 161b—d (DK B41a).

[58] See fn. 29 above, for the interpretation proposed by Howland.

it out. Books IV—X of the *Republic*, on the other hand, attest to how this principle was used by Plato to understand the nature of politics, of which one of the aspects/options is also Critias's TT-confirming reality.

3. **(IV 435a—449a)** After discovering Critias's principle of justice on the large scale of the *polis*, Plato brings us down to the level of the soul (435c—445e). In accordance with the methodology of optical facilitation outlined in II 368c—369a, after seeing justice on a larger scale (that of the *polis*), we now look at a smaller object (one man's *psyche*) in the hope that what we have seen on a larger scale will make it easier to recognize on a smaller scale. The *pseudos* that was so clear on a large scale now, on the small scale of the soul is all but imperceptible. This comes as no surprise, as in the educational process it has been rationalized and internalized, and the effectiveness of this process is a result of the nature of the soul. But we already know, thanks to our learning of looking, that the fact that it is imperceptible does not mean that it is not there. And it is at this stage of looking, in which the word *pseudos* does not appear for a long time, that the term *pseudos en logois*, thrown without explanation in 382b10—c2, becomes clear:

> […] the lie in speeches is a kind of imitation of the affection (*pathematos*) in the soul, a phantom (*eidolon*) of it that comes into being after it, and not quite an unadulterated lie.

In a tone of certainty and obviousness uncharacteristic of Socrates, he now states that in each of us lie the same types (*eide*) and affections (*pathe*) that are present in the *polis* (435c—e), because “they didn't get there [i.e. to the *polis*] from any other place” (435e3). This is confirmed by the expert on behavioral mechanisms, Glaucon: “[q]uite necessarily.”[59] Because of this correspondence with the state of the soul, *pseudo sen logois* has an admixture of truth — it is not pure falsehood. So what content does this admixture of truth contain, that instead of invalidating the remaining falsehood, they create together a beautiful, noble falsehood?

Seeing three different powers of one soul analogous to the three social states of one *polis* (436a—441a), we perceive something else, imperceptible in the *polis* molded on the noble falsehood. Namely, at the level of the soul there is a weakness, a crack: not every soul has a developed logical

[59] Cassirer also confirms this more than two thousand years later, treating myths as psychic affections, which in symbolic expression become narratives and images, or *eidolon* (E. Cassirer: *The Myth of State*, pp. 37—49).

faculty (*logismos*), and most will develop it “quite late” (441b1).[60] Thus, we see a fissure into which falsehood is by nature easily poured. At this point in the dialogue, Plato approvingly quotes Homer, previously reprimanded for ugly lies about the gods, presenting him as a creator of myths aware of this mental weakness (441b—c). From the perspective of the *polis* presented earlier, it is clear that this weakness concerns the most important group in the *polis* — its rulers, because at the level of the soul, it is this group that corresponds to the faculty of *logismos*. If the power of *logismos* is weak, the authority of the guards/rulers is the greatest threat to both themselves and the rest of the *polis*. The remedy — functioning like an artificial implant — is the “noble falsehood,” which instills in the guards a dogma of love and a sense of harmony between the classes in the *polis* in the name of the principle of “to do one’s own.” In the light of this interpretation of Critias’s principle, he appears as a man whose *logismos* does not “do its own,” that is, it does not rule over his lustful and passionate faculty, which therefore disqualifies him as a ruler and marks him as unjust and thoughtless (443e7—444a1). The dogma of fear of the gods certainly does not work on Critias, since — being so wise — he knows it is false. So, what remains for him, since in his case and in that of many others like him it is too late to instill the dogma of love by way of the “noble falsehood”? Undoubtedly — belief in the reality of TT. But what happens to the “noble falsehood” of those few whose souls have properly developed the faculty of *logismos*?

Gennaion pseudos as *gennaion* (V 449a—VII 541b)

1. **(V 449a—473e)** At the beginning of the dialogue, Thrasymachus demonstrated the proper way to “look.” Since Socrates was not convinced and he, in turn, did not succeed in convincing Thrasymachus, both Thrasymachus (I 344d1) and Socrates (II 357a1) expressed a desire to leave. Fortunately, others stopped them. Now, Thrasymachus speaks after a long silence (he fell silent in I 354a11), and in his characteristic rough tone, he makes it clear — however indirectly — that he wants to hear more about

[60] This is repeated in the *Laws* II 653a: “he is a fortunate person to whom it [i.e. prudence and true opinions] comes even in old age.” Both passages weaken the oft-expressed view that Plato “displays unbounded confidence in the powers of human reason, which for Plato is based on the essential identity of reason in man and God” (representatively W.K.C. Guthrie: *The Sophists*, p. 6).

the *polis* based on noble falsehood: about the golden guards' women and children; he came to listen to arguments, not merely "to look for fool's gold" (450b3—4). Glaucon, in the tone of a sage, even adds that "for intelligent men […] the proper measure of listening to such argument is a whole life" (450b6—7). And in response to Socrates's characteristic hesitation, Glaucon outlines the profile of Socrates's current listeners — Plato's "ideal readers": "your audience won't be without judgment, or distrustful, or ill-willed" (450d3—4).

Bearing in mind such listeners in particular, Socrates, additionally safeguarding himself by taking on the attitude of an unbeliever and inquirer (*apistounta de kai zetounta*, 450e1—2), raises the question of why the community of women and children makes them laugh, and this "even more than what we went through before" (450c7) — meaning the "noble falsehood."[61] By suggesting that laughter is evoked by what is contrary to our habits (452a), which we mistakenly identify with our nature (456c), he raises the problem of what ideologies (falsehoods) our flexible human nature can accommodate. Because "the way things are nowadays proves to be, as it seems, against nature" (456c2), it is likely that what seems false today will become consistent with nature (i.e. true) tomorrow, after a change (*metabole*, 452b8) in habits. Once again, the antithesis of nature—culture is blurred, and with it that of truth—falsehood. But this moment of confusion has a heuristic value: the *pseudos* motif has revealed to us not only the illusory nature of the nature—culture dichotomy, but also a situation in which what is considered a natural state is merely the result of the implementation of a certain ideology. Since this is how things are with the *nature of the political*, the question of the consequences and advantages of ideology becomes crucial. The great significance that Plato attaches to this question justifies assigning him the title of an ideologist. On the other hand, the awareness awakened in the reader of current crypto-ideologies and the need to assess them according to the criterion of what benefits the entire social structure (cf. II 382c6—7) — which results from the knowledge that ideology as such is an indispensable element of the political — simultaneously compels us to call him a realist. His honesty, a testament to this realism, is striking: since current customs regarding the attitude towards women — depriving them of participation in ruling the *polis* — are only seemingly in accordance with nature, let us replace them with customs that are "possible and best" (456c4, 457a3), in the belief that beauty is not only more valuable than the possibility of realization (because it is always useful and never causes harm), but also has a greater relationship with the truth (457b4, 473a3). Thus,

[61] See fn. 52 above.

there was a flash of truth not in the context of the dark realism of TT, but in that of "noble falsehood." It is only from this moment in the argument that the term *aletheia* resounds, reflecting that value which implicitly motivated the inquiry thus far and explicitly motivates further inquiry, which is still set within the context of the "usefulness of falsehood" (see II 382c6).

The further context is again a demonstration, bluntly, of how to implement a new custom — a community of women and children. This is a method we are already familiar with — imperceptibly shaping Plato's first readers within the reality of 4th century Athens, partially disclosed to them in the description of the guards' upbringing,[62] i.e. by way of "falsehoods in speeches" (*pseude en logois*), dosed like medicine for the good — this time — of the governed (459d1, cf. III 414c2). It is based on the manipulation of religious rituals and beliefs, even the oracle of Pythia (461e, 469a) — which is not only of the greatest sanctity for the Greeks, but also a factor controlling the internal and external policies of the Greek *poleis*: its military customs (469b) — and in addition to all this, throwing around the attributes of "just," "pious," "sin" (461a4—5), and even "in harmony with nature" (470c8). For words (*onomata*) determine judgment (*nomizein*), and judgment determines conduct (*praxis*, 463c—d; similarly in 471d2, 479b7). Again, Homer and Hesiod are useful with their falsehoods (468d—469a).[63] This mechanism that determines social mentality will be visualized in the image of the cave, which is soon evoked: prisoners name what is shown to them on the wall of the cave, and what they name, they acknowledge as real and true (VII 515b—c). If we still have doubts as to whether Plato is "designing the perfect regime"[64] or simply exposing the mechanisms of every system, then the image of the cave — with its repeated recommendation: "see"[65] "our nature in its education and want of education" as a certain "affection" (*pathos*, 514a1—2) — eliminates those doubts. The cave is only a graphic elaboration of those necessary political mechanisms that Plato reveals from the very beginning of the dialogue — provoked by the "perspective-narrowing" vision condensed in TT.[66] Plato uses the "noble falsehood"— an alternative way of thinking — to release us from this determinism. At the current stage of the dialogue, he calls it paradoxical logos (V 472a6), or one that is contrary to (*para*) the existing mental condition, which is really just an opinion (*doxa*). However, this opinion results in "what is badly done in cities today" (473b5).

---

[62] Cf. III 414c: a manipulation of the content of the oracle.

[63] Cf. above, p. 81 ad 441b—c.

[64] See fn. 27 above.

[65] VII 514a2, b4, b8, 515c4.

[66] The *polis* is called a cave (*spelaion*) directly in VII 539e3.

The sophisticated ingenuity with which Plato knocks readers out of their rut, directing them using *pseudos* to the path of truth — first mentioned in the dialogue as a supreme value just after the demonstration of the implementation of *pseudos* (473a2) — finds a clear expression in the hint concerning which “smallest trifle” would have to be changed to do away with today’s evil (473b). Although so far, the teaching of looking has produced results — in accordance with Socrates’s method of optical facilitation, we saw justice on a large scale (the *polis*), then on a small scale (the soul) — the current object “is hard to see” (*chalepon gar idein*, 473e4). It is concealed by a paradox (473e4) — thus signaling its heuristic value — and a double paradox, at that: this object stands not only *against* (*para*) Thrasymachus’s *doxa*, common in the realities of V/VI century Athens, but also *against* (*para*) the current course of dialogue, alternative to the latter, which — by instilling “noble falsehood” — also eventually forms *doxa*, though in the form of “noble” dogma.

2. **(V 474a—VII 543a)** This “trifle” is those who hate all falsehood (both ugly and noble) — philosophers. The need to determine who they are (474b5) suggests that we have not seen them yet, and therefore they cannot be the guards-“dog philosophers.” The qualities Socrates attributes to these philosophers clearly distinguish them from the guardians of dogma: they love all (*pases*) wisdom (475b9; c6) — not only what they already know (cf. II 375e—376b); they love viewing the truth (475e4) — “unconditionally” (*pantos kai pante*, 490a1—2; 485b); they are able to see (*idein*) the nature of beauty as such (476b7); they are awake (476c, 534c7) — and therefore do not suffer from the confused sense of waking and sleeping that afflicts the golden guards (cf. III 414d); they learn by reasoning — not guided by instilled dogma (476d5—6); from childhood on they love and strive for all truth (485d2—3; also 501d1) — not clinging to the dogma that has been instilled in them (cf. 414c—d). Thus, following the logic of needs, we see that the need for ideological falsehoods generates a need for those in the *polis* who hate all falsehoods. The latter are ultimately called hegemons (VI 484b6). This is a relational term: they are hegemons for the rest of the citizens of a just *polis*, which is supervised by guardians of dogma. So, though truth-loving, the hegemons must somehow tolerate other citizens’ falsehood-supported dogma.

The coexistence of both types of lovers, each of which also has its object of dislike — guardians of dogma (*philodoxoi*), who hate the unknown, and hegemons, who hate all falsehood (*apseudia*, 485c3) — assumes that “noble falsehood” and truth somehow coexist in a just *polis*.[67] Is this assumption

[67] Passage V 484cd—485a allows us to state that hegemons (“truth lovers”) can have all the advantages of “dog philosophers”, but not vice versa.

a Platonic utopia or an expression of political realism? Which group has more utopian traits: are dogma guardians, or lovers of all truth more real? How can we reconcile the latter's aversion to "all falsehoods" with the tolerance of "noble falsehood" harbored by the former? The sharper the dichotomy Plato creates between lovers of truth and lovers of dogma — stating that it is not possible for "the same nature [to] be both a lover of wisdom (*philosophon*) and a lover of falsehood (*philopseude*)" (485c12—d2) and even that philosophers will "hate" (*misein*) falsehood (490b11)[68] — the more fragile the just *polis* based on "noble falsehood" becomes. The philosopher, a lover of truth, is then as great a threat to the just *polis* as is the TT's "stronger" to an existing *polis*. There is the risk of a situation in which the philosopher, in the role of hegemon, will hate the very foundations upon which the *polis* he rules is built.

Thus, another political need arises — the philosopher's proper mental condition. It is now as essential to preserving the *polis* as was the earlier need to create a guardian of the dogma of love. This is because *love* for the *polis* was already instilled in him through noble falsehood, thus protecting the *polis* from him, that is, from the reality of TT[69]; the philosopher, however, must channel the force of *hatred* for falsehood[70] in such a way that he not only does not withdraw from participating in the life of the *polis* and does not become destructive to the guardians of dogma, but so that he may become a "savior" (*soter*) of the political system (502d1).[71] This means accepting *pseudos* not as a good (a desirable condition), but as a necessary and effective medicine in a state of disease. An expression of this acceptance is the ambiguous attribute assigned to *pseudos* — *gennaion* (noble). It expresses the realistic thought that 1) in the situation of the weakness of the human *logismos*, falsehood may be useful in a healing, apotropaic function; 2) the most susceptible part of the *polis* to disease are its best (noblest

[68] Analogical dichotomies: *homoioi philosophois—alethinoi philosophoi* (V 475e2—4); *philodoxoi — philosophoi* (480a6—7); *houtoi — ekeinoi* (485d5—6); *peplasmenos philosophos — alethos philosophos* (485d12—e1).

[69] See III 417a5.

[70] See VI 485d—e: a true philosopher has open spiritual channels.

[71] The question of whether the philosopher was subject to the paideia that instills the "noble falsehood" and remains faithful to it finds an affirmative answer in Wardy's interpretation (R. Wardy: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology*, pp. 127—8, 133). However, Plato does not make the appearance of philosophers dependent on their having received the guards' dogmatic paideia, since the "nature of the philosopher" can appear and endure everywhere, despite a bad paideia prevailing in the *polis* (VI 502a—b). Conversely, it is the existence of the *polis* — based on the "noble falsehood" instilled in its guards — that depends on the presence of philosophers (V 473b—d).

parts); 3) as far as it appears to someone as "a true-blue lie,"[72] he/she reveals the philosophical potential[73] — however, if not properly directed, this potential can become as destructive to the *polis* and the individual as an ugly falsehood.[74]

The description of the philosopher's paideia program — that is, of a philosopher who responds to the compulsion to take on the role of a hegemon (521d—541b) — does not contain even a trace of the dogma of love for the *polis* instilled in the guards, but it does not contradict it, either. The philosopher has a different love, which he needs only to expand to include the truth about the nature of the political, seeing in its light the deeper meaning of "noble falsehood" — like a moral in a fairy tale, which one grows up believing. In the argument that is in progress "under pressure of truth" (from VI 499b), the motif of dislike, coercion, and necessity (with its culmination in 520e2, 521b7) dominates. However, nothing in this program conflicts with these three aspects of the "noble falsehood." The greatest object in the teaching of philosophical viewing, the "*idea* [view] of the Good," does not eliminate the cave, with its chains and shadows — spanning the full scale of beautiful and ugly falsehoods — but deprives it of illusions as to the nature of the political as such. Both the "noble fabrication" and the "realism" of TT are now situated at the same level of existence: they are shadows appearing in accordance with the law of nature on the wall of the cave, watched by prisoners/pupils who are unable to move their heads (514b1—2). How many shadows, but also — what else they will see, depends on their ability to move their heads, and ultimately turn their whole body and soul away from the wall (518c).

---

[72] See fn. 50 above.

[73] VI 503c—d: natures that are strong and resistant to change, whose loyalty and courage in war can be relied upon (cf. similar traits in the guardians of dogma, III 413d—414b), are resistant to learning.

[74] See VI 491d—e: the more noble the nature, the more susceptible it is to corruption; VII 538d—539d: a description of the destructive effects of dialectic efficiency, especially 538e—539a: in a situation where a young, potential philosopher does not treat dogma/the laws of the *polis* as "honorable or akin to him, and doesn't find the true ones," he succumbs to other, ugly dogmas.

Conclusion: The scattered mandala (VIII 543a—end)

The *Republic* is a demonstration of the gradual widening of a field of view and through this, the channeling of philosophers' hatred of falsehood so that it does not spill over onto the *polis* and its citizens. Its starting point is to expose the ugly falsehood under the surface of the realistic description condensed into Thrasymachus's thesis. Since falsehood is a necessary structural element of the *polis*, the ability to challenge TT depends on the attractiveness and effectiveness of implementing an alternative falsehood, which would act as an antidote.

During the process of paradoxical thinking, by which Plato knocks his readers out of their mental habits and encourages them to see (*idein*) more than what is shown to them — ultimately: the idea of Good, which gives power to thinking (see: VI 508b—c) — he reveals the political mechanisms that allow ideological falsehood to be easily implemented and shape the moral condition of the community. Though Thrasymachus did manage to show something in his description, it is not enough to comprehensively grasp the nature of this phenomenon. It is no wonder, then, that Socrates protests against being treated as Thrasymachus's enemy (VI 498d1). He only wants to convince Thrasymachus and "the others" (498d3) who view reality similarly that their field of vision is not only narrow, but also ideologically determined. In short, he wants to show them more — things "they never saw" (498d8)[75] — to enable them to think differently when it is possible (cf. 493c).

