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

Mitchell Miller

September, 1989

This paper, an interpretive analysis of the closing aporiai in the Theaetetus, is in fact only one step in a much larger project. Though it will be impossible to pursue that project on this occasion, I want to sketch its outlines, both here and at the end of the paper, in order to indicate the broader context and implications of the analysis.¹

On what has now become a familiar view of the "development" of Plato's thought, he reaches a turning-point with the composition of the Parmenides: he now begins to think of the forms less on the model of visual objects, hence less as partless and separate *ones*, and more in terms of the conditions for their being subject to logical analysis, hence as composites and the terms of manifold relations. I want to rethink a core element of this view.² It is true that Plato challenges the conception of the forms on the model of visual objects; the first part of the Parmenides, in particular, reveals and articulates some of the disastrous consequences of this misthinking. And in various ways—principally, by introducing in the Parmenides and the Sophist the sense of not-being necessary for logos and by presenting in the Sophist and Statesman and again in the Philebus³ the method of

¹I owe thanks to a number of my colleagues in the Philosophy Department at Vassar College for discussing this paper with me, both informally and at a colloquium in September—especially Neil Thomason, Jennifer Church, Jesse Kalin, Peter Lupu, Michael McCarthy, Michael Murray, and Douglas Winblad.

²There is space only to note two other points on which I want to keep a distance from this view. (1) On perfectly general grounds, it would be absurd to deny that Plato's thinking develops. But how much of the conflict between passages should be credited to *his* having changed *his* thinking and how much to the fact that he is addressing what he projects as changed or different *readers*, in particular, readers at different stages in the psychagogical process of becoming philosophical? Striking the appropriate balance between these possibilities must be a constant task for the interpreter. (2) The developmental view tends to be accompanied by the assumption that passages in the dialogues are (to quote Charles Kahn, "Plato and Socrates in the Protagoras," Méthexis I [1988], pp. 33-52) "transparent" to Plato's thinking, directly conveying, as it were, his current thinking. But this misses what Kahn calls the literary "opacity" of the dialogues, an opacity connected with the way they are intended more to elicit and provoke insight in the reader than to state doctrine systematically. To come to what Plato held true, we must first work our way through (what we can reconstruct of) the insights he intended to elicit in his reader, and to do this we must attune ourselves to the dramatic character of the dialogues and its specific modes and powers of communication. (For an introductory account of these, see the Introduction to my Plato's PARMENIDES, Princeton, 1986 [hereafter PP]).

collection and division—he makes explicit the composite character and relational status the forms must have as the objects of logos. But we would throw out the baby with the bathwater, I think, if we took all this to imply that he gives up the notion of the forms as partless ones. On the contrary, I shall try to show that Plato holds that logos can bring forms to light as composite and as relata only insofar as they also have a presence prior to this, a presence in which, quite the contrary, they show themselves as incomposite and, in their self-sufficiency, independent of relations.

My long-term project is to study the ways Plato both mounts and invites his readers to think through this apparent contradiction, transforming it into a positive insight. This paper, an examination of the closing aporiai in the Theaetetus, is the first step. The Theaetetus, in turn, is linked by the unity of dramatic action with the Sophist and the Statesman⁴ and, again, by recollective allusion with the Parmenides⁵. The Parmenides and the Statesman, in their turns, are each linked in manifold ways to the Philebus. I think these various connections point the way through a subtle, surprisingly well-integrated reflection on simplicity and complexity and, distinctly, self-sufficiency and relatedness in the forms. In later papers, I will move on from the Theaetetus, pursuing this reflection through the relevant passages in these other dialogues.

I. The Closing Aporiai in the THEAETETUS: simplicity and complexity

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

³I will discuss the non-bifurcatory version of collection and division that is practiced at the end of the Statesman and given a general methodological description in the Philebus in "The God-Given Way: Reflections on Method and the Good in the Later Plato," to be presented in the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy in April.

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

⁵See Theaetetus 183e-184a. I have discussed this in my comment on Diskin Clay's "Gaps in the 'Universe' of the Platonic Dialogues," Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, vol. III (1988), pp. 159-160.

discussed; it raises problems and initiates responses to them that recur and are developed and deepened in those other texts.⁶ Second and more particularly, the final part of the Theaetetus, 201c-210a, raises problems regarding just the features of the objects of knowledge that those other dialogues pursue with regard to forms. Socrates attacks Theaetetus' final definition of knowledge by putting forth, then refuting, the notorious "dream" theory. The theory centers around the idea of perceptible "elements" that, taken just as they are in themselves, are each partless and without relation to anything else; the refutation then brings out ways in which the possibility of knowledge appears both to call for and to contradict such a conception of its object. The structural congruence of the "elements" in the theory and the forms makes the final part of the Theaetetus especially important for my project.⁷

That said, let us follow the Theaetetus' own lead and set the notion of forms into abeyance, turning instead to the dialogue's question of what knowledge is and what character and structure it requires of its object, as this is taken up at 201c-210a. The passage has plenty of obscurity, quite apart from any question of forms, to preoccupy us. It centers on Theaetetus' final definition of knowledge, as "true judgment with a logos" (τὴν ... μετὰ λόγου ἀληθῆ δόξαν, 201c9-d1). Socrates first wins Theaetetus' approval for his interpretive restatement of the definition in his "dream," then refutes it with a dilemma—only then, surprisingly, to pass directly and without explanation to the proposal of three senses of logos and a refutation of the proposed definition under each of the three interpretations. Retracing his steps, we should be puzzled at a number of points. If the dilemma is decisive, why does he pass on to the introduction of the three senses of logos? How are these two phases of his refutation—his rejection of the "dream" and his rejections of each sense of logos—related? Again, how, if at

⁶The concept of "proleptic" relations between dialogues is proposed by C. Kahn in his "Plato's Charmides and the Proleptic Reading of Socratic Dialogues," The Journal of Philosophy LXXXV, 10 (October 1988), pp. 541-549, and richly qualified by C. Griswold in his stimulating commentary, an abstract of which is published in the same volume, pp. 550-551. One of Griswold's key challenges is that the "partiality [of proleptic passages] is not completed by other dialogues so much as by the reader's reflection on the whole nature of the matter discussed" (p. 551). I think this insight should be taken less as an objection than as an appropriate complement and complication of Kahn's notion of *prolepsis*; if Plato's invention of the dialogue genre indicates the seriousness with which he is at work eliciting the reader's reflections, so the manifold ways he lets various dialogues allude to one another indicates the way he provides ordered series of occasions for the development of these reflections.