Once he had shown them a different structure of the *polis* — *also* focused on indispensable falsehood, but this time a "noble falsehood," hence making it beautiful (*kale*) — and then compared it to a cave and forced appropriately prepared (from VII 521b to 541b) philosophers to go down into it, despite their hatred for all falsehood (535d—e), Plato destroys this *kallipolis* (527c2) like a mandala. Beginning with Book VIII, he presents the mechanism of degeneration of each regime, put into motion at the stage of the "best *polis*" — not ideal, as many interpreters have typically described it,[76] but at the "height of good government" (*akros oikein*, 543a2). Everything that emerges later disappears in the eternal cycle of birth and

---

[75] Cf. VI 504b1—2: "in order to get the finest possible look at these things another and longer road around would be required" (with a reference to IV 435d3).

[76] Cf. VIII 543d1: Glaucon was under the impression that Socrates could have presented an "even more beautiful" (*kallio eti*) *polis*. Consequently, it would need to be called "more ideal."

death (546a), and the process of this degeneration begins after the peak of growth is reached. Aristocrats/rulers who are loyal/subject to the “noble falsehood” degenerate as a result of this passive fidelity (546d—547a). They are at a stage in the life of the *polis* in which the *gennaion pseudos* loses its usefulness, that is, the attribute of *gennaion*, and its guards are unable to see this. Over time, the reality condensed in TT becomes a necessary phase of this necessary process.[77]

The only thing that remains after destroying the beautiful mandala is the memory of what we were able to see: the image that becomes the content of our thought, able to go beyond the immediate stages of the political process, recognized by it in their spontaneous dynamics as merely aspects — the effects of a necessary entanglement of customs, characters, and regimes. For regimes do not emerge “from an oak or rocks,” but “from the dispositions (*ethon*) of the men in the cities” (544d7—e2). Plato’s Socrates is not sure whether this picture will reveal “the very truth” (533a3). He is certain, however, that “that there is some such thing to see must be insisted on. Isn’t it so?” (533a5—6). He also specifies the purpose of this viewing: that he “who wants to see […] found a city within himself on the basis of what he sees” (592b3); and then, in a long passage criticizing imitative poetry (X 595a—608a) — beginning with the Homeric domain of falsehoods, lies, and fabrications — he contrasts imitation without understanding with the knowledge of how to use imitated things/deeds/dogma (600e—601c): “Aren’t the virtue, beauty, and rightness of each implement, animal, and action related to nothing but the use for which each was made, or grew naturally? — That’s so” (601d4—7).

Plato ends the dialogue with a myth, i.e. the kind of logos in which he diagnosed the most falsehoods (see: II 377a). Er describes what he *saw* in the afterlife: human souls are faced with the choice of a better life from among many possible lives. The ability to recognize a good and bad life in order to make a better choice is the greatest skill a person can have (X 618c—e). The tool Plato uses in the *Republic* to bring man out of the deep and narrow rut of Thrasymachus’s *aspect*/thesis is the starting option: since only god is free of falsehood (*pante apseudes*, II 382e6), man — in many cases not knowing what the reality is[78] — can only have a choice

[77] Thrasymachus’s perspective is directly recalled just prior to the description of this process, reminding us that Plato always has Thrasymachus’s option in mind. On the subject of the reality of TT in the degenerating political systems of Kallipolis, see Z. Hitz: *Degenerate Regimes in Plato’s* Republic. In: M.L. McPherran: *Plato’s* Republic. *A Critical Guide*. Cambridge 2013, pp. 103—131: at 107—118.

[78] This diagnosis, presented in a single sentence in II 382d2 (we do not know the “truth about old things”), is elaborated on in the *Laws* II 663c—664a (it is easier for

between noble or ugly falsehood.[79] In this situation, truth is the criterion of a right — i.e. conscious and beneficial — decision that is compatible with human nature and results from *multi-faceted* knowledge of how "all such things" (i.e. culturally-acquired and innate traits) "are connected" (618d5). In this entanglement, the *gennaion pseudos*, although always "sententially false," reveals "an evaluative truth" under certain circumstances.[80]

Bibliography

Adam J.: *The Republic of Plato*. Cambridge 1902.

Anderson M.: *Thrasymachus' Sophistic Account of Justice in* Republic. "Ancient Philosophy" 2016, vol. 36, pp. 151—172.

Brickhouse T.C., Smith N.D.: *The Trial of Socrates*. Oxford 1983.

Carmola K.: *Noble Lying: Justice and Intergenerational Tension in Plato's* Republic. "Political Theory" 2003, vol. XXXI 1, pp. 39—62.

Cassirer E.: *The Myth of State*. New Haven 1946.

Ferrari G.R.F. Ed., Griffith T. Trans.: *Plato: The Republic*. Cambridge 2000.

Guthrie W.K.C.: *The Sophists*. Cambridge 1971.

Harte V.: *Plato's Politics of Ignorance*. In: *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Eds. V. Harte, M. Lane. Cambridge 2013, pp. 139—154.

Hitz Z.: *Degenerate Regimes in Plato's* Republic. In: *Plato's* Republic. *A Critical Guide*. Ed. M.L. McPherran. Cambridge 2013, pp. 103—131.

---

a lawmaker and more advantageous for the whole community to persuade it of falsehoods than to convince it of difficult truths). Since the ease with which *pseudos* elicits group faith is a consequence of human ignorance, not only in hidden matters and in those concerning "old things," but also in matters concerning our values — and these are the matters that most strongly shape the mental and moral condition of the community — awareness of *pseudos* is awareness of our ignorance (cf. *Laws* IX 864b6: humans' inborn "striving for expectations and true opinion concerning what is best" is one of the main causes of human error; *Theaetetus* 173a: not every young soul can withstand truth and justice; such a soul latches on to lies).

[79] Cf. the implementation of an alternative dogma to the "to do one's own" principle based on *gennaion pseudos*: those who do their part are fools, while those who reach for more and for what belongs to others are admired (VIII 550a, 552a).

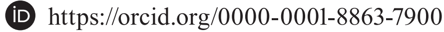
[80] These descriptions are taken from: T.C. Brickhouse, N.D. Smith: *The Trial of Socrates*. Oxford 1983, approvingly cited by V. Harte: *Plato's Politics of Ignorance*, p. 153.

Howland J.: *Glaucon's Fate: Plato's* Republic *and the Drama of the Soul*. "Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy" 2014, vol. 29.1, pp. 113—136.
Howland J.: *Glaucon's Fate: History, Myth, and Character in Plato's* Republic. Philadelphia 2018.
Lee M.: *Epistemology (Knowledge)*. In: *The Bloomsbury Companion to Plato*. Ed. G.A. Press. London—New York 2015, pp. 167—169.
Loraux N.: *The Divided City. On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens*. Trans. C. Pache, J. Fort. New York 2002.
Mannheim K.: *Ideologie und Utopie*. Frankfurt am Main 1929.
Munn M.: *The School of History: Athens in the Age of Socrates*. Berkeley—Los Angeles—London 2000.
Nails D.: *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*. Indianapolis 2002.
Plato: *Cratylus*. In: Plato: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 12. Trans. H.N. Fowler. London 1921.
Plato: *The Laws*. Trans. T.L. Pangle. Chicago—London 1988.
Plato: *The Republic*. Trans. A. Bloom. New York—London 1968.
Plato: *The Seventh Letter*. In: Plato: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 7. Trans. R.G. Bury. London 1966.
Plato: *The Symposium*. In: Plato: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 9. Trans. H.N. Fowler. London 1925.
Reale G.: *Myśl starożytna*. Trans. E.I. Zieliński. Lublin 2003.
Rowett C.: *Why the Philosopher Kings Will Believe the Noble Lie*. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 2016, vol. L, pp. 67—100.
Schofield M.: *The Noble Lie*. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's* Republic. Ed. G.R.F. Ferrari. Cambridge 2007, pp. 138—164.
Sun. Y.-J.: *Lies in Plato's* Republic*: Poems, Myth, and Noble Lie*. "*ΠΕΓΗ/FONS* II" 2017, pp. 87—108.
Wardy R.: *The Platonic Manufacture of Ideology, or How to Assemble Awkward Truth and Wholesome Falsehood*. In: *Politeia in Greek and Roman Philosophy*. Eds. V. Harte, M. Lane. Cambridge 2013, pp. 119—138.
Wedgwood R.: *The Coherence of Thrasymachus*. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 2017, vol. 53, pp. 33—63.
White S.A.: *Thrasymachus the Diplomat*. "Classical Philology" 1995, vol. 90, pp. 307—327.
Zygmuntowicz D.: *Thrasymachus of Chalcedon on the Platonic Stage*. "Journal of Ancient Philosophy" 2019, vol. 13 (1), pp. 1—39.

Dorota Zygmuntowicz — dr hab., profesor w Instytucie Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, kierownik Zakładu Historii Filozofii Starożytnej i Średniowiecznej IFiS PAN.

„Folia Philosophica". Vol. 42, s. 91—114
Katowice 2019
ISSN 2353-9445 (online)

DOI: http://doi.org/10.31261/fp.8515

Artur Pacewicz
Uniwerytet Wrocławski


Plato and the Classical Theory of Knowledge*

Platon a klasyczna teoria wiedzy

Abstrakt: W niniejszym artykule podjęta zostaje kwestia, w jakim stopniu można mówić o klasycznej teorii wiedzy w filozofii Platona. Punktem wyjścia są uwagi poczynione przez J. Woleńskiego w jego książce *Epistemologia*. Obszarem badawczym jest zasadniczo całość twórczości filozoficznej założyciela Akademii, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem pism: *Obrona Sokratesa*, *Gorgias*, *Menon*, *Politeia*, *Teajtet*, *Timajos* i świadectwa dotyczące tzw. niespisanej nauki Platona.

Słowa klucze: Platon, wiedza

Introduction

In his *Epistemology*, Jan Woleński introduces a classical definition of knowledge: it is a true, justified judgement (conviction). It was allegedly created by Plato, who considers it in the *Theatetus* only to reject it in the end.[1] In modern times, this conception has been represented by such phi-

---

* This is a revised version of the paper *O "klasyczności" klasycznej koncepcji wiedzy*, which was published in: *Wiedza*. Ed. D. Leszczyński. Wrocław 2013, pp. 9—29.

[1] J. Woleński: *Epistemologia*, vol. I: *Zarys historyczny i problemy metateoretyczne*. Kraków 2000, p. 26.

losophers as B. Russell, G.E. Moore, A.J. Ayer and R.M. Chisholm.[2] In reference to Plato, Woleński also presents the distinction (introduced in the *Republic*) between knowledge (*epistēmē*) and belief (*doxa*), their divisions and foundation in Plato's ontology. Plato's entire contribution is summarized as follows:

> [Plato] introduced many important views and innovations to epistemology. In general, he developed a consistent system of rationalist theory of cognition. […] Plato's rationalism has two dimensions: methodological, i.e., a radical version of apriorism, and genetic, i.e., innatism. […] Plato was also a radical fundamentalist, i.e., he understood knowledge as a pyramid with the unshakeable foundations. […] He also left behind the worrying ambiguity of the term "knowledge," although he used the term *episteme* unambiguously. […] Finally, Plato initiated irrationalism because the noetic cognition was essentially a kind of contemplation.[3]

The aim of this paper is, first of all, to develop Woleński's general statements in relation to Plato's conception of knowledge, which will allow for a fuller understanding of the "classic" character of the classical concept of knowledge. Secondly, Woleński's approach is shown to be misleading to some extent when the entire philosophical opus of the founder of the Academy is taken into consideration. However, before the arguments are presented, two preliminary issues should be considered.

Firstly, J. Woleński classifies Plato's views by means of a series of abstracts (-isms), and two of them — rationalism[4] and irrationalism — might suggest that Plato's thought contradicts itself. This statement in itself is not surprising, especially when one takes into account the literary character of Plato's writings, but it can perhaps astonish when one considers the fact that, according to Woleński, Plato created a *consistent system* of rationalist theory of cognition. This problem arises perhaps from the application of later abstract concepts to thought that appeared (much) earlier and the

---

[2] J. Woleński: *Epistemologia*, vol. II: *Wiedza i poznanie*. Kraków 2001, pp. 23—24. The *Theaetetus* is frequently quoted in the context of the classical theory of knowledge, see, e.g., M. Williams: *Skepticism*. In: The *Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. Eds. J. Greco, E. Sosa. Malden—Oxford 1999, p. 63; R. Audi: *Epistemology. A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. London—New York 1998, p. 210.

[3] J. Woleński: *Epistemologia*, vol. 1, pp. 28—30 (trans. A.P.).

[4] "Rationalism" is naturally an ambiguous term, see. E. Curley: *Rationalism*. In: *A Companion to Epistemology*. Eds. J. Dancy, E. Sosa, M. Steup. Malden—Oxford—Chichester 2010, pp. 659—663. J. Woleński confronts it with "empiricism"; see J. Woleński: *Epistemologia*, vol. II, p. 87 ff.

fact that the latter cannot be integrated into the contemporary model. This applies not only to the various types of "-isms." It can also problematize (especially from a contemporary point of view) whether there are "theories" in ancient philosophy (which could be understood, for example, as axiomatic systems or sets of models[5]), or whether ancient philosophical conceptions are "systems" (and, if so, in what sense — static or dynamic, for example[6]).

Secondly, attention should be paid to the interpretative problems that arise from Plato's dialogues themselves. As has already been mentioned, they are literary works, which permit the use of colloquial, often ambiguous language, but this does not mean they must necessarily be inaccurate. Already in antiquity, there were problems with the interpretation of Plato's works — subtitles were added to the dialogues to indicate the proper object of the debate and there were attempts at determining the general nature of the discussion.[7] Later, a biographical model was cultivated, which, along with the development of philology, was transformed into a dynamic developmental model. Thanks to stylometric research, the dialogues were divided into three chronological groups; these groups represented three periods of Plato's philosophy (early, middle and late), and the process that linked these groups was referred to as "progress" or "evolution."[8] However, this approach has been criticised and a so-called "unitary" interpretation of Plato has arisen. According to it, either the entire opus of the founder of the Academy contains a coherent philosophical conception, or at least some areas of Plato's philosophy (for example, the theory of the Good or his ethics[9]) are consistent (i.e., they constitute a unity). Another version of the "unitary approach" recommends that every dialogue should be researched independently and without any material connection to other works.[10] In this context,

[5] W.C. Salmon: *Theory*. In: *A Companion to Epistemology*, p. 768.

[6] For more on the introduction of the term "system" to the history of philosophy, see L. Catana: *The Historiographical Concept "System of Philosophy." Its Origin, Nature, Influence and Legitimacy*. Leiden—Boston 2008.

[7] See Diogenes Laertius: *Vitae philosophorum*, III 57—62.

[8] See, e.g., L. Brandwood: *Stylometry and Chronology*. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Ed. R. Kraut. Cambridge 1992, pp. 90—120; W. Stróżewski: *Wykłady o Platonie. Ontologia*. Kraków 1992, pp. 11—26; A. Pacewicz: *O ewolucyjnym charakterze filozofii Platona*. In: *Philosophiae Itinera*. Eds. A. Pacewicz, A. Olejarczyk, J. Jaskóła. Wrocław 2009, pp. 501—518.

[9] See, e.g., G.R. Morrow: *Plato's Cretean City, A Historical Interpretation of the* Laws. Princeton 1993, p. XXV; M. Erler: *"Socrates in the Cave." Argumentations as Therapy for Passions in* Gorgias *and* Phaedo. In: *Plato Ethicus. Philosophy is Life*. Eds. M. Migliori, L.M. Napolitano Valditara. Sankt Augustin 2004, p. 119.

[10] See, e.g., R.B. Rutherford: *The Art of Plato. Ten Essays in the Platonic Interpretation*. Harvard 1995, pp. 23—25; G. Reale: *Storia della filosofia antica*.

Woleński's opinion that Plato used the term "knowledge" unambiguously seems to suggest a unitary interpretation, although it is also possible that his interpretation is based solely on the *Theaetetus* and the *Republic*.

Apology

In the *Apology of Socrates*, the term "knowledge" appears only once and it is used in connection with the philosophy of Anaxagoras (*Ap.* 19c 6). Though Socrates refuses to have this kind of knowledge, he does not condemn it. People with knowledge (*epistemōn*) are also mentioned, and Socrates considers such persons craftsmen (*cheirotechnas*) because they "have knowledge of many beautiful things" (*Ap.* 22d). This kind of knowledge is limited to a certain object (e.g., shoemaking) or to a certain discipline (e.g., handicraft), and there are probably many such subjects/disciplines. It is known that Socrates considers it illegitimate to extend knowledge from one field to another. Craftsmen make the mistake that acting according to the knowledge (and therefore according to certain rules) in a given scope, they believe that they can also act in the field of the greatest (*ta megista* — *Ap.* 22d) or the most important matters (*ta pleistou axia* — *Ap.* 30a). The acceptance of craft knowledge as a model also allows for the recognition of the following things as features of knowledge: (1) possibility and ability to teach it; (2) possibility and ability to explain it.[11]

Both conditions show that knowledge is understandable. But what is the greatest and most important matter? It is a virtue (*aretē*). It seems then that knowledge is divided into two disjunctive scopes which can be called "technical" and "moral." The latter is not an indivisible whole because Socrates claims that there is a person who is an expert on human virtue (*anthrōpinē aretē*) and he or she can perform the function of an educator (*Ap.* 20b). Socrates seems to suppose that there are two kinds of virtues (human and non-human) and they are the subject of two kinds of moral knowledge. The difference between them can be seen by referring to the state that arises as

Vol. II. Milano 1988[6], p. XVIII; G.A. Press: *Preface*. In: *Plato's Dialogues. New Studies & Interpretations*. Ed. G.A. Press. Lanham 1993, pp. VII—IX.

[11] This feature appears during Socrates's encounter with the poets (*Ap.* 20c) — they were not able to explain their own texts.

a result of knowledge, which is called "wisdom" (*sophia*)[12]: "What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing…"[13]

God has the highest wisdom, which probably consists in the absolutely true (real — *tōi onti* — *Ap.* 23a 5) knowledge of virtue.[14] Humans are in possession of a lower type of wisdom that has both a negative and positive dimension. The first one consists in the recognition that no one has divine moral knowledge. It is achieved by the application of several procedures, such as questioning (*ereunan*), researching (*zetein*, *exetazein*) or refuting (*elegchein*[15]), to those views which seem to claim to be full knowledge. The semi-positive aspect comes from this recognition. It allows someone to claim that he or she has better knowledge (i.e., is wiser[16]) than someone who does not recognize the lack of knowledge. But the fully positive facet appears in the form of the set of moral statements, which are scattered across *Apology*. Here are the examples:

> And surely it is the most blameworthy ignorance to believe that one knows what one does not know. […] I do know, however, that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong, to disobey one's superior, be he god or man. I shall never fear or avoid things of which I do not know, whether they may not be good rather than things that I know to be bad (*Ap.* 29b 1—9).

It is not clear, however, what status these statements have within the framework of human knowledge. It seems that they are not "revealed god's truths," since they bear the term of "conformity with [divine] law"

---

[12] Plato uses the terms "knowledge," "wisdom" and "skill" interchangeably; see T.C. Brickhouse, N.D. Smith: *Plato's Socrates*. Oxford 1994, p. 7; P. Woodruff: *Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge*. In: *Ancient Greek Epistemology*. Ed. S. Everson. Cambridge 1990, pp. 60—84.

[13] Pl., *Ap.* 23a 5—6; all quotations from the *Apology* are in G.M.A. Grube's translation.

[14] This is presumably the "technical" knowledge of virtue — C.D.C. Reeve: *Socrates in the* Apology. *An Essay on Plato's* Apology of Socrates. Indianapolis 1989, p. 33 ff.

[15] On the classical interpretation of the elenchus see R. Robinson: *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*. New York 1941, pp. 7—20; G. Vlastos: *The Socratic Elenchus*. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 1983, no. 1, pp. 27—58; R. Kraut: *Comments on Gregory Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus."* "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 1983, no. 1, pp. 59—70.

[16] On the moral level, it also enables one to avoid the greatest vice called *hubris*. This is why the greatest good for man is to ponder and discuss (*peri aretēs logous poieisthai*) virtue every day, i.e., to examine oneself and others in this area (*Ap.* 38a).

(*themiton*[17]), nor the subjective convictions of Socrates, since, in turn, he clearly defines these, using the verb "to be convinced" (*dokein*).[18]

To sum up, knowledge is always knowledge about something, which determines its two basic scopes — craftsmanship (*technē*) and moral knowledge — of which the latter is higher and better than the former. The former is fully accessible to man, while the latter can only be fully possessed by a deity. A man should first of all realize that he or she does not have such full knowledge and compared to the wisdom of god, their knowledge in this area is quite scanty. The relationship between *technē* and moral knowledge can be called a one-way transitive, i.e., to be technically wise cannot guarantee to be morally wise, but to be morally wise can guarantee to be technically wise.[19]

Gorgias — Meno

Two other dialogues of Plato's bring slightly different epistemological distinctions. One of the topics in *Gorgias* (*Grg.* 254d ff.) is the discussion on the status of rhetoric. There is a distinction there between knowledge (*mathēsis*, *epistēmē*) and trust/faith (*pistis*), the first of which is characterized by truthfulness, while it is possible for the second to be both true and false. Both can be sources of a conviction (*peithō*) and on the basis of both elements, the practical effect of an action can be achieved. *Mathēsis*

[17] E.g., Pl., *Ap.* 21b 3—7: "Whatever does the god mean? What is his riddle? I am very conscious that I am not wise at all; what then does he mean by saying that I am the wisest? For surely he does not lie; it is not legitimate [*themiton*] for him to do so."

[18] E.g., ibid. 35b 9—c 2: "Quite apart from the question of reputation, gentlemen, I do not think [*dokein*] it right to supplicate the jury and to be acquitted because of this, but to teach and persuade them." It seems also that these are not any beliefs, but rather serious and non-hypothetical ones; see Pl., *Grg.* 495a—b: "You're wrecking your earlier statements, Callicles, and you'd no longer be adequately inquiring into the truth of the matter with me if you speak contrary to what you think. […] Do you really assert these things, Callicles?" (translated by D.J. Zeyl); Pl., *Prt.* 331c—d: "Don't do that to me! It's not this 'if you want' or 'if you agree' business I want to test. It's you and me I want to put on the line, and I think the argument will be tested best if we take the 'if' out." (translated by S. Lombardo and K. Bell).

[19] This feature can be inferred from Socrates' statement that "Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively" (*Ap.* 30b 2—4).

is understood as something learned (*memathēkenai* — *Grg.* 454c 8—9) and the examples of professions (doctor, shipbuilder, bricklayer, military commander — *Grg.* 455b—c) show that for Plato, the conditions required for something to qualify as knowledge are closely related to the conditions imposed on a skill (*technē*). Rhetoric seems to fulfil the conditions of being a skill (knowledge), i.e., it can be learned and taught to others, it has a practical application and works according to certain rules, but while other *technai* have their own specific object, rhetoric appears to be an objectless action (the possible object of rhetoric can be perhaps language itself).[20] If it enters into the scope of another human activity, it oversteps its authority, which can have disastrous consequences (as in the courts, e.g., where one seeks justice), especially when the rhetorician possesses only false beliefs.[21] The *Gorgias* leaves two important questions about knowledge unsettled: (1) the status of true faith (*pistis alēthēs*)[22] and (2) whether knowledge about moral values is achievable. As to the second question, the mythological ending of the dialogue and the use of allegorical argumentation may suggest that moral knowledge is given to human beings to a very limited extent (perhaps myths represent the *pistis alethēs*).

In *Meno* (*Men.* 82b ff.), there is the famous experiment with the slave who, without any mathematical education and on the basis of questions asked by Socrates, "discovers" some mathematical propositions. According to Socrates, this is possible as the soul is immortal and possesses the innate truths which are forgotten because of its incarnation and should be recalled during its life on Earth.[23] Socrates generally describes the effects of the slave's reasoning as "true belief" (*doxa alethēs*).[24] When one re-

[20] Pl., *Grg.* 459b 7—c 2: "Oratory doesn't need to have any knowledge of the state of their subject matters; it only needs to have discovered some device to produce persuasion in order to make itself appear to those who don't have knowledge that it knows more than those who actually do have it."

[21] See ibid., 458a 8—b 1: "I don't suppose there's anything quite so bad for a person as having false belief about the things we're discussing right now."

[22] It is worth mentioning here that in Parmenides's poem *pistis alethēs* is the opposite of the beliefs of mortals (*doksai brotōn*); DK 28 B 1, 30 (H. Diels, W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. I. Berlin 1951).

[23] W.K.C. Guthrie (*The History of Greek Philosophy*. Vol. IV: *Plato: the Man and His Dialogues. Earlier Period*. Cambridge 1975, p. 255) believes that in the *Meno*, the difference between the *a priori* knowledge and the empirical knowledge is articulated for the first time.

[24] There is a discussion on the very difficult question of whether the distinction between knowledge and true opinion is accepted in the so-called "Socratic" dialogues or not. For those who accept it, see: E.R. Dodds (Plato: *Gorgias*. Ed. E.R. Dodds. Oxford 1959, p. 206); T. Irwin (*Plato's Moral Theory. The Early and Middle Dialogues*. Oxford 1977, p. 40; *Plato's Ethics*. Oxford 1995, pp. 27—28, 141—143); L. Tarán (*Platonism

peats a recollection over and over again, it can lead to accurate knowledge (*akribōs — Men.* 85c—d). True or right (*orthē*) belief can be no worse lodestar (*hēgemōn*) for right action (*orthōs prattein*) than knowledge, so it is also no less useful than knowledge. The first difference between true belief and knowledge most likely consists in the degree of their permanence. The former has a tendency to leave the human soul, which is the cause of the fact that the goal of an action can only be achieved from time to time, while the latter is something permanent and guarantees consistent success. The second difference is the possibility to learn it — only knowledge can be taught and learned (*Men.* 97b—e). Though true beliefs are the starting point and basis for knowledge, they have to be connected by causative reasoning (*atias logimōi*) and enhanced by the anamnetic procedure (*anamnēsis — Men.* 98a 3—4).[25] As a result, it is possible not only to answer the question about the cause of a being, but also to know the whole logical structure justifying that something is just such. Thus, taking into account the fact that Plato considers mathematics, anamnesis and extrasensory sources of cognition, it can be concluded that the basis of knowledge is *a priori* (although the ontological status of this basis is not entirely clear), the structure is characterized by accuracy, i.e., it is most likely non-contradictory, and the only criterion and producer of knowledge is reason (*phronēsis*). One can see, then, that this is not the same approach to knowledge as before. The paradigm of knowledge is not *technē* but mathematics. Morality (*aretē*) is excluded from the area of knowledge, but not because of its nature. According to Socrates, the argument against identifying knowledge with virtue is that there is no teacher of the latter (*Men.* 98e). This argumenta-

---

and Socratic Ignorance. In: *Platonic Investigations*. Ed. D.J. O'Meara. Washington 1985, p. 88) and H.H. Benson (*Socratic Wisdom. Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues*. Oxford 2000, p. 93). For those who reject it, see: C.H. Kahn (*On the Relative Date of the* Gorgias *and the* Protagoras. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 1988, no. 6, pp. 87—88); A. Nehamas (*Socratic Intellectualism*. "Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy" 1986, no. 2, p. 282), P. Woodruff (*Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 80—81) and T. Penner (*What Laches and Nicias Miss — and Whether Socrates Thinks Courage Merely a Part of Virtue*. "Ancient Philosophy" 1992, no. 12, p. 151, note 18).

[25] The procedure of anamnesis appears also in *Phaedo*, where it is indicated that it can assume a stronger, more correct form, i.e., the one that can lead to knowledge based on innate, general concepts, or a weaker one which is based solely on the sensual cognition. In this dialogue, knowledge is a postulate — the goal of human aspiration, which can be fully achieved only after death, i.e., after separation from all sensual determinants. It is worth mentioning here that in the *Phaedo*, there is also a demand to present a justification (*logon dounai*) for the proposed theses. For more on this, see A. Pacewicz: *Wisdom — Knowledge — Belief. The Problem of Demarcation in Plato's "Phaedo."* "Studia Philosophica Wartislaviensia. Supplementary Volume. English Edition" 2013, pp. 11—23.

tion, however, can be read in a way that is related to the historical context of the dialogue — there are no such teachers so far (until the time of the conversation between Meno and Socrates), which does not mean that they cannot appear in the future, and if this happened, it would be possible to identify virtue with knowledge. Moral ideas expressed in the past by eminent persons (such as Solon for example) are not the result of reason but of a divine activity similar to poetic work (*theia moira — Men.* 100a). Some of these ideas can be considered as true beliefs and by philosophical research, they can probably become knowledge.[26]

It follows from the above that one of the possible ways of presenting what knowledge was for Plato is to refer knowledge to other cognitive states — to faith (*pistis*) and belief (*doxa*). This picture of epistemological states is continued and deepened in the *Republic*. In Book V (*R*. 476a—480a), Plato proposes the thesis that an elite possessing philosophical knowledge should rule, and he introduces a distinction between knowledge, ignorance and opinion. As a result of *gnōsis*, knowledge is clear (*saphēs*), and it has as its object what is (*to on*) or what is in a "pure" way (*eilikrinōs* — *R*. 477a 7), while the object of ignorance is what is not (*to mē on*).[27] If something that is is *pantelōs,*[28] then its cognition is also *pantelōs*. But

[26] This seems to be the fundamental and the most important difference between the *Gorgias* and the *Meno*. See C.H. Kahn: *Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues*. "Classical Quarterly" 1981, no. 31, p. 312, note 16; C.H. Kahn: *On the Relative Date*, p. 77, note 18; H.H. Benson: *Socratic Wisdom*, p. 94, note 156.

[27] In both cases, Plato uses a noun which is formed from the participle of the present tense of the verb *einai* ("to be"). I.M. Crombie (*An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*. Vol. I: *Plato on Man and Society*. London 1962, p. 42) argues that there are four meanings of the verb 'to be' in Plato's dialogues: *existence*, *genuineness*, *stability* and *ultimacy*. On the different meanings of the verb, see C.H. Kahn (*A Return to the Theory of the Verb* Be *and the Concept of Being*. In: C.H. Kahn: *Essays on Being*. Oxford 2009, pp. 115—116), who writes: "we can say that Plato has only one concept of Being, expressed by *einai*, *ousia* and *on*, a concept that will cover the notions of existence, predication, identity, truth, and perhaps more. […] Of course for analytical purposes we need to introduce such distinctions into our hermeneutical meta-language in commenting on Plato's text. But we must be alert to the discrepancy between such modern distinctions and what is actually under discussion in the ancient texts. It is we who are fusing the two meanings, not Plato or Aristotle." See also R.C. Cross, A.D. Woozley: *Plato's* Republic. *A Philosophical Commentary*. London 1964, p. 45; J. Annas: *An Introduction to Plato's* Republic. Oxford 1981, pp. 196—198. The model object of knowledge is the beauty itself (*kalon auto*) or the idea of the beauty (*idea autou kallous — R.* 479a 1—2) and it is something that is one (*hen*) and absolute (*aei kata tauta hōsautōs on — R.* 479e 7—8). By contrast, the object of belief is characterized by plurality and relativeness, e.g., beautiful sounds or colours.

[28] The precise translation and interpretation of this adverb is difficult: W. Witwicki (Platon: *Państwo*, Kęty 2001): "doskonale"; I.M. Crombie (*An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*. Vol. II: *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*. London—New York 1963, p. 56):

human cognitive activity cannot, according to Plato, be correctly described by the dichotomy of knowledge and ignorance, because there is something between (*metaxu*) them. This "something" is a belief and its object is and is not at the same time. This object is not *pantelōs*, but it is also not non-being.[29] It is also recognized more clearly than non-being but less clearly than being. An example of knowledge's object is beauty itself (*auto kalon*) or the idea of beauty itself (*idea autou kallous — R.* 479a 1—2), and this object is something one (*hen*) and non-relative (*aei kata tauta hōsautōs on — R.* 479e 7—8). In juxtaposition to it, the object of belief is a plurality and it is relative, and sound or colour are examples of it (*R.* 480a 2). In Book VI, a point of departure for the discussion, a slightly different dichotomy can be found. In the famous metaphor of the line,[30] Plato starts from the difference between the believable (*doxaston*) and the knowable (*gnōston*). The first is connected with sensual experience (*horōmenon*) and it is unclear and untrue. The second is joined with intellectual cognition (*nooumenon*, *noēton*) and it is clear and true (*R.* 509d 9; 510a 9). Finally, as is well known, there are four states of soul (*pathēmata en tēi psuchēi*) in the metaphor of the line: *noēsis* and *dianoia* are the contents of mental activity; *pistis* and *eikasia* are in the area of sensory perception (*R.* 511d 8—e 2). The objects of *eikasia* are images (*eikones*) of which examples are shadows or reflections in the water (*R.* 509e 1—510a 3). The objects of *pistis* are things which are the sources of shadows and reflections, i.e., plants or the objects of craft (*R.* 510a 5—6). The characteristic of *dianoia* includes both the object and the activity. Hypotheses[31] are the starting point

---

"totally"; J. Annas (*An Introduction*, p. 196): "fully"; S. Benardete (*Socrates Second Sailing. On Plato's* Republic. Chicago—London 1989, p. 136): "perfectly"; K. Dorter (*The Transformation of Plato's* Republic. Lanham—Boulder—New York—Toronto—Oxford 2006, p. 153): "completely"; S. Rosen (*Plato's* Republic. *A Study*. New Haven—London 2005, p. 218): "entirely"; É. Chambry (Plato: *Oeuvres Completes*. vol. VII.1. Paris 1933, p. 93): "absolument"; R.K. Maurer (*Platons 'Staat' und die Demokratie*. Berlin 1930, p. 230): "vollkommen."

[29] It is worth mentioning that the difference between knowledge and belief can be used as an argument for the existence of ideas. See Pl., *Ti.* 51d 3—7: "If understanding and true opinion are distinct, then these 'by themselves' things definitely exist — these Forms, the objects not of our sense perception, but of our understanding only. But if — as some people think — true opinion does not differ in any way from understanding, then all the things we perceive through our bodily senses must be assumed to be the most stable things there are" (translated by D.J. Zeyl).

[30] A summary of the studies up to the mid-1980s can be found in: Y. Lafrance: *Pour intrepréter Platon*. Vol. I: *La ligne en* République *VI, 509d—511e. Bilan analytique des études (1804—1984).* Montréal 1987.

[31] W.D. Ross (*Plato's Theory of Ideas*. Oxford 1951, p. 51) suggests that they have an existential character.

of *dianoia*, i.e., something that is not only undefined (*oudena logon didonai*) but also unjustified,[32] and this mental operation heads consequently (*homologoumenos*) from the hypotheses to an end. Examples of hypotheses are the even, the uneven, three forms of the angles and the shapes (*R.* 510c 4—5). The demonstration objects for *dianoia* are the square itself (*tetragonon auton*) or the diagonal/diameter itself (*diametros autē* — *R.* 510d 7—8).[33] As can be seen, Plato uses the pronoun *autos*, *-ē*, *-on* to describe the object of mathematics, which is generally reserved for the ideas in his philosophy. This raises the question of whether the mathematician takes up the ideas. Summarising his teacher's philosophy, Aristotle states that

> apart from the both perceptibles and the Forms are the objects of mathematics […] which are intermediate between them, differing from the perceptible ones in being eternal and immovable, and from the Forms in that there are many similar ones, whereas the Form itself in each case is one only (*Metaph.* 987b 14—18, trans. C.D.C. Reeve).

Middle and late dialogues of Plato

In the *Republic* (*R.* 511d 4), mathematics is also "between," but it is between *pistis* and *nous*.[34] The latter has a common starting point with

[32] R.M. Hare (*Plato and the Mathematicians*. In: *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*. Ed. R. Brambough. London 1965, pp. 21—22) thinks that it is only about lack of the definition.