⁷Ryle was evidently the first to point out that Socrates' refutation of the "dream" theory bears critically on the forms—see the brief discussion of Ryle's (unpublished) paper for the Oxford Philological Society in R.C. Cross' "Logos and Forms in Plato," published in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. R.E. Allen, Routledge, 1965, pp. 14-15. Against Ryle's view that the refutation bears only *per accidens* on the theory of forms, see J. Leshner, "ΓΝΩΣΙΣ and ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗ in Socrates' Dream in the Theaetetus," Journal of Hellenic Studies 89 (1969), pp. 72-78.

all, are the three senses of logos related? Are they to be thought as competitors, each excluding the other two, or as complements? Does the refutation of each remove it from consideration, clearing the stage for the next, or does it invite us to consider all three together? Each of these questions bears on the more general question that all interpreters of the Theaetetus have to confront: is the dialogue essentially negative, restricted to showing the failure of a set of approaches to the question of what knowledge is, or does it "end well,"⁸ suggesting, by the light that it casts on the failed approaches, ways of rethinking them and the issues they raise that might lead to a viable alternative account?

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

A. Socrates' Refutation of the "Dream" Theory: The Object of Knowledge

Theaetetus first proposes the final definition of knowledge, "true judgment with a logos" (201d), as something he has heard from someone else and "just now" recalls; when Socrates presses him for explication, his recollection proves dim and hazy, and he asks for help. It is at this point that Socrates characterizes the proposal as a "dream" and offers to tell Theaetetus "a dream in exchange for a dream."⁹ But he does not intend to replace Theaetetus' thought with his own; rather, once he completes his statement at 202c, he asks Theaetetus whether it does justice to "the dream" (τὸ ἐνύπνιον, 202c5) as he, Theaetetus, has had it and whether it "satisfies" him and represents the final definition "in just the way" (τούτῃ, 202c7) he understands it. In this way Socrates makes clear that he intends the theory he presents in the "dream" to spell out the final definition as Theaetetus understands it. At the same time, when he goes on to ask rhetorically, "...how can there ever be knowledge without logos and right judgment?" (202d), Socrates also indicates that whatever difficulties Theaetetus' understanding may turn out to have, he regards true judgment and logos as at least necessary for knowledge.

⁸This is borrowed from the title of E.S. Haring's fine study, "The Theaetetus Ends Well" [hereafter TEW], The Review of Metaphysics XXXV, 3 (1982), pp. 509-528.

⁹Ἄκουε δὴ ὄναρ ἀντὶ ὀνείρατος, 201d8. I follow Edward Lee here, who argues in his exciting (as yet unpublished) essay, "Understanding Plato's Theaetetus" (hereafter UPT), that Socrates' offer to exchange dreams is his way of offering a clarifying interpretation of Theaetetus' understanding of the third definition. But see, as well, n. 24 below. For illuminating remarks on the range of connotations of the dream metaphor, see M.F. Burnyeat, "The Material and Sources of Plato's Dream" (hereafter MSPD), Phronesis XV, 2 (1970), pp. 101-122.

In outline, the theory in the "dream" runs as follows. On the one hand, there are "elements"; on the other hand, there are complexes that are composed of these elements. Each of the elements, while "sense-perceptible" (αἰσθητὰ, 202b6), is properly subject only to its own name and not to any other term or character that might be said of or attributed to it. Since a logos is (at the least¹⁰) a combination of names and since knowledge, by the new definition, requires a logos, the elements are "inexplicable and unknowable." The composites, by contrast, are subject not only to "true judgment" but also—since it is possible to give a logos of them by combining the names of the elements that make them up—"knowable and explicable."

Once he has won Theaetetus' approval (202c) of this theory, Socrates attacks it with a dilemma. As we will see, the dilemma does manifold work, (i) forcing a retraction of what is most problematic in the theory, (ii) confronting us with a paradoxical directive for rethinking the object of knowledge, and (iii), once we come to recognize this directive, providing new resources for pursuing it.

(i) *Retracting the unknowability of the elements in the "dream" theory.* Socrates takes the relation between letters and syllables as the paradigm for the "dream's" account of the relation between elements and complexes. On the one hand, he argues, a syllable may be nothing more than "all" the letters (τὰ πάντα, 203c5), that is, the mere aggregate of them. But if so, then the "dream" theory implies that for any syllable, one can know *all* the letters, the mere aggregate of them that the syllable just *is*, without knowing *each* of them. This, Theaetetus declares, is "a monstrous absurdity" (203d). Since an aggregate just *is* each and each and each, etc., of the items that comprise it, it seems evident that, as Socrates goes on to say, one must "first know" (προγινώσκειν, 203d8) the letters before one knows the syllable (203d). But this will defeat the "dream" theory. To avoid this, Socrates swings to the far extreme: a syllable may be "a certain unitary form, come to be when the letters are put together" (203c); as such, it will both "differ from the elements" (203e) and not have parts (204a, also 205bff.). But if this is so, then, since a logos proceeds by spelling out the parts of its object, the syllable will be just as incapable of being made the object of a logos—and, so, just as incapable of being known—as the individual letters. In sum, either the elements are knowable along with the complexes, or the complexes are unknowable along with the elements (205d-e). In either case, the "dream" theory fails.