[33] As is well known, Plato stresses that there is a connection between mathematics and the sensual world. It is stated in the *Republic* that mathematicians can illustrate mathematical objects by, for example, drawing a square on the sand. But they are aware that the proper object of their activity is the square in the mind and not the drawn one. The deeper connection between mathematics and the material reality can be found in the *Timaeus*, where geometry is the essence of the material being (*Ti.* 53c ff.). Every bodily being can be reduced to the four elements that are physical manifestations of the four so-called "platonic solids" and they can be reduced to the two basic forms of the triangle — rectangular and equilateral. That is why mathematics is a "bridge" between the sensory and the intellectual spheres. See J.S. Morrison: *Two Unresolved Difficulties in the Line and Cave*. "Phronesis" 1977, no. 22, p. 231.

[34] This position of mathematics is certainly opposed to the Democritean and Protagorean beliefs concerning this science; see Arist., *Metaph.* 997b 32 ff. = DK 80 B 7; W.D. Ross: *Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Vol. I. Oxford 1924, p. 232.

dianoia — the hypothesis, but its activity is first directed at something higher — to something not hypothetical (*anupotheton*) and to the principle of the whole (*tou pantos archē*) — and then *nous* descends to the Forms and uses only Forms themselves (*R.* 511b 6—c 2). The ability to ascend and to descend is nothing other than dialectics (*dunamis tou dialegesthai*), i.e., the kind of knowledge which enables the *logos itself* to see noetic being (*R.* 511c 5—6). So, Plato also uses the pronoun *autos* to specify a special activity of reason. When it works *itself*, it is separated from sensual data. When it considers *itself* a quadrilateral, it makes it without physical images. When this activity is undertaken by the *logos* of a mathematician who is not able to rise above the hypotheses, the mathematics is simply a kind of skill (*technē* — *R.* 511c 6). The truth of mathematical theses is only relative and not absolute because it is relative to the accepted hypotheses and the process of deduction. The knowledge of the mathematician is not as clear as the knowledge of the philosopher and one can hazard a guess that the former could be treated as a belief.[35] This is why Plato shows that hypotheses need to be justified and this justification comes from disciplines other than mathematics. When a mathematical activity is undertaken by a mathematician-philosopher, a given form of mathematical knowledge is not only coherent but also fully well-founded through dialectical knowledge. Mathematical beings and the principles then constitute *epistēmē*.[36] This does not mean that the difference between mathematics and dialectics is razed. It should not be forgotten that a hypothesis in mathematics

[35] One may object to this hypothesis but it seems that a mathematician as mathematician does not know which hypotheses are justified and which are (probably) not. Nothing precludes the possibility that a new hypothesis is added or an old hypothesis is changed especially since the deductive model of mathematics was still *in statu nascendi* in Plato's time.

[36] In the *Republic*, there are geometrical beings and the numbers themselves (*R.* 525d 6). In the *Phaedo*, there are two important statements about mathematics. There are the undivided and non-added numbers (*Phd.* 96e—97b) and the number is the number thanks to participation (*metaschesis*) in the given being-essence (*ousia*), e.g., the number two is two thanks to its participation in the *duas* (*Phd.* 101c 2—5). This is probably connected with the so-called *agrapha dogmata* of Plato. In this theory, Plato accepted two kinds of numbers: mathematical and ideal. The latter is not a multitude of unities, but rather it is an undivided and non-added whole. There are only ten ideal numbers and they are inferred from the two highest principles: the one (*hen*) and the indefinite dyad (*aoristos duas*). For more on this, see: K. Gaiser: *Platons Ungeschriebene Lehre. Studien zur systematischen und geschichtlichen Begründung der Wissenschaften in der Platonischen Schule*. Stuttgart 1963, p. 115 ff.; W. Burkert: *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*. Cambridge 1972, pp. 15—28; G. Reale: *Per una nuova intepretazione di Platone*. Milano 2003, p. 228 ff.; B. Dembiński: *Późna nauka Platona. Związki ontologii i matematyki*. Katowice 2003, p. 81 ff.

need not be justified and it is a self-evident principle. A philosopher finds a real hypothesis (*tōi onti* — *R.* 511b 5) *qua* hypothesis which needs to be justified by something non-hypothetical. According to Plato, mathematical operations consist in examination and searching (*skepsis* — *R.* 510d 3; *zētēsis* — *R.* 511a 4) which is necessary and coherent, whereas the philosophical activity is to grasp and to contemplate (*haptesthai* — *R.* 511b 4—7; *theōrein* — *R.* 511c 6). For a mathematician, mathematical objects are self-evident (*panti phanera* — *R.* 510d 1; *enargeis* — *R.* 511a 8) and self-sufficient (*auta*), i.e., they do not need to be justified, but the philosopher is aware that mathematical hypotheses must be justified by higher principles which are really self-sufficient (*auta dia auta* — *R.* 511c 2). But three questions need to be explained:

(1) what are the above-hypothetical beings;

(2) what can be said about the method which enables one to go beyond the hypotheses and to go back to them;

(3) what is the non-hypothetical — the principle of all.

As far as (3) is concerned, it is universally accepted that Plato has the idea of the good in mind.[37] As for the method mentioned in (2), the *Republic* offers no description of how to go beyond the mathematical hypotheses. It is important to say more what kind of hypotheses could be accepted in Plato's time. W.R. Knorr states that in Euclid's *Elements*, books I, III and VI contain the earliest, Ionian form of Greek geometry. Its beginnings can be dated back to Thales and Oenopides, and it was presented for the first time as an organized structure by Hippocrates of Chios.[38] In the first book for example, a point (*sēmeion* — def. 1), a line (*grammē* — def. 2), a plane (*epiphaneia* — def. 5), three angles (def. 10, 11, 12), a shape (def. 14), a diameter (def. 17) and a quadrilateral (def. 19) are defined. On the other hand,

---

[37] See, e.g., W.D. Ross: *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, p. 54; R. Robinson: *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, p. 160; I.M. Crombie: *An Examination of Photos Doctrines*, Vol. II, p. 550 ff.; J.E. Raven: *Plato's Thought in the Making*. Cambridge 1965, p. 162; K. Gaiser: *Platons Ungeschriebene Lehre*, pp. 91—95; J. Halfwassen: *Der Aufstieg zum Einen. Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin*. Stuttgart 1992, p. 20; J. Gajda: *Platońska droga do idei. Aksjologiczny rodowód platońskiej ontologii*. Wrocław 1993, p. 93; H.-G. Gadamer: *Idea dobra w dyskusji między Platonem a Arystotelesem*. Trans. Z. Nerczuk. Kęty 2002, p. 64; H.J. Krämer: *Die Idee des Guten. Sonnen- und Linengleichniss*. In: *Platon. Politeia*. Ed. O. Höffe. Berlin 2005, p. 192.

[38] W.R. Knorr: *The Evolution of the Euclidean Elements. A Study of the Theory of Incommensurable Magnitudes and Its Significance for Early Greek Geometry*. Dodrecht 1975, p. 306. B.L. van der Waerden, *Science Awakening*. Trans. A. Dresden. Groningen 1954, p. 135. T. Heath (*A History of Greek Mathematics*. Vol. I: *From Thales to Euclid*. Oxford 1921, p. 374) thinks that definitions 4 and 7 came into being in Plato's time and the others are earlier.

the seventh book includes the definitions of a unit (def. 1), a number (def. 2), an even (def. 6) and an uneven number (def. 7). Historically, this book likely contains the findings of Theaetetus, a mathematician closely related to Plato's school.[39] If Knorr is right, the philosopher-dialectician should be able to go beyond the above-mentioned hypotheses. But is it possible to find the traces of such a procedure in Plato's dialogues?

In the fullest possible way, mathematics was used by Plato in the *Timaeus*. Since a detailed presentation of the difficult and often unclear arguments contained in this dialogue would go too far beyond the framework of this paper, only the most important elements will be presented that will allow for a clarification of the Platonic concept of knowledge.[40] For Plato, the universe has a spiritual and bodily dimension and it is a reflection of the noetic sphere. Its soul and body are the work of Demiurge. The first was created from what is divisible (*meriston*) or the other (*heteron*) and indivisible (*ameriston*) or the same (*tauton*) and from what is mixed with both. The resulting entity was divided again and combined into a harmonious whole (*Ti.* 35a—36b), i.e., the parts are arranged in a geometric series in which harmonic and arithmetic means are inserted.[41] A feature of matter is being three-dimensional, i.e., being solid. Each solid consists of surfaces and they can be assembled, according to Plato, of triangles (*Ti.* 53c—d). Plato does not explicitly say that the triangles could also be constructed but he seems to allude to that: "[…] but the principles which are still higher than these are known only to God and the man who is dear to God" (*Ti.* 53d 6—7; trans. R.G. Bury).

This enigmatic comment can mean that one should look for these principles outside Plato's dialogues, in the so-called "unwritten doctrine." From the testimonies,[42] we learn it carried out a deeper dimensional reduction

---

[39] W.R. Knorr: *The Evolution*, p. 273.

[40] The disputes over the interpretation of this dialogue date back to antiquity, i.e., to the first generation of Plato's successors: Xenocrates and Crantor. Contemporary literature on this dialogue is enormous; see, e.g., A.E. Taylor: *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Oxford 1928; *Interpreting Timaeus — Critias*. Eds. T. Calvo, L. Brisson. Sankt Augustin 1997; *Le* Timée *de Platon. Contributions a l'historie de sa reception. Platos* Timaios. *Beiträge zu seiner Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Ed. A. Neschke-Hentschke. Louvain—Paris 2000; T.K. Johansen: *Plato's Natural Philosophy. A Study of the* Timaeus-Critias. Cambridge 2004.

[41] A. Barker: *Three Approaches to Canonic Division*. "Apeiron" 1991, no. 24, p. 68 ff.; M. von Perger: *Die Allseele in Platons Timaios*. Stuttgart—Leipzig 1997, p. 74 ff.

[42] See: K. Gaiser: *Platons Ungeschriebene Lehre*; J.N. Findlay: *Plato. The Written and Unwritten Doctrines*. London 1974; M.-D. Richard: *L'esignement oral de Platon*. Paris 1986; H.J. Krämer: *Platone e i fondamenti della metafisica*. Milano 1992.

than the one presented in the *Timaeus*. A solid can be reduced to planes and the planes, in turn, to sections. However, there is something else that is earlier and that is the principle of that geometrical order, namely, undefined spatiality,[43] which enables geometric thinking at all. This principle is called the "indefinite dyad" (*aoristos duas*) in the unwritten doctrine and its function is to double or to multiplicate. It needs to be marked by another principle — unity (*to hen*). The representation of unity in the geometrical order is probably a point and when it is connected with the undefined spatiality, it makes the space definite because every point of this space can be circumscribed with reference to this point. So, Plato shows that something that is non-hypothetic for a geometrician does in fact need a justification. He could conclude that the geometrical definitions are only hypothetical through their analysis. Let us take a look at two examples:

Def. 1: "A point (*sēmeion*) is that which has no part." To understand this, one needs to be able to discern what a part is.[44]

Def. 2: "A line (a section — *grammē*) is breadthless longitude (*mēkos*)." To understand this, one needs to understand what breadth and longitude are.

In the *Elements*, there is also no explanation of the definitions' order and number.[45] The philosopher, however, justifies this order by dimensional reduction. The reduction is carried out on the object level, and its equivalent on the epistemological level is an analysis. The reverse procedure then is the construction of being from the principles and deduction. The acceptance of an undefined dyad as a principle of an undefined (infinite) multiplicity indicated the necessity of another mathematical reform, namely the rejection of the notion of a point and its replacement with the notion of a segment, since the segment-line appearing thanks to the dyad defines it and grants it the characteristics of divisibility. From the *Parmenides* dialogue (*Prm*. 137d—138a), we learn that what has no part is infinite and indefinite (*apeiron*) geometrically (without beginning, end, middle; without shape; without position), and thus basically, it is what is non-geometric. It seems then that in the area of beings, there would be no such thing as a mathematical point.[46]

---

[43] Z. Król: *Platon i podstawy matematyki współczesnej. Pojęcie liczby u Platona*. Nowa Wieś 2005, p. 96.

[44] See the discussion in *Theaetetus* 204d—205a.

[45] What is interesting is that some of the definitions are not used at all. In geometry, the so-called "postulates" (*aitēmata*) are also accepted, i.e., the theorems are accepted without proof (in Book I of *Elements*, there are five of them; all of them — except postulate 4 — are constructions) and there are also general terms (*koinai ennoiai* — and those in Book I are also five). The postulates were probably written by Euclides, but the general concepts may be later. See T. Heath: *A History*, vol. I, pp. 375—376.

[46] The issue of the indivisibility in Plato's philosophy is very controversial. I agree with R. Sorabji's findings; see R. Sorabji: *Time, Creation, Continuum. Theories in*

The discussion in the *Timaeus* also shows that the arithmetical order is important and the concept of a number is something fundamental. The oldest definition of a number (dating to the Pythagoreans and perhaps even Thales[47]) says that it is a connection of units. The numbers are divided into even and uneven, and an even sequence starts from 2, and the uneven from 3.[48] The number 1 is not a number and it is a non-arithmetical being (it can be called a logical predicate[49]). It serves to make other numbers: through its addition to even, an uneven number is made, and through its addition to uneven, an even number is made.[50] As it was said, Plato calls this basic division of the numbers is called a hypothesis. The fundamentals of arithmetic can be found in the seventh book of the *Elements*:

> Def. 1. A unit is that by virtue of which each of the things that exist is called one.
> Def. 2. A number is a multitude composed of units.
> Def. 3. A number is a part of a number, the less of the greater, when it measures the greater;
> Def. 4. but parts when it does not measure it.
> Def. 5. The greater number is a multiple of the less when it is measured by the less.
> Def. 6. An even number is that which is divisible into two equal parts.
> Def. 7. An odd number is that which is not divisible into two equal parts, or that which differs by a unit from an even number" (trans. T.L. Heath).

The first two definitions do not play a major role in the proofs carried out in Book VII. In definitions 2—7, however, the notions of "measure" and "being a measure," the "smaller — larger" relationship and subtraction are presupposed. One needs to remember that arithmetic operations were presented in geometric form, where the monad corresponded to a segment. When the irrationality of the hypotenuse was discovered, it appeared not

Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. London 1983, pp. 358—359.

[47] Iamb. *In Nic.* 10, 8—10: "Thales defines quantity, which is a number, as the set of monads (*sustēma monadōn*)"; trans. A.P.

[48] See DK 44 B 5; Arist. *Metaph*. 986a 17—18; Nicomachus of Gerasa: *Introduction to Arithmetic*, I 7, 1.

[49] Z. Król: *Platon i podstawy*, p. 29.

[50] Archytas and Philolaus were probably already aware of this otherness of the number 1; DK 47 A 4; DK 44 B 5. For more on this, see C.A. Huffman: *Philolaus of Croton. Pythagorean and Presocratic*. Cambridge 1993, p. 177 ff.; C.A. Huffman: *Archytas of Tarentum. Pythagorean, Philosopher and Mathematician King*. Cambridge 2005, p. 485 ff.

only that a monad is really not a number, but also that there is a segment which cannot be measured by units.[51]

Mathematics in this form cannot be a basis for knowledge, it must be grounded and, as it turned out, reformed. It found its basis in two already mentioned principles: unity and undefined dyad, and the theory of ideal numbers. The latter, as we try to reconstruct it on the basis of indirect proofs, are generated from principles, most probably thanks to the method of diaeresis.[52] Without going into the details of this concept, what is important is that Plato noticed what is not arithmetical in arithmetic and he pointed out that it somehow funds and conditions as a principle the whole sphere of human intellectual activity. The project to find a definitive justification for human knowledge and to revise its present form did not, however, involve only mathematical order, although, in this respect, it turned out to be fundamental. For Plato, the sphere of values can be considered the most important.

The discussion on values permeates most of the writings of the founder of the Academy. Plato searches for the definition of virtues, considers the possibility of shaping the human character so that virtues can be realized in it, and finally postulates the existence of such beings as the idea of beauty (*Symposium*), justice (*Phaedrus*) or goodness. He introduces the last idea in the *Republic*. The Good becomes that thanks to which every human being has the power/capacity (*dunamis*) of cognition, and this *dunamis* connected with the truthfulness (the true object of cognition) gives him or her knowledge. The object of cognition obtains truthfulness, to be recognized (*gignōskesthai*), to be (*einai*) and being (*ousia*) from the Good. The Good itself is also above the ideas (*epekeina tēs ousias*) (*R.* 507a—509d).[53] Why does the Good create knowledge? Plato gives the following explanation: "the form of the good is the most important thing to learn about (*megiston mathēma*) and that it's by their relation to it that just things and the others become useful and beneficial (*chrēsima kai ōphelima*)" (*R.* 505a; trans. G.M.A. Grube). Thinking in Platonic categories: a good car is an efficient car (capable of carrying people or things), that is, a useful car; however, a car is a car because it is a four-wheeled vehicle equipped with an engine.

---

[51] For more on this, see A. Szabó: *The Beginnings of Greek Mathematics*. Budapest 1978.

[52] See Porphyry's and Alexander of Aphrodisias's reports in Simplicius's *Commentary on Aristotle's "Physiscs"* 453, 22—455, 1 (= 23B Gaiser).

[53] This does not mean that the Good is transcendent over the already transcendent ideas; see R. Ferber: *L'idea del bene è o non è transcendente? Ancora su epekeina tēs ousias*. In: *Platone e tradizione platonica. Studi su filosofia antica*, Eds. M. Bonazzi, F. Trabattoni. Milano 2003, p. 127—149.

The value of being useful is something added here, but it is so important that it is able to "activate" the cognitive structures of a human being: "Every soul pursues the good and does its utmost for its sake. It divines that the good is something but it is perplexed and cannot adequately grasp what it is…" (*R.* 505d 11—e 2, trans. G.M.A. Grube). When the senses attain the object,[54] the process of building expertise about it begins; when a mind achieves an idea or ideas, cognition finds its fulfilment and it can be said that someone has Knowledge. Knowledge is like its object, i.e., eternal, unchanging, true and real, but it is also something more. It is good and its being good is anchored "beyond" the given idea(s) in the Good Itself. So, the idea of the Good is a distinguished element in Plato's philosophy similar to the principles of the unwritten teaching.