Argued thus, the dilemma is not merely negative. Of its two horns, the second is utterly unacceptable; it would deny the possibility of knowledge altogether. This throws us back to

¹⁰In "Knowledge and *Logos* in the *Theaetetus*" [hereafter KLT], *Philosophical Review* LXXXVIII (July, 1979), pp. 366-397, G. Fine argues persuasively that *logos* must mean not just "statement" but something stronger like "account" or "explanation."

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

(ii) *The directive.* In having Socrates leave Theaetetus with this conclusion, Plato leaves us with a paradoxical directive for rethinking the structure of the object of knowledge. As we have noted, Socrates indicates at the outset (202d) the necessity of logos for knowledge. And in presenting his "dream," Socrates says that "the essence of logos is the interweaving of [the] names [of the elements]" (202b). Thus logos would seem to presuppose, in its object, whole-part structure; for logos to explicate something by interweaving the names of its elements, that 'something' must have these elements as, in some sense, its parts. How, then, can Socrates respond to the dilemma by insisting on the knowability of simple elements? Evidently, we are asked to return to the simples of the dream and rethink what at first seemed obvious, that their simplicity precludes them from having the composite structure that being subject to logos requires. Can we conceive, without contradiction, simple elements that are also, as subject to logos, in some sense composite?¹¹ What sort of being, and what sort of compossibility of aspects, needs be thought here?¹²

¹¹Cf. R. Desjardins' provocative "The Horns of Dilemma: Dreaming and Waking Vision in the *Theaetetus*," *Ancient Philosophy* 1(1981), pp. 109-126; by a different analysis of the dilemma, she also argues that Plato intends to provoke the reader to accept both simplicity and complexity in the object of knowledge.

¹²Two strategies for forestalling this new directive may be set aside from the beginning. (1) We might try to withdraw the characterization of the elements as partless and treat them as composites; thus they would be subject to logos. But what, now, of *their* parts? Are *these* simple? If not, the question repeats itself: what of the parts of these parts? And so on. Thus we would be engaged in an infinite regress, and the "clearer and more authoritative knowledge" of the elements that Socrates praises at 206b would be an illusion. If, on the other hand, the parts *are* simple, then we must either accept the unacceptable claim of the "dream" and consign them to unknowability, or we must grant them compositeness in some sense as well. But this latter is just the course urged in the new directive for rethinking the structure of the object of knowledge, and there is no good reason, if we accept it on the level of the parts of the elements, not to accept it earlier as well, on the level of the elements themselves. (2) We might retain the characterization of at least some level of elements as simple but reinterpret what it means to give a logos of them,

(iii) *New resources for rethinking the object of knowledge.* If we turn back to the details of the text with Plato's directive in mind, we find striking resources for developing this new conception of the object of knowledge. In passing from the first to the second horn of his dilemma, Socrates first elicits from Theaetetus, then suppresses, the discovery of a very similar conception. Consider, first, the elicitation. At 204a Socrates proposes that they consider the syllable "a unitary character (μία ιδέα) that comes to be out of a set of letters that fit together." He then adds, "Accordingly, it must have no parts." When Theaetetus, surprised, asks why, Socrates simply asserts this pre-emptive principle: "where something has parts, the whole must be all the parts."¹³ That is, the whole must reduce to nothing more than the aggregate of the parts, just the characterization offered in the first horn. But thus declared, this seems quite arbitrary, and Socrates immediately acknowledges the specific alternative it pre-empts: "or do you think that it is precisely the whole of the parts¹⁴ that has arisen as a certain unitary character different from all the parts?" This is, in outline, strikingly like the new conception of the object of knowledge we are pondering: a being that, by virtue of having parts, is not *merely* a simple one and yet, by virtue of its unitary character, is not *merely* the

setting aside the notion of the analysis of a whole into its parts. This is a part of Fine's strategy in KLT; she argues that Plato wants us to reconceive logos so that it means not "enumeration of elements" but rather the kind of "classificatory" account that Theaetetus starts to give at 203b, an account that tells how the elements within the relevant field both differ and interrelate with one another. Fine takes this latter sort of logos to belong to what she calls "the interrelational model" of knowledge. But I think the text discourages us from distinguishing this notion of logos from analysis into parts and setting the two up as alternatives. First, Socrates nowhere suggests that logos needn't be *at least* an "enumeration of elements"; the refutation of the second sense of logos shows only that having such a logos is not sufficient for knowledge, not that it is not necessary to it. Second, when Socrates makes that refutation, he treats the "enumeration of elements" as inseparable from knowledge of the structure by which they relate--this is most explicit at 208a9-10, where he says that "one is then in possession of the account that goes through the elements (τὴν διὰ στοιχείου διέξοδον), together with right opinion, when, writing 'Theaetetus,' one writes [the letters] *in order* (ἐξῆς)." It seems not to occur to him that these might be taken apart and regarded as separate "models." Third and finally, classificatory knowledge proceeds by giving distinguishing features, and these, as we will see later in discussing Socrates' treatment of the third sense of logos (and, too, much later when we come to consider the language with which the procedures of collection and division are presented in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*), Plato conceives as "parts" of the definiendum; thus, classificatory knowledge is itself a mode of analysis into parts.

¹³My stress. The argument requires that this be the "is" of identity. Cf. Fine, KLT, p. 382.

¹⁴The "precisely" is my effort to render the force of the καὶ at 204a8.

aggregate of its parts.

To preserve his dilemma for Theaetetus, Socrates must suppress this conception; but the particular way that Plato has him do so should make it all the more interesting to us, as we ponder the Platonic directive. In effect, Socrates' suppression of what he has elicited from Theaetetus is Plato's more radical elicitation of it from us. Socrates' key moves are to establish, (1), that the aggregate of the items that a thing includes ($\tau\acute{\alpha}$ πᾶντα) is identical with the sum or, literally, "the all" of them ($\tau\acute{\omicron}$ πᾶν, 204b10) and, (2), that a whole is identical with the sum of its parts in that each is alike "that from which nothing is missing" (205a2, 4-5); from these claims he can establish by substitution his pre-emptive principle that a whole is identical with the aggregate of its parts. Step (1), in turn, Socrates establishes by studying "things that consist of a number" ($\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma$ ὅσα ἐξ ἀριθμοῦ, 204d1). He begins by taking the number 6 as an exemplary "all" (πᾶν, 204c8); the items it includes, the units, can be articulated in a host of ways—there are the counting-out, "1,2,3,4,5,6," the multiplications "2x3" and "3x2," and the additions "4+2" and "3+2+1." No matter how the units are gathered and grouped, Socrates gets Theaetetus to agree, in each case "the all," the sum or complete collection that 6 is, is expressed. Should we agree? In fact, Socrates' argument highlights the way, if we regard something as nothing more than the sum of its parts, we commit ourselves to neglect the various ways the parts may be organized. Socrates' example brings out nicely the complementary dimensions of such organization: the degree to which parts are broken down (contrast, for instance, the counting-out, which takes each unit as a basic part, with the multiplications, which take 2 and 3 as the basic parts) and the structure of their combination (contrast serial order, multiplication, addition, as well as, within these, the specific sequences of the numbers). Is neglecting the organization of the parts objectionable? We *might* go along, as Theaetetus does, if our attention is limited to "things that consist of a number."¹⁵ But Socrates' next set of examples seems chosen to bring out what Theaetetus apparently misses, that this is a highly restricted class. Socrates cites acres (204d4-5), miles (204d7),¹⁶ and armies (204d9-10) as cases in which the number of items a thing includes is identical with the thing. But it is surely one thing to say that 5280 feet are identical with a mile and another to say that 10,000 soldiers are identical with an army.¹⁷ This brings out

¹⁵On the other hand, such examples seem to invite a Fregean sense-reference distinction.

¹⁶That is, of course, he cites the Attic equivalents of these, the plethron and the stadion.

¹⁷In his summative sentence at 204d10-11, Socrates says, ὁ γὰρ ἀριθμὸς πᾶς τὸ ὄν πᾶν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐστίν ("For the complete number is the complete thing [or sum or complete collection] that each of these is"). One way to try to minimize the immediate difficulty of the identity Socrates is asserting is to read this sentence as claiming only that the complete number is the same as the *sum or complete collection* of the numerous items, and not the same as the complete *thing* that has these items. But there are two problems with this. First, it would make the summative sentence introduce a distinction of which there is no trace in the sentences that it

what is wrong with step (2) as well. To know there are 10,000 soldiers in an army may well be to know the whole in the sense of "that from which nothing"—that is, no particular item—"is missing." But this very sense of "whole" omits what is much more basic, the "division of labor"¹⁸ or organization according to differentiated and co-ordinated functions that gives the plurality of soldiers the character of a potentially effective fighting force, an *army* in the genuine sense. *This* is the true whole, and it is not reducible to the aggregate of its parts.

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

Recognizing this, however, is itself a step in the right direction. It should invite us, reflecting on the example, to focus on the "unitary character." Granted, we encounter it only *in* the whole, as the immanent organization according to which the parts are determined and arrayed.¹⁹ Still, is it itself, in *its* unity, the trace of the simple for which Plato calls? Can we refocus somehow, moving from the composite with a simple character to the character itself as what is basic to the composite, in order to meet the Platonic directive?

summates; in presenting the three examples, Socrates says, "The number of an acre is the same as the acre" (204d4-5), "The [number] of a mile, in the same way" (204d7), and "And also, indeed, the [number] of an army and the army, and likewise for all such things" (204d9-10). Second, this reading would only change the way the passage functions to suggest the contrast between "things that consist of a number" and other things, not the contrast itself. Hearing the way the summative sentence makes a distinction that the statements of the examples do not, we would be moved to say, 'Yes, 10,000 soldiers are the sum or complete collection of the items in an army, but *this*, the sum or complete collection, is hardly the same as the army itself!'

¹⁸Cf. K. Watanabe, "The *Theaetetus* on Letters and Knowledge" (hereafter TLK), *Phronesis* XXXII, 2 (1987), p. 158.

¹⁹Thus, the several appearances of ἰδέα (203e4, 204a1, 205c2, 205d7) and εἶδος (203e4, 205d6) refer not to separate forms but to immanent characters of concrete things. But to say this is not to beg the question against the possibility that Plato intends to call to the reader's mind the notion of separate forms.

B. The Senses of Logos: Types of Composite Structure and the Act of Knowing

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

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

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

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

Why does Socrates even bother with so dismissable an interpretation of logos? In context, both the interpretation and the refutation make important points. The interpretation, first of all, distinguishes and ties together "one's thought" and its linguistic expression. On the one hand, "one's thought" does not reduce to its linguistic expression, for the latter is only an "image" of it. On the other hand, this "image" plays the crucial role of "mak[ing] one's thought manifest." It is tempting to hear in this an acknowledgment of what the dialogue itself puts on constant display. When, at the end of the conversation, Theaetetus tells Socrates that "thanks to you, I have given utterance to more than I had in me" (210b6-7),

he attests to the maieutic power of speaking—in this case, responding to Socrates' questions and challenges. The "image" of one's thought in the "mirror or water" of speech enables one to come to 'see'—that is, to recognize and assess—what one thinks, and this, in turn, is itself the beginning of fresh thinking and speaking. At the same time, the refutation makes clear that not just any linguistic expression will do. To preserve the distinction of knowledge from right judgment, *logos* must do some distinctive work. The function of the refutation is, then, hardly to deny the necessity of speech; rather, Socrates raises the question of what kind of speech knowledge requires. With the second and third senses of *logos*, in turn, Socrates offers the beginnings of an answer.