But Plato encountered difficulties in his theory, which are presented in the *Parmenides*. It turned out that some of the predicates of ideas (e.g., indivisibility or non-relativity) could create contradictions both in the theory of ideas and in the concept of knowledge. This seems to be why Plato searched for something higher than the ideas, started to consider whether there was an idea for any multitude of objects[55] and the main scientific method was a dichotomous division (*diairesis*).[56] This method is based on the synoptic and diaeretic procedure and enables one to see the hierarchical order between the notions and relations between them (genus — species order), to formulate definitions and to grasp the essence of a thing(s). The discussion with the sophistic movement and on the nature of language (*Cratylus*) made Plato aware that the division cannot be arbitrary and the definition should describe the *real* being (*Sph.* 221c), and the *real* first of all is what is *natural*. An example can be found in the *Timaeus* (39e—40a): the alive contains the immortal (gods) and mortal beings. The latter is divided into flying beings, swimming beings, and beings that move on land. The latter is then divided into rational and non-rational beings. The former, in turn, is divided into man and woman. In the case of Plato's philosophy, such a model of knowledge can be encapsulated from a static and dynamic

[54] In spite of the fact that sense perception is here the starting point, knowledge cannot be reduced to it, which Plato states clearly in the *Theaetetus*. The first part of this dialogue (151e—187d) is devoted to the relation between knowledge and perception (*aisthēsis*). Plato considers the questions of the subjectivity and variability of the perception and the individuality of its object. These three positions are represented by the sophist Protagoras, Heracliteans and Theaetetus, and all three are criticized by the founder of the Academy.

[55] This pertains particularly to something described in negative way (e.g., not-beautiful, not-good). The consequence is the elimination of the "non-being" category through its reduction to the "difference" category in the *Sophist*.

[56] See Pl., *Phdr.* 265d—e; *Sph.* 253d; *Pol.* 285b; *Phlb.* 16a—17a. It should also be mentioned here that Plato allows for non-dichotomous divisions.

perspective. Knowledge is a full system of the relations between the genus and species in the whole of nature. This project is maximalist (it can be called a strong concept of knowledge), and it probably represents something that can be called divine knowledge. From the dynamic perspective, there are a method and the hypotheses at the philosopher's disposition and every single discovery can be methodically reduced to the hypotheses and be appropriately placed within the scope of the current partial knowledge (a weak concept of a knowledge). But is the partial knowledge *real* knowledge or an opinion (*doxa*)?[57]

Plato discusses the problem of whether knowledge is true opinion or true opinion with *logos* in the second and third part of *Theaetetus* (187e—201d), which is an aporetic dialogue, i.e., it ends without positively resolving the issue. If a true opinion has a propositional character and it is knowledge of a thing, then this knowledge precedes the opinion. Even if the true opinion was supplemented by the *logos* which could be an explanation of the difference (*diaphorotētos hermēneia*), the knowledge of the difference would precede this *doxa alēthēs meta logou*. Similarly to the *Cratylus*, where the problem of meaning in language cannot be positively solved in the language, it appears in the *Theaetetus* that the propositional knowledge called true opinion cannot be sufficiently determined in a propositional way. In both cases, it is necessary to grasp something beyond language, beyond proposition and extra-mental. This leads to the following questions: how can one's mind gain access to the non-sensual and extra-mental sphere? How is the sensual world conditioned by this sphere? Plato's answer to the first question would be the theory of recollection and to the second — the theory of participation. It is also probable that Plato attempted to infer the whole of reality from the first principles but this attempt was not successful, because according to the ancient testimonies, his successors were the first ones who succeeded in doing so.

[57] This problem seems to appear already in the *Symposium* (*Smp.* 202a) where Diotima says that there is something between wisdom and ignorance, and it is the right opinion (*orthē doksa*) which is something true even though no reason can be given for it (*aneu tou echein logon dounai*). The example could be taken as a definition of being happy (*Smp.* 205a): "the happy are happy by acquisition of good things, and we have no more need to ask for what end a man wishes to be happy, when such is his wish: the answer seems to be ultimate" (trans. R.G. Bury).

Conclusion

After Plato's ideas on knowledge are outlined, it is possible to return to the questions posed at the beginning of the paper. It seems that Plato is not the author of a *consistent system* of a theory of knowledge. He accepted something that could be called innatism and apriorism. However, we do not know precisely what is innate for Plato — concepts, knowledge as a whole, or the disposition to have knowledge?[58] There is also no consistent description of the process of recollection in his dialogues. Plato is an apriorist, but this apriorism does not seem to be a methodological dimension of his philosophy. Is Plato an irrationalist for whom knowledge is contemplation? This is indeed what many researchers suggest.[59] Plato can be understood as an epistemological fundamentalist, but only in the weak sense. His philosophy seems to be a scientific *project*. He called for the existence of an unshakeable basis of knowledge, but the first discovery — ideas — did not fulfil the postulate and the theory of the unwritten teaching was probably unfinished. Woleński does not, however, take into consideration another possibility. One needs to remember that there was already a dispute in Antiquity as to whether Plato was a sceptic or a dogmatic.[60] Settling this dispute depends naturally on the definition of both terms. But if it is possible to read his philosophy as sceptical (and many of the statements in the dialogues seem to confirm that, e.g., the monologue of Timaeus is described as a probable account [*eikos logos*]), to pass it over is the weakest feature in Woleński's interpretation of Plato's philosophy.

[58] For more on this, see G. Fine: *The Possibility of Inquiry. Meno's Paradox from Socrates to Sextus*. Oxford 2014, p. 140 ff.

[59] See, e.g., I.M. Crombie: *An Examination*, vol. I. p. 65, 192, 316; Z. Danek: *Myślę, więc nie wiem. Próba interpretacji platońskiego dialogu „Teajtet"*. Łódź 2000, p. 249; R. Rhees: *In Dialogue with Greeks*. Vol. II: *Plato and Dialectic*. Aldershot—Burlington 2004, p. 144; R. Spaemann: *Die Philosophenkönige*. In: *Platon. Politeia*, p. 130.

[60] Diogenes Laertius: *Vitae philosophorum*, III 51; Sextus Empiricus: *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes*, I 33.

Bibliography

Annas J.: *An Introduction to Plato's* Republic. Oxford 1981.

Audi R.: *Epistemology. A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. London—New York 1998.

Barker A.: *Three Approaches to Canonic Division*. "Apeiron" 1991, no. 24, pp. 49—83.

Benardete S.: *Socrates Second Sailing. On Plato's* Republic. Chicago—London 1989.

Benson H.H.: *Socratic Wisdom. Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues*. Oxford 2000.

Brandwood L.: *Stylometry and Chronology*. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Ed. R. Kraut. Cambridge 1992, pp. 90—120.

Brickhouse T.C., Smith N.D.: *Plato's Socrates*. Oxford 1994.

Burkert W.: *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*. Cambridge 1972.

Calvo T., Brisson L. Eds.: *Interpreting Timaeus-Critias*. Sankt Augustin 1997.

Catana L.: *The Historiographical Concept "System of Philosophy." Its Origin, Nature, Influence and Legitimacy*. Leiden—Boston 2008.

Crombie I.M.: *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*. Vol. I: *Plato on Man and Society*. London 1962.

Crombie I.M.: *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*. Vol. II: *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*. London—New York 1963.

Cross R.C., Woozley A.D.: *Plato's* Republic. *A Philosophical Commentary*. London 1964.

Curley E.: *Rationalism*. In: *A Companion to Epistemology*. Eds. J. Dancy, E. Sosa, M. Steup. Malden—Oxford—Chichester 2010, pp. 659—663.

Danek Z.: *Myślę, więc nie wiem. Próba interpretacji platońskiego dialogu* Teajtet. Łódź 2000.

Dembiński B.: *Późna nauka Platona. Związki ontologii i matematyki*. Katowice 2003.

Diels H., Kranz W.: *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Vol. I. Berlin 1951.

Dorter K.: *The Transformation of Plato's* Republic. Lanham—Boulder—New York—Toronto—Oxford 2006.

Erler M.: *"Socrates in the Cave." Argumentations as Therapy for Passions in* Gorgias *and* Phaedo. In: *Plato Ethicus. Philosophy is Life*. Eds. M. Migliori, L.M. Napolitano Valditara. Sankt Augustin 2004, pp. 107—120.

Ferber R.: *L'idea del bene è o non è transcendente? Ancora su epekeina tēs ousias*. In: *Platone e tradizione platonica. Studi su filosofia antica*. Eds. M. Bonazzi, F. Trabattoni. Milano 2003, pp. 127—149.

Findlay J.N.: *Plato. The Written and Unwritten Doctrines*. London 1974.

Fine G.: *The Possibility of Inquiry. Meno's Paradox from Socrates to Sextus*. Oxford 2014.

Gadamer H.-G.: *Idea dobra w dyskusji między Platonem a Arystotelesem*. Trans. Z. Nerczuk. Kęty 2002.
Gaiser K.: *Platons Ungeschriebene Lehre. Studien zur systematischen und geschichtlichen Begründung der Wissenschaften in der Platonischen Schule*. Stuttgart 1963.
Gajda J.: *Platońska droga do idei. Aksjologiczny rodowód platońskiej ontologii*. Wrocław 1993.
Guthrie W.K.C.: *The History of Greek Philosophy*. Vol. IV: *Plato: the Man and His Dialogues. Earlier Period*. Cambridge 1975.
Halfwassen J.: *Der Aufstieg zum Einen. Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin*. Stuttgart 1992.
Hare R.M.: *Plato and the Mathematicians*. In: *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle*. Ed. R. Brambough. London 1965, pp. 21—38.
Heath T.: *A History of Greek Mathematics*. Vol. I: *From Thales to Euclid*. Oxford 1921.
Huffman C.A.: *Archytas of Tarentum. Pythagorean, Philosopher and Mathematician King*. Cambridge 2005.
Huffman C.A.: *Philolaus of Croton. Pythagorean and Presocratic*. Cambridge 1993.
Irwin T.: *Plato's Ethics*. Oxford 1995.
Irwin T.: *Plato's Moral Theory. The Early and Middle Dialogues*. Oxford 1977.
Johansen T.K.: *Plato's Natural Philosophy. A Study of the* Timaeus-Critias. Cambridge 2004.
Kahn C.H.: *A Return to the Theory of the Verb* Be *and the Concept of Being*. In: C.H. Kahn: *Essays on Being*. Oxford 2009, pp. 16—40.
Kahn C.H.: *Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues*. "Classical Quarterly" 1981, no. 31, pp. 305—320.
Kahn C.H.: *On the Relative Date of the* Gorgias *and the* Protagoras. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 1988, no. 6, pp. 87—88.
Knorr W.R.: *The Evolution of the Euclidean Elements. A Study of the Theory of Incommensurable Magnitudes and Its Significance for Early Greek Geometry*. Dodrecht 1975.
Krämer H.J.: *Die Idee des Guten. Sonnen- und Linengleichniss*. In: *Platon*: *Politeia*. Ed. O. Höffe. Berlin 2005, pp. 135—154.
Krämer H.J.: *Platone e i fondamenti della metafisica*. Milano 1992.
Kraut R.: *Comments on Gregory Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus."* "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 1983, no. 1, pp. 59—70.
Król Z.: *Platon i podstawy matematyki współczesnej. Pojęcie liczby i Platona*. Nowa Wieś 2005.
Lafrance Y.: *Pour intrepréter Platon*. Vol. I: *La ligne en* République *VI, 509d—511e. Bilan analytique des études (1804—1984)*. Montréal 1987.
Maurer R.K.: *Platons 'Staat' und die Demokratie*. Berlin 1930.
Morrison J.S.: *Two Unresolved Difficulties in the Line and Cave*. "Phronesis" 1977, no. 22, pp. 212—231.

Morrow G.R.: *Plato's Cretean City, A Historical Interpretation of the* Laws. Princeton 1993.

Nehamas A.: *Socratic Intellectualism*. "Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy" 1986, no. 2, pp. 275—316.

Neschke-Hentschke A. Ed.: *Le* Timée *de Platon. Contributions a l'historie de sa reception. Platos* Timaios. *Beiträge zu seiner Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Louvain—Paris 2000.

Pacewicz A.: *O ewolucyjnym charakterze filozofii Platona*. In: *Philosophiae Itinera*. Eds. A. Pacewicz, A. Olejarczyk, J. Jaskóła. Wrocław 2009, pp. 501—518.

Pacewicz A.: *Wisdom — Knowledge — Belief. The Problem of Demarcation in Plato's* Phaedo. "Studia Philosophica Wartislaviensia. Supplementary Volume. English Edition" 2013, pp. 11—23.

Penner T.: *What Laches and Nicias Miss — and Whether Socrates Thinks Courage Merely a Part of Virtue*. "Ancient Philosophy" 1992, no. 12, pp. 1—27.

Plato: *Gorgias*. Ed. E.R. Dodds. Oxford 1959.

Press G.A.: *Preface*. In: *Plato's Dialogues. New Studies & Interpretations*. Ed. G.A. Press. Lanham 1993, pp. vii—ix.

Raven J.E.: *Plato's Thought in the Making*. Cambridge 1965.

Reale G.: *Per una nuova intepretazione di Platone*. Milano 2003.

Reale G.: *Storia della filosofia antica*. Vol. II. Milano 1988[6].

Reeve C.D.C.: *Socrates in the* Apology. *An Essay on Plato's* Apology of Socrates. Indianapolis 1989.

Rhees R.: *In Dialogue with Greeks*. Vol. II: *Plato and Dialectic*. Aldershot—Burlington 2004.

Richard M.-D.: *L'esignement oral de Platon*. Paris 1986.

Robinson R.: *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*. New York 1941.

Rosen S.: *Plato's* Republic. *A Study*. New Haven—London 2005.

Ross W.D.: *Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Vol. I. Oxford 1924.

Ross W.D.: *Plato's Theory of Ideas*. Oxford 1951.

Rutherford R.B.: *The Art. of Plato. Ten Essays in the Platonic Interpretation*. Harvard 1995.

Salmon W.C.: *Theory*. In: *A Companion to Epistemology*. Eds. J. Dancy, E. Sosa, M. Steup. Malden—Oxford—Chichester 2010.

Sorabji R.: *Time, Creation, Continuum. Theories in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. London 1983.

Spaemann R.: *Die Philosophenkönige*. In: *Platon: Politeia*. Ed. O. Höffe. Berlin 2005, pp. 121—134.

Stróżewski W.: *Wykłady o Platonie. Ontologia*. Kraków 1992.

Szabó A.: *The Beginnings of Greek Mathematics*. Budapest 1978.

Tarán L.: *Platonism and Socratic Ignorance*. In: *Platonic Investigations*. Ed. D.J. O'Meara. Washington 1985, pp. 85—109.

Taylor A.E.: *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*. Oxford 1928.

van der Waerden B.L.: *Science Awakening*. Trans. A. Dresden. Groningen 1954.

Vlastos G.: *The Socratic Elenchus*. "Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy" 1983, no. 1, pp. 27—58.

von Perger M.: *Die Allseele in Platons Timaios*. Stuttgart—Leipzig 1997.
Williams M.: *Skepticism*. In: *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*. Eds. J. Greco, E. Sosa. Malden—Oxford 1999.
Woleński J.: *Epistemologia*. Vol. I: *Zarys historyczny i problemy metateoretyczne*. Kraków 2000.
Woleński J.: *Epistemologia*. Vol. II: *Wiedza i poznanie*. Kraków 2001.
Woodruff P.: *Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge*. In: *Ancient Greek Epistemology*. Ed. S. Everson. Cambridge 1990, pp. 60—84.

Artur Pacewicz — doktor habilitowany w Instytucie Filozofii Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.

„Folia Philosophica". Vol. 42, s. 115—139
Katowice 2019
ISSN 2353-9445 (online)

DOI: http://doi.org/10.31261/fp.8520

Piotr Świercz
Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6290-879X

The Allegory of the Cave and Plato's Epistemology of Politics

Mit jaskini i Platońska epistemologia polityki

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest analiza Platońskiej epistemologii polityki w świetle VII księgi Państwa, przedstawiającej mit jaskini. Tytułowe zagadnienie jest ukazane w kontekście werytatywnej interpretacji ontologii greckiej (w nawiązaniu do dzieł Charlesa Kahn'a), a także na tle polemiki Platona z sofistyką (Protagoras i Gorgiasz) wraz z odniesieniami do źródeł Platońskich inspiracji — Eleaci i pitagorejczycy. W trakcie analiz zaproponowane zostaną hipotezy dotyczące pewnych aspektów mitu jaskini (e.g. status ognia), jak i zaprezentowana zostanie interpretacja Platońskiego projektu polityczno-filozoficznego.

Słowa klucze: Platon, mit jaskini, epistemologia, ontologia werytatywna, filozofia polityki

The goal of this text is to analyze Plato's epistemology of politics. In other words, it is a reconstruction, or more precisely, an indication of a possible interpretative model of Plato's political reflection. The necessary starting point for achieving this goal is to show the context of Plato's thought. This contextual analysis, which is necessarily limited to a very synthetic sketch, will be divided into two parts. (1) I will point to the inseparability of epistemology and ontology in Greek pre-Platonic (and Platonic) reflection; this inseparability, in turn, leads to a particular version of ontology, which I call veritative ontology to differentiate it from existential ontology. (2) I will outline the political and legal reflection of sophistry, which is the

main reference point for Plato, as it is overcoming sophistry which, in my opinion, was Plato's main goal. In this context, it will also be necessary to refer to the main theses of Pythagorean and Eleatic reflection, whose criticism (especially Eleatism) was, on the one hand, an integral part of sophistry, and on the other — an important source of inspiration for Plato.

I consider it necessary to emphasize that my intention is, as I emphasized above, to indicate a possible interpretative model, not to present an exhaustive elaboration of this topic. Many issues will be treated very synthetically. A full analysis of the issue would require a monograph, perhaps more than one. However, my interpretation may serve as a starting point for further research.