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

The second sense is, "in face of the question of what a given thing is, a reply that goes through the [thing's] elements" (206e6-207a1). As Socrates indicates at 207b, this is the interpretation of *logos* intended before in the "dream." Now he offers two worries about whether *logos* in this sense is sufficient for knowledge. Strikingly, however, the illustrative cases by which he explains his worries to Theaetetus raise problems not so much about this sense itself of *logos* as about ways in which what it really involves might be missed. Thus Socrates, even as he seems to set this second sense of *logos* aside, in fact opens up what it presupposes and requires.

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

Socrates' spelling analogy both raises and veils a deeper question. At what level are we entitled to claim that we have come to the elements of a thing? How far does the goal of knowledge require us to go in breaking down the parts? The fact that in spelling it is agreed from the beginning that the letters are the elements (indeed, Plato follows standard Greek practice in using the same word, *στοιχείον*, for "letter" and "element") should not keep us from recognizing the underlying general question: what qualifies one level of units, rather than another, to count as elemental? Socrates signals what is crucial by the way he first introduces *logos* in the second sense as the reply to the question of "what" a thing "is" (τί ... εἶναι, 206e6-7, cf. 207a5-6). He is explicit to the point of redundancy at 207b-c: one "gives a detailed account" (διελθεῖν) of "the *being*" or "*nature*" (τὴν οὐσίαν) of a wagon "by way of" (διὰ) its parts, he says, becoming "expert and knowledgeable about the *nature* (οὐσίας) of a wagon insofar as one works through the whole, from beginning to end, by way of its elements (διὰ στοιχείων τὸ

ὅλον περᾶναιτα).” These formulations imply, first of all, that what counts as an elemental part depends on the “nature” of the thing in question. More fully, Socrates draws a three-fold distinction: there are the “elements,” the “whole” thing which they comprise, and the “nature” of this whole. The object of knowledge is the “nature”; the express form this knowledge takes, however, is a logos, an account, that lays out the whole completely (“from beginning to end”), identifying all of its parts. For this to be the form appropriate for knowledge of the “nature” suggests two key points. First, the “nature” is what is responsible for the thing’s having the parts that it does; this is what makes identifying these parts a way of “giving a detailed account of the nature.” Second, at least in the context of its causal power, Socrates considers the “nature” to be incomposite; if it were not, if it itself were a whole of parts, knowledge of it would refer to *these* parts, not to those of the thing whose “nature” it is.²⁰

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

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

²⁰With this introduction of the notion of οὐσία Socrates recalls his much earlier characterization, in the “digression,” of the philosopher’s search for the “nature” (φύσιν, 174a1) of each thing.—Both Haring, TEW, especially p. 520, and A. Nehamas, in “*Episteme and Logos in Plato’s Later Thought*” [hereafter ELP], Essays on Ancient Greek Philosophy III, edited by J. Anton and A. Preus, SUNY Press, pp. 267-292, stress that knowledge in the Platonic sense must be understood as directed toward essence.

Socrates builds up to this point in three steps. Retracing them helps to bring Plato's underlying concerns into focus. (1) Socrates begins with an almost formulaic characterization of two complementary forms of occasional error. There is, he points out, (a) the situation in which "one sometimes judges the same to be part of the same, sometimes takes it to be part of something different"; here one fails to recognize the difference between two wholes, taking them to have the same part when they do not. There is also (b) the situation in which "one sometimes supposes one thing to be part of the same, sometimes supposes something different to be part of it"; here one fails to recognize the sameness between two wholes, taking them to have different parts when they do not. (207e) (2) He then points Theaetetus back to his childhood experience of learning to spell, and Theaetetus correctly recalls examples of each type of error: the first type, (a), occurred when he put the self-same letter sometimes in a syllable to which it belongs, sometimes in a wrong one, while the second type, (b), occurred when he sometimes put the right letter, sometimes the wrong one, into a self-same syllable.²¹ Note that had Plato wanted to show only that correctly laying out a thing's elements is not enough to assure that one has knowledge, he might have had Socrates stop here. But he does not. (3) Rather, Socrates goes on to construct a single example of his own. What if, as a child, Theaetetus had recognized theta (θ) and epsilon (ϵ) as the letters making up the first syllable of his own name, $\Theta\epsilon\alpha\iota\tau\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$, but mistakenly took *tau* (τ) and epsilon (ϵ) as the letters making up the self-same syllable in the different name $\Theta\epsilon\alpha\delta\omega\rho\omicron\varsigma$? Theaetetus agrees that even though he could spell $\Theta\epsilon\alpha\iota\tau\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ correctly, putting down all the right letters in the right order, he shouldn't be credited with knowledge.

Socrates' example involves two interesting departures from steps (1) and (2). First, with no warning or explanation he drops one of the two types of error, (a), turning his attention exclusively to (b).²² This is surprising and should move us, as we think into the example, to ask for an analogous development of (a). Second, he expands Theaetetus' frame of reference in (2): whereas Theaetetus had considered the placement of letters in syllables, Socrates now adds consideration of the placement of self-same syllables in different words. With this, Plato points to a *distinct mode of logos* that must be introduced to complement the work of laying out a thing's elements "in order." To achieve genuine knowledge of a word, Socrates implies, we must be able to recognize the occurrences of each of its syllables in other words as well. To bring into focus the new mode of analysis this suggests, consider these points of difference: whereas to this point Socrates' concern has been to get to the level of elemental

²¹It may be helpful to construct English examples for each type of error. For (a), take the letter *p* and the syllables *pa* and *ba*; the mistake would be to say, on one occasion, that *p* is part of *pa* and then to say, on another occasion, that it is part of *ba*. For (b), take the letters *p* and *b* and the syllable *pa*; here the mistake would be to say, on one occasion, that *p* is part of *pa* and then to say, on another occasion, that *b* is part of *pa*.