The context of Plato's political reflection

Veritative ontology

The starting point for the concept of veritative ontology is a reference to the research of Charles H. Kahn and his book *The Verb "Be" in Ancient Greek*.

I'd like to start with a very short summary of Kahn's analysis of the meaning of *einai* in ancient Greek. The main thesis of Kahn's article *The Greek Verb "To Be" and the Concept of Being*,[1] recently elaborated in his famous book, is that "the Greeks did not have our notion of existence."[2] Instead, as Kahn convincingly proves, "for the philosophical usage of the verb, the most fundamental value of *einai* when used alone (without predicates) is […] 'to be so,' 'to be the case,' or 'to be true.'"[3] Very important for the purpose of my thesis are Kahn's remarks about the durative aspect of *einai*. The verb *einai* has no aorist and no perfect forms. Kahn pointed out some philosophical consequences of this: "what is the philosophic significance of this morpho-semantic fact? I think it may help us to understand (1) the Greek notion of eternity as a stable present, an untroubled state of

[1] C.H. Kahn: *The Greek Verb "To Be" and the Concept of Being.* "Foundations of Language" 1966, vol. 2, pp. 245—265.

[2] Ibid., p. 248.

[3] Ibid., p. 250.

duration, (2) the classical antithesis of Being and Becoming, and (3) the incommensurability already noted between the Greek concept of being and the modern-medieval notion of existence."[4]

The veritative meaning of *einai* allows us not only to make translational corrections to Greek philosophical texts and to indicate an alternative to the existential conception of ontology; the veritative meaning of *einai* also allows us to look at all of Greek philosophy from a completely new perspective. Its object, its aim would not be to determine what exists and what does not exist. Rather, it would be to gain an understanding of how the *kosmos* functions, an understanding of its laws. And understanding the *kosmos*, in itself, would connect in an inextricable way the ontological aspect with the epistemological aspect. In other words: we are talking about understanding "understanding" as the only possible way of non-dogmatic philosophizing.

Veritative ontology can be most precisely characterized on the example of Eleatian thought. Parmenides plays a special role in the history of philosophy: he was the first philosopher to introduce the terms *to on*, *to eon*, *to ouk on*, *to me on*. How the source meanings of these concepts in the philosophy of Parmenides are understood affects our understanding of the whole of post-Eleatic Greek philosophy. Here, I would like to concentrate only on the meaning and relations connecting four concepts: being, non-being, truth, and opinion.[5] For obvious reasons, the analysis presented here will be very concise and synthetic.

In his treatise *Peri Physeos*, Parmenides writes about two ways of cognition: the way of Truth, whose object is being, and the way of opinion,

---

[4] Ibid., p. 255.

[5] For clarity, it is necessary to emphasize at the start that I am a strong advocate of the two-way interpretation of Parmenides's poem *Peri Physeos*, which distinguishes the way of Truth and way of opinions. I reject, as completely inconceivable, those interpretations that distinguish a third way — the way of falsehood. The reasons for my position will become clear after an analysis of the concepts of being, non-being, truth, and opinion, but I will briefly indicate why accepting a "way of falsehood" is absurd. If truth corresponds to being, and opinion to non-being, we are faced with the fundamental question of what could correspond to falsehood. Being and non-being seem to fill up the entire admissible spectrum. If that is the case, then the way of falsehood is "empty" — in other words, it is not there at all! In reference to doubts that may arise about whether it is justified to connect opinion with non-being, since both Parmenides (fr. B6) and Plato (*Respublica*, 478e) indicate that opinion corresponds to a *mixture* of being and non-being: this is an intentional simplification on my part. Presuming that a) opinion is a mixture of being and non-being, b) opinion is not truth, and c) being corresponds to truth, we must conclude that opinion is different from truth due to its admixture of non-being. Thus opinion corresponds to non-being. I consider this mixture a form of relative non-being, because (e.g. in the light of Zeno's paradoxes) it is impossible to even imagine a form of knowledge corresponding to absolute non-being.

whose object is non-being. What are being and non-being? If we accept an existential understanding, the whole line of argument loses its significance. How could there be a way of opinion referring to what does not exist? The only alternative to the existential interpretation, both in light of the fragments of Parmenides's text and in light of the principles of rational analysis, is the acceptance of a non-existential understanding of the concepts of "being" and "non-being." Being (*to eon*) is as follows:

1. non-born and indestructible;
2. eternal;
3. immutable;
4. indivisible and complete;
5. full and non-gradational;
6. absolute and identical;
7. necessary and connected to justice and righteousness;
8. authoritative;
9. unified.[6]

In consequence, non-being does not refer to what is non-existent, but to what is born and perishable, temporal, mutable, divisible and incomplete, gradational, relative and non-identical, unnecessary and unconnected with justice and righteousness, unauthoritative and plural. Non-being cannot be grasped by true cognition, only by "probable" cognition.[7] Neither the concept of "being," nor the ontology at its source are existential in nature; rather, they are veritative-epistemological.

What are the political and legal consequences of the veritative standpoint? The matter is undoubtedly complicated. The main problem lies in establishing the relationship between being and non-being. Are they levels of reality that are isolated from one another or are they somehow connected? It seems that two possibilities are justified here. The first is recognizing that the levels of being—truth and non-being—opinion are completely separate from one another. Consequently, knowing the truth—being would be useless at the level of non-being—opinion. The second possibility is that these two levels are connected, but it is a one-way relationship — that is, only being—truth affects non-being—opinion, not the other way around. In this

[6] D. Kubok: *Prawda i mniemania. Studium filozofii Parmenidesa z Elei*. Katowice 2004, pp. 444—445.

[7] The question arises whether we see a similar distinction between certain knowledge and probable knowledge in Pythagorean philosophy, though such a distinction is not made *expressis verbis*. Of course, this question is open and debatable. However, I think that in Pythagorean philosophy, the status of certain knowledge can be ascribed to mathematics. Knowledge of entities that can be grasped by the senses would belong to the category of probable knowledge.

case, knowing the truth-being would be the basis for probabilistic knowledge of the sphere of non-being—opinion, although the “probabilistic truth” concerning non-being—opinion would not be identical with truth—being, but would merely constitute its approximation.

The second problem regarding the political and legal consequences of veritative ontology concerns the classification of the political and legal aspect itself: does it belong to the sphere of being—truth or non-being—opinion? Taking into consideration the features of both orders presented by Parmenides, it seems reasonable to attribute political and legal reality to the sphere of non-being—opinion. However, the matter is more complicated. After all, in the sphere of being—truth we can create rational constructs of law and of the state. While everyday political and legal activity, with its multiplicity and volatility, certainly belongs to the sphere of non-being—opinion, it seems crucial here to settle the problem of the relationship between the sphere of being—truth and non-being—opinion. If they are isolated, the matter is closed — the political and legal aspect belongs to the sphere of non-being—opinion. However, if we accept the alternative I have indicated — that the sphere of being—truth affects the sphere of non-being opinion — things get much more complicated. The political and legal aspect, although in our daily activities belonging to the sphere of non-being—opinion, would be (or at least could be) somehow rooted in the sphere of being—truth. The key question is: what does this rootedness consist in? Let us put the problem rather naively — does the rooting concern only some of the most general laws of reason, such as mathematical and logical rules, or more specific “political and legal” threads, such as “true” justice, the cognition of which is a prerequisite for bringing about the best possible “probabilistic justice” in the sphere of non-being—opinion, or even a “true” political system that would constitute a model for all regimes implemented in the sphere of non-being—opinion? At the moment, I will leave this issue open. I will return to it while analyzing Plato’s conception.

Sophist political and legal reflection

In this article I will focus only on two representatives of the so-called "old sophistry,"[8] namely Protagoras of Abdera and Gorgias of Leontini. Before I move on to political and legal issues, I will outline the ontological and epistemological foundations of sophistry, without which it is impossible to understand the political and legal aspect. My analysis will be based on two issues: Protagoras's principle of *anthropos metron* (*homo mensura*) and the theses of Gorgias's treatise *Peri tou me ontos e periphyseos* ["On Non-Being or on Nature"]. At this point, I will leave aside the conception of justice from the dialogue *Protagoras*. I will cite it in the last part of this text.

[8] There is a very rich secondary literature devoted to "old sophistry" (Protagoras and Gorgias) available. In Polish, the most important are studies authored by J. Gajda-Krynicka (*Sofiści*. Warszawa 1989; *Przedplatońskie koncepcje prawdy. Gorgiasz z Leontinoi*. In: *Prawda, język, szczęście. Studia z filozofii starożytnej* (II). Ed. J. Gajda, A. Orzechowski, D. Dembińska-Siury. Wrocław 1992, pp. 15—54.) and Z. Nerczuk (*Sztuka a prawda. Problem sztuki w dyskusji między Gorgiaszem a Platonem*. Wrocław 2002; *Miarą jest każdy z nas. Projekt zwolenników zmienności rzeczy w platońskim Teajtecie na tle myśli sofistycznej*. Toruń 2009; *Parafraza gorgiańskiego traktatu „O niebycie" w wersji Sekstusa Empiryka*. In: *Sapereaude. Księga pamiątkowa ofiarowana profesorowi dr. hab. Marianowi Szarmachowi z okazji 65 rocznicy urodzin*. Ed. I. Mikołajczyk. Toruń 2004, pp. 185—201; *Traktat „O niebycie" Gorgiasza z Leontinoi*. "Przegląd Filozoficzny — Nowa Seria" 1997 vol. 3, no. 23, pp. 79—94; *Wokół sofistyki*. Toruń 2016). Major studies from world literature include: G. Calogero: *Studisull' Eleatismo*. Roma 1932; B. Cassin: *Si Parmenide. Le traite anonyme De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia. Edition critique et commentaire*. Lille 1980; R.N. Gaines: *Knowledge and Discourse in Gorgias's "On the Non-Existent or On Nature."* "Philosophy and Rhetoric" 1997 vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 1—12; O. Gigon: *Gorgias "Uber das Nichtsein."* "Hermes" 1936, vol. 71, pp. 186—213; H. Gomperz: *Sophistik und Rhetorik*. Leipzig 1912; G.B. Kerferd: *The First Greek Sophists*. "The Classical Review" Apr. 1950 vol. 64/1, pp. 8—10; G.B. Kerferd: *The Sophistic Movement*. Cambridge 1981; G.B. Kerferd, Ed.: *The Sophists and Their Legacy* (Hermes Einzelschriften, 44.). Wiesbaden 1981; A. Levi: *The Ethical and Social Thought of Protagoras*. "Mind" 1940, no. 40, pp. 284—302; A. Long: *Refutation and Relativism in Theaetetus 161—171*. "Phronesis" vol. XLIX/1, pp. 24—40. M. Mendelson: *Many Sides: A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice and Pedagogy of Argument*. Dordrecht—Boston—London 2002; M. Nussbaum: *Sophistry about Conventions*. "New Literary History" Autumn 1985, vol. 17, no. 1 *Philosophy of Science and Literary Theory*, pp. 129—139; E. Schiappa: *Interpreting Gorgias's "Being" in "On Not-Being or On Nature."* "Philosophy and Rhetoric" 1997, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 13—30; E. Schiappa: *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric*. Columbia (South Carolina) 2003; F.D. Walters: *Gorgias as Philosopher of Being: Epistemic Foundationalism in Sophistic Thought*. "Philosophy and Rhetoric" 1994, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 143—155.

I will start in an unusual way, not from Protagoras, but from a very brief discussion of the theses in Gorgias's treatise.

Two extant ancient texts summarize the *On Non-Being*. One is authored by Sextus Empiricus,[9] the other is written by an anonymous author, previously identified with Aristotle.[10] Both versions differ in their details, which, however, I will skip in this analysis, focusing rather on the most general issues.

Gorgias's treatise is read in the context of a polemic with Eleatism.[11] From this perspective, it would be a critique of the possibility of knowing absolute truth. Given this interpretation, the three theses of the treatise should be read as follows:
1. there is no absolute truth;
2. even if there was absolute truth, it would not be knowable by the human being;
3. even if there was absolute truth and it would be knowable by a human being, it would not be transferrable to other human beings.

While the second and third theses are obviously epistemological, the first seems to be an ontological thesis. Closer analysis, however, strongly indicates its veritative, not existential nature. In his justification, Gorgias points to the equal strength of the various accounts of being—truth.[12] It is impossible to decide which of the mutually exclusive ways of cognition is right. Consequently, the adoption of any of them is unfounded. I would venture the following hypothesis: the essence of Gorgias's veritative-ontological argument against being—truth lies in showing the impossibility of formulating a non-contradictory and comprehensive model of being—truth, a model that would either synthesize and reconcile all other possible models, or would indisputably refute these models while itself — alone — remaining irrefutable.

The second thesis seems to indicate the incompatibility of human cognitive capabilities with the absolute. Man can create in his mind a conception of the absolute (though, as I suggested above, such a conception would be inconsistent), but human cognition, which is always contextual and relative, cannot grasp the absolute as absolute, even if it did come across that which is absolute. In other words, in the process of cognition one could only grasp the absolute as relative, because we do not possess absolute cognitive tools.

---

[9] Sextus Empiricus: *Adv. Math.*, VII, 65,1—87, 5.

[10] *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia*, 979a11—980b21.

[11] See e.g. Z. Nerczuk: *Wokół sofistyki*, pp. 115—154; G. Calogero: *Studi sull' Eleatismo*; O. Gigon: *Gorgias "Uber das Nichtsein,"* pp. 186—213.

[12] *Adv. Math.*, VII 66,1—76, 6.

Human cognitive abilities do not allow us to distinguish between the relative and the absolute, even if there is such a thing as absolute being—truth.[13]

The third thesis concerns the possibility of relaying possible knowledge concerning the absolute. Gorgias again indicates the incompatibility of human instruments of communication — language, with what is absolute. No one is able to relay knowledge to others — only words. All messages, therefore, will be contextual and relative. Therefore, it is not possible to convey knowledge about the absolute by means of human communication, i.e. by means of language, even if there was an absolute, and even if someone managed to grasp it through cognition.[14]

What are the social, political, and legal consequences of Gorgias's conception? His rejection of the possibility of grasping being—absolute truth sheds new light on the issue of political decisions, and especially law making. From the Eleatic dualism of truth—opinions only opinions remain. What is more, even if someone achieved the knowledge of absolute truth, then in the social context (the third thesis of the *Treatise on Non-Being*) this absolute truth will be nothing more than another opinion that in terms of truth does not possess a privileged status over other opinions. Absolute truth as a criterion for political and legal activity must be rejected, because anyone's claim to possessing this truth will always be unfounded.

In the light of Gorgias's treatise, the Eleatic problem of the relationship between the realms of being—truth and non-being—opinions is resolved as follows:

1. There is only one sphere of non-being—opinions.
2. Even if there were two spheres, human cognitive capabilities make it impossible to distinguish between them, because man cannot grasp the sphere of being—truth.
3. Even if there were two spheres and the human individual could distinguish them and get to know the sphere of being—truth, it would be impossible to convey this knowledge to others.
4. *Ergo*, at the level of socio-political life we are forced to limit ourselves to the sphere of non-being—opinions.

The most important source of information about Protagoras's best known conception is Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus* (and also *Cratylus*).[15] The second most frequently cited source — Sextus Empiricus's texts[16] — is most likely dependent on Plato's message.

[13] *Adv. Math.*, VII 77,1—82, 4.

[14] *Adv. Math.*, VII 83,1—87, 1.

[15] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 152A2—4, 166D1—4; *Cratylus*, 385E6—386A4.

[16] Sextus Empiricus: *Adversus Mathematicos*, book VII, sections and lines 60, 7—61, 2; *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes*, book I, section 216, lines 1—7.

The *anthroposmetron* principle, as the founder of the Academy introduces it in his dialogue, is based on the assumption that all human cognition is initiated by sensual impressions. However, each individual differs from others in the way s/he senses reality. Simply put — the senses of each of us are different from those of other people. Consequently, there are as many ways of sensually grasping reality as there are individuals.[17] We can even venture the hypothesis that each individual, because of the specific state in which s/he is in the moment of the sensory experience, "receives" reality in different ways. This means that there are more possible descriptions of reality based on sensory experience than there are human individuals — each of an individual's experiences forms the basis for a different description and interpretation of reality.[18] In this way, Protagoras refutes the possibility of knowing the absolute truth — it is impossible to point to the criterion of such truth. Only opinions or relative truths are available to man. They are true only in a specific context characterized by specific states of the perceiving subject.[19] A point of contention is the interpretation of Sextus Empiricus, who suggests that Protagoras's position is not limited to epistemology, but also results from ontological assumptions. Sextus states that Protagoras accepts that reality itself is changeable. This would mean that the reasons for the lack of a criterion of absolute truth lie not only in the relativity of human cognition, but also in the very nature of things.[20] However, is Protagoras's thesis on the changeability of reality really relevant in the context of the criterion of absolute truth?

The permanent changeability of reality and its relationality undoubtedly make it difficult to grasp the possible rules and principles governing that reality. However, they do not render such samples senseless and do not prejudge the impossibility of achieving this goal. For changeability to decide about the impossibility of grasping the absolute truth, it would have to be a special type of changeability devoid of any fixed characteristics. In other words, the world would have to be chaos. However, is the concept of "changeability" appropriate for describing chaos? Does Protagoras say anywhere that the world is chaos? It seems that not only do we not find any premises to defend such an interpretation, but even on the contrary — we can point to threads in Protagoras's reasoning that seem to negate it.

In the *Apology of Protagoras* from *Theaetetus*, Plato points to the analogy between the physician of the body and the physician of the soul,

[17] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 166e1—4, 167a7—167b1.

[18] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 166D1—4.

[19] Sextus Empiricus: *Adv. Math.*, VII, 61, 5—64, 5; Sextus Empiricus: *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes*, I, 218, 4—219, 3.

[20] Sextus Empiricus: *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes*, I, 217, 4—218, 4; 219, 7—10.

i.e. the sage in Protagoras's thought. What underlies the activities of both types of doctors is the belief in the possibility of comparing the states of the body and soul (mind) from the perspective of their usefulness.[21] Even if we assume that specifying what is more or less useful is sensitive to the circumstances and to the context (that is, what is more useful in a given context may be less useful in another — the changeability would therefore also apply to the content of usefulness), the very fact that usefulness is accepted by Protagoras as a kind of guide in the process of choosing between various options seems incompatible with chaos.