²²To my knowledge, only A. Nehamas, ELP, p. 277, has noted this.

parts, now he marks out an intermediate level between the whole and its elemental parts, a level of parts composed of these elemental parts, that is, the level of syllables, and fixes his attention on these; whereas with the laying out of a thing's elements he has not looked beyond the whole that these comprise, now he is concerned to recognize, in other wholes, occurrences of the same intermediate level parts; finally, whereas the laying out of a thing's elements is concerned with the way they fit together within the whole they comprise, now he is concerned to be able to identify, in the many different occurrences of its intermediate level parts, respects in which different wholes are alike. To gather up these implications of Socrates' example in a provisional way: to know what something is in the fullest sense, he seems to be saying, requires *both* that we can spell out the the array of elements that its "nature" exacts of it *and* that we can recognize its kinship, through shared intermediate level parts, with other things.

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

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

The sense of giving a logos accepted by "most people," Socrates says at 208c7-8, is "to tell some mark by which the thing in question differs from everything else." The idea behind this seems straightforward at first: by "adding" to one's "right judgment" or "opinion" (ὀρθή δόξα) about something a grasp of what differentiates it from other things, one moves beyond mere opinion to genuine knowledge of the thing; one "will have become knowledgeable of that of which, beforehand, one had only opinion." (208e)

Socrates attacks this sense of logos and the new definition of knowledge it yields with an elegant compound dilemma. (1) In stressing the *addition* (προσλάβω, 209a2) of the logos of the difference to one's right judgment of the object, the definition implies that the "thought"-content (τῆ διανοίᾳ, 209a8, also b3, b7, c1) of the right judgment does not itself include what differentiates the object from others, hence that it refers to the object only by way of what it has in common with others. But if that is so, then the right judgment is no more directed at the object in question than it is directed at other quite different objects, and this undermines its very status as right judgment *of that object*. (2) To avoid this consequence, Socrates gets Theaetetus to agree that the right judgment of an object must include an awareness of what differentiates that object from all others. Taking Theaetetus himself as an exemplary object,

he drives the point home by working stage-wise from the common to the particular. To identify Theaetetus, he points out, it would not be enough to list all the parts of the human body, e.g. "nose and eyes and mouth and so on," for everyone has them (209b); nor would it suffice to give a list of more specific features like "snub-nosedness" and "bulging eyes," for lots of others, including Socrates himself, have these (209b-c); rather,

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

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

(i) *A second sort of simplicity and complexity.* As we work through Socrates' argument, we should be struck by the way it brings us back—with, however, several significant differences—to the issue of the simplicity and complexity of the object of knowledge. As we've begun to consider, logos in the third sense complements what Socrates called for in his immediately preceding objection to the second sense; where that objection implied that knowledge of something requires the ability to recognize parts or features it shares with others, the third sense of logos implies that knowledge requires recognition of the different ways things have these parts. Socrates' stage-wise movement through his example leads from the indeterminate and common to the determinate and distinctive. Thus, Theaetetus is distinguished, first, from other beings with noses by his snub-nosedness and, secondly, from others who are also snub-nosed by "the particular snub-nosedness" peculiar to him. The same point holds for his peculiar bulging-eyedness and—since he has each of his features with a peculiar determinateness—"so too for the other features of which [he is] comprised." With this language we are returned to the conception of the object of knowledge as, in being subject to logos, a whole of parts: in the example at hand, Theaetetus is thought as "comprised of" (ἐξ ...) his various determinate features, and the task of logos is to work through them. But there are two important differences. The first has to do with the intimacy, so to speak, of the whole-part structure to the object. In examining the second sense of logos, Socrates distinguished the "nature" from the thing that has it, and it was only the thing, not the

"nature" itself, that logos disclosed as actually having parts; or, to draw this distinction in a different way, whereas whole-part analysis revealed the "nature" in its formal-causal power to exact a certain organization of parts *in others*, it treated the "nature" *in itself*, in its own intensional content, as partless. Now, by contrast, logos treats the object itself as composite, as "comprised of" its various features. Secondly, there is a basic difference in the aims of the two kinds of analysis and, correspondingly, in the status of the parts each works to distinguish. Logos in the earlier sense picks out constituents of the thing as a whole; it selects and identifies parts with an eye to the way they fit together, answering to the unifying organization the "nature" exacts. In the present sense, the context is not the relation of parts to each other within a whole but, rather, the contrast of the whole with other wholes. Logos picks out features that differentiate the object as a whole from other generally similar objects; comparing its object with others, it selects parts with an eye to the way these bring to light the uniqueness of the whole they comprise.

With this new sort of complexity we are led, as well, to a corresponding new sort of simplicity. Socrates' choice of example is very striking. How is it that one recognizes another individual? It is not, Socrates' example implies, that one spots a single telling mark, Theaetetus' snub-nosedness, for instance; for "the other features of which [he's] comprised" are also "stamped and registered within me" as "record[s]" of Theaetetus. Nor does Socrates suggest that one somehow adds all of these up, as if they were distinct bits and the mental operation of recognition were a reassembling of Theaetetus as an aggregative whole. If one thinks of the two features Socrates cites, Theaetetus' peculiar snub-nosedness and bulging eyes, it is more natural to think that each of these goes with the other, as it were, from the start and that for either to "stir the memory" is for it to call to mind what we might call Theaetetus' peculiar 'look.' This would be that peculiar bearing or Gestalt by which those who know Theaetetus recognize him 'instantly.'²³ On the one hand, this 'look' or Gestalt is not reducible to a catalogue of Theaetetus' various peculiar features; such a catalogue must treat them distinctly, one by one, whereas the features themselves, if they perform their function as "memory traces," move us to bring them to mind in their prior unity with one another. On the other hand, such a catalogue can have precisely this function, calling to mind, in place of the distinct items it names, the overall Gestalt to which they all belong. There is the familiar experience of hearing a sensitive, well-attuned description of someone and finding oneself saying, 'Yes, exactly. That's him to a T!'

Socrates' example, then, should lead us to discover a second fulfillment of the paradoxical requirement of a simple that is also in some sense composite and subject to logos: on the one hand, the peculiar 'look' that is the object of such acts of recognition precedes any

²³Note R. Mohr's fascinating reference to such recognition on pp. 121-122 of his "Forms as Individuals," Illinois Classical Studies XI (1986), pp. 113-128. But note, too, the cautionary force of my section C (iii) for this line of interpretation.

analysis into determinate features; on the other hand, these belong to *it*, and an account that tries to recapture that 'look' in its uniqueness will select those features that are most intensely indicative of it. In these respects, the object is, again, simple or partless, preceding the distinctions that analysis makes, and yet, in being suggestible in its uniqueness by way of such descriptions, subject to whole-part analysis as well.

(ii) *Disarming the final dilemma: relating the moments of the activity of knowing.* Interpreted in the context of his affirmation of both logos and right judgment as necessary for knowledge, Socrates' final dilemma takes on an elicitive function: by showing ways in which, as moments of knowledge, logos and right judgment cannot be related, it challenges us to conceive in what other ways they *are* related. Each of the horns, in turn, contributes in some definite way. From (1) we learn that logos and right judgment must be directed toward and disclose the self-same object; from (2a) we learn that they must disclose the object in distinctive ways; and from (2b) we learn that logos alone cannot constitute knowledge—it must function together with right judgment.

Strikingly, the reflections we have been developing in response to the earlier Platonic directive provide the resources for disarming the dilemma and working out concretely its positive implications; in effect, the elicitive work of the final dilemma dovetails with that of the first dilemma, at 202d-205e. For consider together the two sorts of simplicity and complexity that have emerged in our study of the second and third senses of logos. In both senses, logos brings the object to light by disclosing a whole of parts—an ordered set of elemental constituents, in the second sense of logos, and a list of telling features, in the third. Yet we have also seen that these disclosures answer to and explicate a prior awareness of the object (this would be the moment of right judgment), and in this awareness the object is given as simple. The "nature," even while it exacts whole-part structure of the things that have it, does not itself have these parts; analogously, the unique 'look' precedes the sorting of its various telling features from one another and so is not reducible to their aggregate. Thus right judgment and logos do bring the self-same object to light in distinctive ways, the one disclosing it in its simplicity, the other explicating this by laying out a plurality of parts; and in that logos, in this explicative function, depends on and answers to right judgment, it is only together with right judgment that it can constitute knowledge.

Having said this, we should add a major, counterbalancing qualification. Even while logos depends on right judgment for the content which it explicates, *knowledge* depends on logos to show that such "judgment," δόξα, is "right" or "true" in the first place; explication should therefore be understood as a mode of examination. Here the first sense of logos, "making one's thought (διανοίαν) manifest" in speech, makes its special contribution to the overall conception of knowledge. How else, short of giving a logos, can we put that "thought" to

the test? Short of discursive expression, we are not in position to distinguish, within our own "thought," what is genuine insight from what is misguided opinion. Even as it answers to and depends upon a prior awareness, giving a logos also exposes this awareness and makes it subject to critical reflection.

Clearly, both of these relationships of right judgment and logos are indispensable to knowledge as a whole. If the first relationship, in which logos expresses a genuine recognition of the "nature" of a thing, is the consummation of coming to know, the second, in which logos permits us to examine an apparent recognition, testing it for adequacy and depth of understanding, is what enables inquiry to begin and to move toward consummation in the first place.

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

If our reflections so far are well-taken, then there is, at the least, pointed *Platonic* irony when, at 210b, Socrates asks Theaetetus whether their definitions of knowledge have proved to be "mere wind eggs and not worth the rearing (ἄξια τροφῆς)." Theaetetus takes this as a rhetorical question and agrees, but we have found, both in the original "dream" and in the ways Socrates has responded to it, a great deal that is worthwhile. The suggestion that it must still be "reared," moreover, captures precisely the status of this content. The Theaetetus has given us specifications, or determinate conditions, that the object of knowledge must meet in order to *be* the object of knowledge; but it has left for another occasion the discovery of what there is that is suited to meet these conditions. Likewise, it has indicated the kinds of work that logos must do in order to help to constitute knowledge; but it has left open just what methodological form logos might take in order to do this work. Finally, it has left inexplicit the character of the cognitive act that, filling the role of "right judgment" in the final definition, is capable of orienting the work of logos. On these three counts, the Theaetetus is "proleptic," pointing beyond itself and requiring other occasions for the full development of the reflections it has initiated.²⁴

²⁴Recall n. 6 above. Would it go too far to bring the idea of proleptic content together with the earlier metaphor of the dream? For the Greeks, dreams were traditionally considered vehicles of premonition. But the content of dream-premonitions was not to be taken uncritically at face value—there is always the danger that the dreamer, even as he is transported beyond his ordinary waking understanding, might also be fooled by illusion, remaining asleep, as it were, to what is really at hand; hence dreams are in need of probing interpretation. All this seems to fit the situation in the Theaetetus. With its notions of simple elements, of a mode of "true judgment" that reaches them, and of the key role of logos, Socrates' "dream" theory is prescient. But as his subsequent challenges have brought out, each of these notions needs be developed and complicated before it can be accepted; only as clarified by the reflections these challenges occasion, does the "dream's" premonitory content come to view. If this is well taken, then the

(i) *The manifold specification of the object of knowledge—and the forms.* In the last two sections, we concentrated on the way Socrates' example—Theaetetus' 'look'—points a path through the final dilemma: as the object of right judgment, Theaetetus' 'look' both orients and transcends the way it is itself represented in a logos of his features; thus right judgment and logos function together without redundancy. Concentrating on this aspect of the example, however, we neglected a different, initially puzzling aspect. Theaetetus is a particular person, and recognition of him is recognition of a *particular sensible individual*. Likewise, the sun, the entity Socrates takes as his example in the passage just preceding at 208d, is a particular celestial body, and to distinguish it as "the brightest of the celestial bodies that go around the earth" is to distinguish a particular sensible individual from others. Can Plato intend us to take entities of this kind as proper objects of knowledge? This would be surprising both in itself and in light of Socrates' earlier discussions of the wagon and spelling examples. In the treatment of the wagon example, the object of knowledge is the οὐσία, the "nature" that determines the structure of those things that have it as their "nature"; and in the treatment of the spelling example, in turn, the need to be able to recognize the various appearances of the syllable -θη- in other words implies that knowledge is concerned with these words as instances of the self-same. Both passages imply that the proper objects of knowledge are universals.