Usefulness is also the most important criterion for assessing political action and the value of legal arrangements. It is not absolute truth, which, if it exists at all, is elusive for people, but the principle of usefulness that is the criterion of wisdom. The wise man can recognize what will be more useful to the individual or the state in the given circumstances. He will also be able to convince both the individual and the state to abandon less useful (though no less true) opinions or laws in favor of more useful (though not more true) opinions and laws — this is how the particular "psychiatric" role of the sophistic sage is expressed.[22]

To sum up the conceptions of sophistry (of Protagoras and Gorgias), it should be emphasized that the foundation is a veritative-epistemological position, according to which the tools of human cognition are incompatible with being—absolute truth. It is impossible for humans to grasp the absolute. Absolute truth cannot, therefore, be the foundation of human actions, either those of the individual or the community.

All human opinions, based on individual sensory experience, are equally "true" — but this "truthfulness" is always relative and contextual. No human opinion can legitimately claim to be "more real." This necessarily leads to a particular version of the social contract. However, in the sophistic version of the social contract, the status of a wise man is distinguished, understood not as possessing absolute truth, but as recognizing what is more useful in a given context and able to convince other individuals and citizens of the *poleis* of this.

---

[21] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 166e4—167a6.

[22] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 167b1—2; 167b5—167c4.

Plato's criticism of sophistry

There is a huge literature devoted to the subject of Platonic criticism of sophistry. My goal here is not even a very synthetic attempt to refer to all the threads concerning this criticism. I will focus only on the most important aspects, from the perspective of this article's purpose, such as the question of the criterion of absolute truth and the issue of how usefulness is understood and validated in sophistic reflection.

Absolute truth and the ability to grasp it in human cognition were the necessary conditions for the legitimacy of philosophy. In turn, the socio-political importance of philosophy results from the possibility of the interpersonal communication of absolute truth, its translatability into human language, and its applicability in legal regulations and the political decision-making process. Sophistry, striking a blow at all three aspects (the absolute truth itself, the ability to learn about it, and the ability to effectively communicate it), undermined the importance of philosophy and its role in social and political life. Although it retained the concept of "wisdom," it gave it a completely different meaning. The rehabilitation of the pre-sophistic understanding of philosophy is a key element of Plato's reflection.

As I indicated above, the starting point of the sophists' conception is the assumption that all human cognition is initiated by a sensory grasp of reality. This must necessarily lead to relativism and the equal strength of all opinions. A defense of the epistemologically privileged status of being—truth necessarily requires overcoming the aporia indicated by the sophists. The only way to achieve this is to make human cognition at least in part independent of sensual impressions.

Consequently, Plato's epistemology is focused on mental cognition — *noesis*, which is contrasted with sensual cognition — *aisthesis*.[23] In the *Republic*, Plato indicates two levels of mental cognition. The first is *dianoia* — mathematical cognition, which is mental cognition "bordering on" sensual cognition. The point is that the essence of *dianoia* is mental cognition, but sensual perception serves as a kind of epistemological help. The best illustrations in this case are geometry and stereometry. In themselves, these are ways of mental cognition, but illustrations and measurements facilitate understanding — they are intermediate stages in the teaching process, which aims to develop the skill of pure thinking. Hence the description of mathematical entities as intermediate entities — they are noetic, but still possible

[23] Plato: *Republic*, VI, 508b12—511e5.

to illustrate and thus to grasp sensually. Although this sensory grasp does not encompass the essence of mathematical entities, it is nevertheless necessary and helpful especially at the introductory stages of the noetic method.[24]

The second level is the purest form of *noesis*.[25] It is completely and exclusively mental cognition, entirely "free" from sensual connections. *Noesis* is the cognition of ideas, perfect numbers, and finally principles — *hen-agathon* and *aoristosdyas*.[26] Their status is different from what is sensually graspable (the sphere of *aisthesis*), as well as from what is sensually illustratable (the sphere of *dianoia*).

The problem arises when we think about the way in which we arrive at mental cognition. Showing the full path to cognition in Book VI of the *Republic*, which he then illustrates using the Myth (Allegory) of the Cave in Book VII, Plato begins with *aisthesis* (*eikasia* and *pistis*) to then — through *dianoia* — reach *noesis*. One may get the impression that each higher level results from a lower level. Does this mean that *noesis* and *dianoia* are rooted in *aisthesis*? In other words, is abstraction the basic cognitive instrument realized at the noetic level?

It depends on how you define "abstraction" and "abstracting." *Abstractio* understood as "detachment" suggests a procedure that is best illustrated using simple arithmetic. We have 2 horses (2h), 2 sheep (2p), and 2 dogs (2k). How many animals (z) do we have in total? Of course, 2h+2p+2k=6z. We abstract the numbers from the letters and get an abstract formula — $2 + 2 + 2 = 6$. Can this reasoning also be applied to geometry and stereometry? Certainly not. Sensory experience does not provide us with any data concerning geometric and stereometric entities. In *aisthesis*, we do not encounter anything that would be a straight line, triangle, cube, etc. We cannot, therefore, abstract geometric and stereometric entities from what we have grasped in sensory experience. The path to geometric and stereometric entities (and even more so to ideas, ideal numbers and principles) requires the process of **idealization**. The essence of idealization lies in the mind's ability to create a reality (or realities) alternative to the one about which sensual experience informs us. Idealization is therefore not an abstraction in the simple sense illustrated above. Of course, as is always the case with human word games, we can define "idealization" as "idealizational abstraction" (as opposed to "non-idealizational abstraction" or "ordinary

---

[24] Plato: *Republic*, VI, 510b4—511b2.

[25] Plato: *Republic*, VI, 511b3—511c2.

[26] The secondary literature concerning Plato's teaching on principles emphasizes the key importance of the so-called "unwritten doctrines" (*dogmata agrapha*), while indicating that clear allusions to these doctrines can be found in the dialogues; for example *Republic*, VI, 508e1—509c2.

abstraction") and thus maintain the thesis that mental cognition is none other than abstraction. By doing so, however, we lose a fairly important aspect. What is going on? The term "abstraction" suggests that all theses at the level of *noesis* are nothing more than "abstractions" from what is grasped at the level of *aisthesis*. Such an understanding of *noesis*, however, would not overcome sophistic relativism, because "abstraction" would only relate to what was captured sensually in a relative (and relational) way. In turn, "idealization" introduces a new instrument to human cognition, independent of the results of sensual perception. The possibility of creating alternative worlds in itself points to this independence. In other words, "idealization" allows for the creation of noetic models independent of *aisthesis*, which for Plato are to serve as an instrument for understanding reality.

At this point I will venture the thesis that Plato's defense of being—truth against sophistic arguments boils down to the procedure of reinterpreting Eleatism through Pythagoreanism. Pythagoreanism is interpreted by Plato in the context of the theory of ideas and theory of principles, which we also find in Pythagorean reflection. To put it simply, the sphere of being—truth is mathematics, which enables us to create alternative worlds in the form of axiomatic models. The problem that appears in the context of the Platonic method understood in this way concerns (analogously to the problem of the relationship between being—truth and non-being—opinions in Parmenides) the relationship between the axiomatic model (the alternative world) and the level of reality perceived by way of the senses. An attempt at resolving this difficulty will be presented in the third part of this text, devoted to the model of political epistemology.

I would like to focus on one more difficulty related to sophistry, namely the problem of utilitarianism. In light of the *Apology of Protagoras*, it seems that usefulness is not subject to the *anthropos metron* principle. A doctor or sophist recognizes what is more useful in a given context and can change the current state of affairs (related to the body's or soul's state of health) to a better, more useful one. The thing is, their job is merely to **recognize**, not to create something using their mind.[27] Recognition is about grasping how things are, and grasping how things are is grasping the truth. If usefulness was subject to the *anthropos metron* principle, all states and all opinions would be equally useful if only the subject of these opinions believed them to be such. However, Protagoras distinguishes between more and less useful, better and worse opinions. What is the criterion for making such a distinction? It seems that the only criterion we can indicate is the nature of things, i.e. the truth. Even if what is useful depends on the con-

[27] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 167a2—3, b3—4.

text, then, if in a given context something is more useful and something less useful, the only justification for this state of affairs is nature-being-truth. The only way to avoid this aporia would be to reject what is useful and recognize that all opinions and states are completely equal. This would consequently lead to the rejection of all wisdom, whether defined by truth or by usefulness. Rejecting all wisdom would render any discussion senseless, regardless of whether it concerned individual issues (individual choices and decisions), or socio-political and legal issues connected with state, political, and legal choices and decisions.

However, even in situations in which we agree that usefulness requires truth as a criterion, do we have to accept absolute and certain truth? Wouldn't it be enough to admit that since there is only non-being, then the only truth available to man is probable truth? The problem seems to lie in the fact that the graduated probability of opinions in the sphere of non-being in Parmenides's philosophy is conditioned by the certainty and necessity of the absolute truth of the sphere of existence, regardless of whether these spheres are isolated or not isolated. In other words, graduating probability does not make sense if we do not accept certainty, regardless of whether this certainty is attainable for us or not; this is analogous to the problem of similarity and identity — identity is the criterion for the graduation of similarity.

The myth of the cave and Plato's model of political epistemology

I would like to make Book VII of the *Republic*, i.e. the Myth (or Allegory) of the Cave, the starting point for my analysis of the Platonic model of political epistemology.[28] There is no doubt that the Myth of the

[28] I must point out two things. First of all, I will not take a position here on the problem of whether the description of the cave is a myth or an allegory. To accomplish the goal I have set for myself in this article, I read the cave's description in general terms; I do not devote space to analyzing every detail, which is why resolving the myth—allegory problem is not of utmost importance to me. Secondly, the vastness of literature devoted to Plato's cave and the accompanying variety of interpretations make it impossible to subject them to analysis here. I will only indicate selected items that refer to the myth of the cave: J. Annas: *An Introduction to Plato's "Republic."* Oxford 1981; J. Annas:

Cave is a Platonic interpretation of Parmenides's philosophy: the reality inside the cave corresponds to the level of non-being—opinion, while the reality outside the cave corresponds to the level of being—truth. Capturing the essence of the Myth of the Cave is, in my opinion, decisive for understanding Plato's political philosophy.

What is crucial to interpreting Plato is recognizing that these two levels/spheres are not isolated from one another. In my opinion, this is not so much about the possibility of moving between the spheres — the possibility of leaving the cave and returning to it — as it is about the relationship between the epistemological models proper to both of these spheres. The mere fact of being able to move could easily be reconciled with the separation of the spheres of being and non-being. We can go from one to the other, but each time we have to adapt to the rules — the separate rules that govern each of them. In other words, what is known at the noetic level in no way makes it easier for us to understand what is found at the aisthetic level. In this way, despite the fact that we can move on both levels/spheres, both levels/spheres remain cognitively isolated from each other. Even if it could be shown that the sphere of being-truth is available to us, if knowledge of it does not translate into understanding the sphere of non-being—opinion, all the effort would, in fact, be wasted. Within the cave we would have to forget about what is outside of it. We would be forced to move around in the sophistic "darkness of non-being." Therefore, Plato's goal is not merely to rehabilitate the pre-sophistic category of absolute truth — it also concerns the socio-political consequences of absolute truth. To achieve this goal, Plato must not only rehabilitate absolute truth, but also demonstrate that it somehow conditions probabilistic cognition at the level of the cave. It does so in an intricate, vague, seemingly incoherent manner.

Plato, Republic V—VII. In: *Philosophers Ancient and Modern*. Ed. G. Vesey. Cambridge 1986, pp. 3—18; S. Benardete: *Socrates' Second Sailing*. Chicago 1989; A. Bloom: *The Republic of Plato. Trans. with an interpretative essay*. New York 1968; M.F. Burnyeat: *Culture and Society in Plato's "Republic,"* "The Tanner Lectures on Human Values" 1999, vol. 20, pp. 215—324; T.F. Morris: *Plato's Cave*. "South African Journal of Philosophy" 2009, vol. 28 (4), pp. 415—432; T.F. Morris: *The Way Out of Plato's Cave*. "Scholia" 2008, vol. 17, pp. 2—18; A. Ophir: *Plato's Invisible Cities. Discourse and the Power in the "Republic."* London 1991; M.L. McPherran, Ed.: *Plato's "Republic." A Critical Guide*. Cambridge 2010; L. Purshouse: *Plato's "Republic."* London—New York 2006; D. Cairns et al., Eds.: *Pursuing the Good. Ethics and Metaphysics in Plato's "Republic."* Edinburgh, 2007; C.D.C. Reeve: *Philosopher-Kings. The Argument of Plato's "Republic."* Indianapolis 2006; G. Santas: *Understanding Plato's "Republic."* Malden—Oxford—Chichester 2010; G. Santas, Ed.: *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's "Republic."* Malden—Oxford—Carlton 2006; G.R.F. Ferrari, Ed.: *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's "Republic."* Cambridge 2007; D. Zygmuntowicz: *Praktyka polityczna. Od „Państwa" do „Praw" Platona*. Toruń 2011.

In Neoplatonic sources we find a story about Pythagoras sitting by the setting sun at the entrance to the basement, which he had ordered to build for himself.[29] Sitting with his face facing inside the basement, he watched the shadows moving on its wall cast by the setting sun. This story was supposed to inspire Plato to create the Myth of the Cave. However, both versions differ significantly. In the Pythagoras version we have one light source (the sun), and the shadows in the basement are a reflection of "real" patterns from outside the basement. The interpretation of this version is simple: aisthetic entities (Parmenides's non-being) are only a shadow of a noetic being (Parmenides's being). Understanding what a shadow is requires understanding what that shadow is a reflection of.

Plato's version is much more complicated. First of all, there are two sources of light — the sun and the fire. While the sun is clearly identified by Plato himself as the Good (the idea of the Good) and indirectly as the One, the answer to what fire is is extremely difficult, because Plato does not write about it directly. He merely mentions that this fire somehow comes from the Good[30] and compares it to the sun. And the solution to this puzzle seems extremely important, because it is the light of the fire, not the sun,[31] that creates shadows on the cave wall.

Secondly, the shadows in the cave are reflections of the products carried over the wall, not the "real" patterns outside the cave. The items carried over the wall, in turn, are merely "reflections" of these "real" patterns. As a consequence, we have a rather unclear situation. The ultimate goal is the best possible organization of life in the cave (i.e. socio-political life), for which the necessary tool is to recognize what the shadows are. The shadows are a reflection of the items carried over the wall. And essentially, to understand what appears in the cave in the form of shadows, it would suffice to get to know the items carried over the wall. What does the knowledge of a giraffe contribute to recognizing and understanding the shadow of a giraffe sculpture? Is it not enough to know about the giraffe sculpture itself? To answer these questions, it is first necessary to understand whether there are items carried over the wall, and who are those who carry them.

At the starting point, therefore, we have two basic problems: 1) what is the fire, and 2) what are the items carried over the wall and who are they carried by. It is all reduced to understanding the level of the fire, the path, and the wall. The difficulty is increased by the fact that Plato's description does not clearly show whether this "mysterious trinity" is inside the cave, outside the cave, or at the very entrance to the cave. In other words: do the

[29] Porphyry: *Vita Pythagorae*, 9, 5—8.

[30] Plato: *Republic*, VII, 517c3.

[31] Plato: *Republic*, VII, 517b3—4.

fire, the path, and the wall belong to the aisthetic level, the noetic level, or do they designate a separate, intermediate third level of veritative being and cognition?

Being aware that all these issues are extremely complicated and unclear, and that resolving them (if at all possible) goes far beyond the scope of this publication, I will accept two working hypotheses and test what consequences follow.

The first hypothesis concerns the status of the level between the fire and the wall. I assume that this is an intermediate level, between the cave (whether the cave represents *aisthesis* is an open matter for now) and the noetic level.

Secondly, keeping to the veritative context consistently maintained in this article, I assume that the whole Myth of the Cave illustrates our cognitive capabilities, our ways of building "truth." Each level shown in the myth will correspond to its own level of reason (mind) and the level of veritative being associated with it.

I will analyze both hypotheses together, because they are inextricably linked. However, let us first conduct a small intellectual experiment. Imagine a cave in which the wall separating it from the path and fire reaches the ceiling itself. The cave is completely dark, not a single photon or phonon reaches it. Speaking anachronistically, we would then be dealing with the purest form of *Cogito* — it would be a mind alone with itself, devoid of any sensory data. Using Plato's language, a closed cave would be a soul in a state of memory loss, devoid of the sensory impressions that would allow it to recall what has been forgotten. Such a soul would not be able to "give birth to" any knowledge, would not be able to remember anything.[32] However, the cave is not closed — its entrance are the senses that make anamnesis possible for the soul. Sensory impressions are symbolized by shadows and echo. It is on their basis that the human mind constructs an interpretation of reality — from *eikasia* to *pistis*. The stage of climbing uphill towards the fire begins. What is the level between the wall and fire? Let us put forth another hypothesis — this level represents abstract thinking, an intermediate stage between the cave and noetic thinking. Though this stage is dependent on *aisthesis*, it is here that the possibility of going beyond *aisthesis* is revealed. This is the level of *dianoia*, for which the level of mathematical entities becomes crucial. As I have indicated above, among the mathematical entities, geometric—stereometric entities that result from idealization have a special status — they lead beyond the fire, to noetic thinking, which is completely free of sensory impressions.

---

[32] Plato: *Phaedo*, 75e2—76a7.

To sum up, let us reconstruct the Myth of the Cave from the perspective of the two hypotheses:

1. The cave itself symbolizes the soul, the state of memory loss and immersion in the darkness of ignorance. The firelight reaching the cave enables anamnesis (a closed cave would be a state of permanent darkness and oblivion, without any understanding, whether at the level of *episteme* or of *doxa*). All human cognition necessarily begins with sensory impressions.

2. The level between the fire and the wall is the level of abstract cognition — *dianoia*. This knowledge is higher than *eikasia* and *pistis*, but still based on sensory cognition. It is at this level that the mind generalizes, recognizes physical laws, etc.; at the same time, thanks to idealization (geometry and stereometry), the seeds of noetic cognition are formed at this level. What is the fire? In my opinion, it would be best to identify it with the principle of sensual cognition in the broadest sense.[33] How should this level of cognition be classified within the context of Parmenides's thought? This question requires a slightly longer answer and reference to Pythagorean philosophy.

As I suggested above in comparing Parmenides with the Pythagoreans, mathematics in Pythagorean thought would correspond to the level of being—truth. An illustration of this would be the description of Pythagoras's basement cited by the Neoplatonists: what is inside the basement is reality perceived sensually, what is outside that basement — is the level of mathematics. The problem lies in the relationship between these levels, or more precisely — in their epistemological—veritative relationship. We are familiar with Plato's criticism of the method of determining a mathematical interpretation of music. According to many researchers, this is a criticism of the Pythagorean method.[34] In my opinion, the issue is open, but for the purpose of these reflections I will accept this interpretation. What is the essence of this criticism? According to Plato, although the Pythagorean method discovered the mathematical possibility of expressing aisthetic reality (i.e. it discovered the interaction between being—truth and non-being—opinions), it seems to have stopped halfway: it is attempting to extract mathematical dependencies from the empirical study of *aisthesis*, instead of what Plato believed would be more fruitful — imposing these mathematical

---

[33] Regarding the criticism of interpretations that see in the cave itself a level of various possible misrepresentations of reality, see: T.F. Morris: *Plato's Cave*, pp. 415—432. I strongly agree with the author's argument.

[34] Plato: *Republic*, VII, 531b2—c4. Regarding the identification of Plato's criticism with criticism of the Pythagorean method, see e.g. C.A. Huffman: *Archytas. Music and Mathematics*. In: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/archytas/.

dependencies on *aisthesis*. In other words — Plato seems to suggest building a **mathematical model** first, to which data from *aisthesis* should then be adapted. The ability to build a **mathematical model**, however, requires higher justification — higher in an epistemological and veritative sense. Such justification can only come through the consistent application of idealization, which is abstraction from abstraction, release from all sensory data, i.e. a transition to the noetic level.

Consequently, the status of the intermediate level depends on the possibility of going beyond the fire. If we do not allow for this possibility, then the intermediate level should be included in the level of non-being—opinions. In turn, if we do allow for this possibility, the status of the intermediate level changes — it becomes the lowest level of being—truth. Ultimately, everything depends on the legitimacy of mathematical instruments. If the rules of mathematics are "extracted" from the aisthetic level and thus justified by that level, we are dealing with non-being—opinion. If, in turn, mathematical rules are a **model** imposed on the aisthetic level and justified noetically, their status is higher — they belong to the level of being—truth.

Let us now apply the above analyses to Plato's political reflection. Let us take a look at the issue of justice; after all, it is the main (or at least **explicitly indicated as such** within the dialogue) subject of Plato's analysis in the *Republic*.

At the starting point, let us reconstruct the path leading to the establishment of the principles of justice from a sophistic perspective. At its base lies the assumption that all people have a (innate?) sense of law (*dike*) and shame (*aidos*).[35] However, what justice is, what its principles and its content should be, are all subject to the *anthropos metron* principle. The diversity of equally strong opinions — in terms of their degree of truthfulness — makes determining the rules of justice an extremely complicated task. The solution to the problem seems to be the reference to democratic procedures, that is, making decisions by a majority vote. However, this is only a procedural solution. It does not guarantee that the result obtained will be the best, or even satisfactory. Herein lies the most important difficulty — does it even make sense in the context of *anthropos metron* to undertake the question of what is "best," "better," or "good"? Usefulness seems to be Protagoras's answer — if a certain state or opinion leads to greater functionality than another state or opinion, the more functional solution should be chosen. The more useful thus becomes the more just. However, this means that usefulness is not subject to the *anthropos metron*

---

[35] Plato: *Protagoras*, 322c1—d5.

principle.[36] While all opinions are equivalent in terms of truthfulness, they are not equivalent in terms of their usefulness. Let us illustrate the above statement with the Myth of the Cave: at the level of the cave, opinions are equal in terms of truth, but the same opinions are subject to hierarchization at a higher level — the level between the fire and the wall. Why do I put forth the thesis that usefulness and justice in sophistic thought belong to this level and not to the level of the cave? Because they correspond to a different state of mind, a different method of reflection. This is not the simple organization of sensual impressions and the opinions constructed on their basis. This is an attempt at discovering certain principles. However, these lack higher justification; they are still rooted in the "shadows" of the cave. And this is what Plato criticizes.

From the perspective of Plato's epistemology, the correct path of discourse on justice must go from abstraction to idealization. Sophists stop at the pragmatic stage, at establishing only the practical aspect of justice. According to Plato, the discussion on justice requires determining what justice is in itself and what justifies it. In other words, the thesis that what is most useful is just (leaving aside the problem of the criterion of what is useful for now), which results from observations and their analyses, becomes an unfounded judgment, if it is not justified by something other than what justice is supposed to regulate.

In Book VI of the *Republic*, Plato points to the Good (the idea of the Good) as the ultimate justification of justice.[37] The main task of justice is to maintain the Good in the structure of the *poleis*. But what is the Platonic Good? It is identical to the highest, first, and final justification of all knowledge and all being — the One. The One—the Good, which in the Myth of the Cave is symbolized by the sun, on the one hand completes the whole process of idealization, and on the other, it is a prerequisite for all knowledge. It justifies the truth of noetic cognition, and also grants probability to the cognition and understanding of the sphere of non-being.

Consequently, Plato's thesis becomes clear that only philosophers, i.e. those who have gained understanding of the One—the Good, should direct political and legal affairs.[38] Only those who have a non-contradictory explanatory model independent of sensory data have knowledge not only of how things are, but also of why they are this way. The sophists' conception is limited only to the first level — to the level of knowledge of craftsmen, using Aristotle's terminology.[39] Returning to the example of the giraffe

---

[36] Plato: *Theaetetus*, 167b2—4.

[37] Plato: *Republic*, VI, 504b1—505b3.

[38] Plato: *Republic*, VII, 520c1—6.

[39] Aristotle: *Metaphysics*, I, 1, 981a24—b6.

sculpture: knowledge of a giraffe will allow for a more adequate interpretation of the giraffe sculpture, and as a consequence also a more adequate interpretation of the shadow (shadows) of that sculpture. If the sculpture of a giraffe were to be the final justification, then relativism would be impossible to overcome.

Knowledge at the noetic level, as a particular axiomatic model, however, is not knowledge of a "material" nature, but only of a "formal" nature. There are no absolute, non-relative contents of justice whose application (implementation) will be best in all circumstances. The noetic axiomatic model is sensitive to the context, to the specifics of the "material" that it is to "form."[40] Consequently, it is impossible to formulate an absolute and simultaneously "material" model of justice. Without reference to the noetic level as a necessary condition for human cognition, the only remaining option would be to follow the path indicated by sophistry. Plato seems to agree with the sophists that in relation to the "material," "content-based" aspect, we are necessarily entangled in relativism. That is why he moves the discussion to the noetic level — by entering the field of discussion on noetic axiomatic models, we are able to overcome the relativism of aisthetic cognition. This is of great importance for political reflection. Just as understanding the cube model frees us from the relativism of sensual impressions and the equally-true-not-true opinions built on the basis of those impressions, so understanding the model of justice justified by the One—the Good liberates us from the relativism of equally-true-not-true opinions about justice.

Plato's political epistemology is composed of three levels. The highest level is political *noesis*, in which the most important aspects are pure reflection on the good and on justice. The lowest level is the level of the cave, the level of individual relative impressions and opinions. The intermediate level is political reality in the strict sense — this includes, first and foremost, constitutional law and the political decision-making process. The intermediate status of this level is not only due to the fact that it is depicted "between" the cave and the path to the sun in the Myth of the Cave. It is an intermediate level because it indeed "mediates" between the two extreme levels. It "mediates" in both a veritative-epistemological and a practical sense. It is at this level, according to Plato, that "mediation" should be undertaken between empirical data and individual opinions, and the noetic model. The outcome achieved as a result of such "mediation," of "matching up" these extreme levels, should indeed harmonize them. This harmonization on veritative-epistemic grounds means compatibility with

[40] Similarly: Aristotle: *Politics*, 1288b10—1289a25.

the cave and with *noesis*. On practical grounds, in turn, practicality is expressed in greater usefulness, which is lacking both at the level of the cave (due to relativism) and at the level of *noesis* (due to the "formal" nature of noetic knowledge).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to refer once again to one of the issues raised above, namely to interpreting the Myth of the Cave in the context of Parmenides's of Elea thought, i.e. the dualism of being—truth and non-being—opinions. The doubts concern the classification of the intermediate level. I suggested above that the status of this level depends on the type of justification: if the justification is the cave, then the level should be classified as non-being—opinion, if the justification is *noesis*, then the level should be classified as being—truth. Such reasoning can be criticized by indicating that no findings at the intermediate level will ever obtain the status of certainty and necessity that characterizes being—truth. These findings will always be probable, and this is characteristic of the level of non-being—opinions. Perhaps it would be reasonable to consider the level between the wall and the fire as a separate, indeed intermediate, veritative-epistemological level, simultaneously indicating that Plato's conception simply cannot be reconciled with Parmenides's conception.

Though aware of these difficulties, I am inclined to agree with the position described earlier because of the problem of justification. It is the only way in which you can distinguish the sophists' method from that of Plato. The sophistic approach to political issues can be classified as belonging completely to the level of non-being—opinions. If we classified Plato's political practice, which is justified by a noetic model, in the same way, it would mean disregarding significant, even key differences between the two methods. Even if in certain circumstances, in the "material" aspect, Plato and the sophists would agree on the same proposal of understanding justice (or rather, on the same proposal of legal solutions), the differences in justification would be diametrically different: for sophists, it would lie in the usefulness of opinions and experience, for Plato — in the coherence and clarity of the noetic model. Sooner or later, such a difference in justification must also lead to significant "material" differences.

Bibliography

De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia. In: *Aristotelis De Melliso, Xenophaneet Gorgia disputations cum Eleaticorum Philosophorum fragmentis*. Ed. F.W.A. Mullach. Berlin 1845.

Aristotle: *Metaphysics*. Ed. W. Jaeger. Oxford 1957.

Aristotle: *Politics*. Ed. W.D. Ross. Oxford 1957.

Plato: *Cratylus*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Vol. I. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1955—1957.

Plato: *Phaedo*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Vol. I. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1955—1957.

Plato: *Protagoras*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Vol. III. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1955—1957.

Plato: *Republic*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Vol. IV. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1955—1957.

Plato: *Theaetetus*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Vol. I. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1955—1957.

Porphyry: *Vita Pythagorae*. In: Des Places É. Segonds A.-Ph. *Porphyre. Vie de Pythagore. Lettre a Marcella*. Paris 1982.

Sextus Empiricus: *Adversus Mathematicos*. Eds. H. Mutschmann, J. Mau. Leipzig 1914—1954.

Sextus Empiricus: *Pyrrhoniae hypotyposes*. In: *Sexti Empirici Opera*. Vol. I. Ed. H. Mutschmann, J. Mau. Leipzig 1958.

Annas J.: *An Introduction to Plato's "Republic."* Oxford 1981.

Annas J.: Plato, *Republic* V—VII. In: *Philosophers Ancient and Modern*. Ed. G. Vesey, pp. 3—18. Cambridge 1986.

Benardete S.: *Socrates' Second Sailing.* Chicago 1989.

Bloom A.: *The Republic of Plato. Trans. with an interpretative essay*. New York 1968.

Burnyeat M.F.: *Culture and Society in Plato's "Republic."* "The Tanner Lectures on Human Values" 1999, vol. 20, pp. 215—324

Cairns D. et al. Ed.: *Pursuing the Good. Ethics and Metaphysics in Plato's "Republic."* Edinburgh 2007.

Calogero G.: *Studi sull' Eleatismo*. Roma 1932.

Cassin B.: *Si Parmenide. Le traite anonyme De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia. Edition critique et commentaire*. Lille 1980.

Ferrari G.R.F. Ed.: *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's "Republic."* Cambridge 2007.

Gaines R.N.: *Knowledge and Discourse in Gorgias's "On the Non-Existent or On Nature,"* "Philosophy and Rhetoric" 1997, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 1—12.

Gajda-Krynicka J.: *Sofiści*. Warszawa 1989.

Gajda-Krynicka J.: *Przedplatońskie koncepcje prawdy. Gorgiasz z Leontinoi*. In: *Prawda, język, szczęście. Studia z filozofii starożytnej* (II). Eds. J. Gajda, A. Orzechowski, D. Dembińska-Siury. Wrocław 1992, pp. 15—54.

Gigon O.: *Gorgias „Uber das Nichtsein."* "Hermes" 1936, vol. 71, pp. 186—213.

Gomperz H.: *Sophistik und Rhetorik*. Leipzig 1912.

Huffman C.A.: *Archytas. Music and Mathematics*. In: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/archytas/

Kahn C.H.: *The Greek Verb "To Be" and the Concept of Being*. "Foundations of Language" 1966, vol. 2, pp. 245—265.

Kerferd G.B.: *The First Greek Sophists*. "The Classical Review" 1950, vol. 64/1 (Apr.), pp. 8—10.

Kerferd G.B.: *The Sophistic Movement*. Cambridge 1981.

Kerferd G.B. Ed.: *The Sophists and Their Legacy* (Hermes Einzelschriften, 44), Wiesbaden 1981.

Kubok D.: *Prawda i mniemania. Studium filozofii Parmenidesa z Elei*. Katowice 2004.

Levi A.: *The Ethical and Social Thought of Protagoras*. "Mind" 1940, vol. 40, pp. 284—302.

Long A.: *Refutation and Relativism in Theaetetus 161—171*. "Phronesis" 2003, vol. XLIX/1, pp. 24—40.

McPherran M.L. Ed.: *Plato's "Republic." A Critical Guide*. Cambridge 2010.

Mendelson M.: *Many Sides: A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice and Pedagogy of Argument*. Dordrecht—Boston—London 2002.

Morris T.F.: *Plato's Cave*. "South African Journal of Philosophy" 2009, vol. 28(4), pp. 415—432.

Morris T.F.: *The Way Out of Plato's Cave*. "Scholia" 2008, vol. 17, pp. 2—18.

Nerczuk Z.: *Sztuka a prawda. Problem sztuki w dyskusji między Gorgiaszem a Platonem*. Wrocław 2002.

Nerczuk Z.: *Miarą jest każdy z nas. Projekt zwolenników zmienności rzeczy w platońskim Teajtecie na tle myśli sofistycznej*. Toruń 2009.

Nerczuk Z.: *Parafraza gorgiańskiego traktatu „O niebycie" w wersji Sekstusa Empiryka*. In: *Sapereaude. Księga pamiątkowa ofiarowana profesorowi dr. hab. Marianowi Szarmachowi z okazji 65 rocznicy urodzin*. Ed. I. Mikołajczyk. Toruń 2004, pp. 185—201.

Nerczuk Z.: *Traktat „O niebycie" Gorgiasza z Leontinoi*. "Przegląd Filozoficzny — Nowa Seria" 1997, vol. 3, no. 23, pp. 79—94.

Nerczuk Z.: *Wokół sofistyki*. Toruń 2016.

Nussbaum M.: *Sophistry about Conventions*. "New Literary History" 1985, vol. 17, no. 1, *Philosophy of Science and Literary Theory*, pp. 129—139.

Ophir A.: *Plato's Invisible Cities. Discourse and the Power in the "Republic."* London 1991.

Purshouse L.: *Plato's "Republic."* London—New York 2006.

Reeve C.D.C.: *Philosopher-Kings. The Argument of Plato's "Republic."* Indianapolis 2006.

Santas G. Ed.: *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's "Republic."* Malden—Oxford—Carlton 2006.

Santas G.: *Understanding Plato's "Republic."* Malden—Oxford—Chichester 2010.

Schiappa E.: *Interpreting Gorgias's "Being" in "On Not-Being or On Nature."* "Philosophy and Rhetoric" 1997, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 13—30.

Schiappa E.: *Protagoras and Logos: A Study in Greek Philosophy and Rhetoric*. Columbia (South Carolina) 2003.
Walters F.D.: *Gorgias as Philosopher of Being: Epistemic Foundationalism in Sophistic Thought*. "Philosophy and Rhetoric" 1994, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 143—155.
Zygmuntowicz D.: *Praktyka polityczna. Od „Państwa" do „Praw" Platona*. Toruń 2011.

Piotr Świercz — doktor habilitowany, profesor na Wydziale Filozoficznym Akademii Ignatianum w Krakowie.

Central and Eastern European Online Library
www.ceeol.com

The Silesian Digital Library
www.sbc.org.pl

Instytut Filozofii Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
Institute of Philosophy, University of Silesia in Katowice
www.folia.philosophica.us.edu.pl

Publikacja na licencji Creative Commons
Uznanie autorstwa-Na tych samych warunkach 4.0 Międzynarodowe (CC BY-SA 4.0)

ISSN 2353-9445

Redakcja / Copy-editing
Tomasz Kalaga

Projekt okładki / Cover Design
Magdalena Pache

Korekta / Proofreading
Anna Kisiel

Łamanie / Typesetting
Edward Wilk

Czasopismo wcześniej ukazywało się w formie drukowanej z identyfikatorem
ISSN 1231-0913. Wersją referencyjną jest wersja elektroniczna.

The journal was formerly published in print with the following identifier
ISSN 1231-0913. The referential version of the journal is its electronic (online) version.

ISSN 2353-9445

Wydawca / Published by
Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego
ul. Bankowa 12B, 40-007 Katowice
www.wydawnictwo.us.edu.pl
e-mail: wydawus@us.edu.pl

Ark. druk. 8,75. Ark. wyd. 11,0.
Printed sheets: 8,75. Publishing sheets: 11,0.