In fact, the problem dissolves if we pay strict attention to the specificity of what is exemplified in each case. As we noted much earlier, throughout the Theaetetus Socrates holds back from letting knowledge be defined in terms of what it takes as its objects (see 146e); he proceeds, instead, in the contrary direction, letting the object of knowledge take shape as a function of the requirements of knowing. This implies that the entities Socrates chooses for his examples should be considered not for what they are in themselves but rather for the way they exhibit that which the relevant conception of knowledge implies in its object. The wagon example, as we have seen, is particularly well suited to illustrate the notion of giving a logos as laying out a thing's elements, for it presents us, as the object of knowledge, a "nature" that calls for a specific array of determinate parts. The -θη- example, in turn, brings home that knowledge requires recognizing this array and its major structural parts—its syllables, as it were—wherever these appear, with the implication that we must be able to locate them as self-same units among others, capable of various combinations with various others. If we now interpret the examples of the sun and Theaetetus in the same way, looking at the way they make prominent in the object that which the third notion of logos—giving the difference—requires of it, what stands out is not that they are sensible individuals but, rather, that each is in its own way something *unique*. There is only one sun in the heavens, obviously, and dream metaphor seems to invite the discovery and focusing of the proleptic content of the final part of the Theaetetus.

Socrates is explicit that Theaetetus' peculiar features distinguish him "from all other cases ... I've ever seen" (209c, quoted above).²⁵ This is what Socrates' current account of logos calls for. To be able to articulate what differentiates an object from everything else requires, of the object, that it in fact stands apart from all others. It is this uniqueness that Socrates plays on in taking the sun and Theaetetus as examples.

With this in mind, we can find in Socrates' examples at least three sets of features that knowledge calls for in its object. (1) Really to know what something is requires that we be able to lay out its elemental parts "in order." But the essential whole-part structure of a thing depends on its "nature." As exacting such structure, moreover, this "nature" itself precedes it. Thus, the object of knowledge is the *simple "nature"* that exacts determinate composite structure of the things that have it as their "nature." (2) Really to know what something is requires that one be able to recognize different appearances of it as, *qua* appearances of it, the same. Thus the object of knowledge is not a concrete particular but, rather, the *universal* of which particulars are appearances. (3) Really to know what something is requires as well that the one who knows it be able to differentiate it from everything else. It is appropriate, therefore, that the object of knowledge be *unique*.

Bringing Socrates' examples to focus this way makes clear that we must wake up from the presumption of the "dream" (recall $\alpha\lambda\sigma\theta\eta\tau\acute{\alpha}$, 202b6)—a presumption, moreover, that has guided Theaetetus throughout the dialogue—that the objects of knowledge are sense perceptible.²⁶ More generally, it will mean accomplishing what Plato elsewhere describes as the "turning" of the soul from sensibles to forms.²⁷ This task, however, involves much more than simply introducing a new metaphysical entity, for such a procedure would leave in place, untransformed, the basic habits of thought that go with taking sensibles as basic; the consequence would be that the new entity would be conceived by way of the categories appropriate to sensibles. In the Theaetetus, then, Plato leaves the task of the "turning" of the soul implicit, deferring it for another occasion. That occasion is the Parmenides.²⁸ We must reserve the explication of this claim for another time.²⁹ By way of anticipation, however, we

²⁵Peter Lupu has pointed out to me that Socrates actually secures the uniqueness of Theaetetus' 'look' by restricting it to the context of his experience.

²⁶For just this use of the metaphor of dreaming and waking, see Republic 476c-d.—On the point in the Theaetetus, cf. F. Cornford, Plato's Theory of Knowledge Bobbs Merrill, 1957, p. 162; Haring, TEW, p. 517; K. Sayre, Plato's Analytic Method, University of Chicago, 1969, pp. 136-137.

²⁷Republic 518c.

²⁸For Plato's indication that the Parmenides constitutes a further task, related to but presupposing more preparation than is demanded by the Theaetetus, see the reference in n. 5.

²⁹The material for this explication, however, is already gathered, without reference to the Theaetetus, in my PP (see n. 2).

may observe that in the hypotheses of the Parmenides Plato offers a conception of the forms that dovetails with the conception of the object of knowledge in the Theaetetus. In the Parmenides forms are characterized as the simple and unique "ones" that determine, in the things that "participate" in them, their whole-part structure; moreover, they are taken to be objects of a discourse (λέγειν) that, moving between what they "are" and "are not," differentiates each from everything else. In these ways, forms are shown to be, in their own nature, the same sort of entity that, in the Theaetetus, knowledge is shown, in its own nature, to require for its object.

(ii) *The modes of logos—and the various forms of collection and division.* From the beginning (recall 202d) Socrates has treated logos as necessary for knowledge. For logos, in turn, he has disclosed three kinds of work: (1) the laying out, "in order," of a thing's elemental parts, (2) the identification of respects in which otherwise different things are the same, and (3) the identification of respects in which generally similar things differ. (2) and (3), we have seen, Socrates takes together as a pair, both in his formulaic statement of the complementary kinds of error at 207e and again in the way he follows his illustration of missed sameness at 207e-208a by the interpretation of logos as giving the difference at 208c.

By contrast, it remains an open question just how (1), the laying out of elemental parts, and (2)/(3), the discerning of sameness and difference, fit together. It is also left open what specifically *methodological* forms these several modes of analysis might take. For these questions we have to turn to other texts. To indicate these, again by way of anticipation: With regard to (2) and (3), the Sophist and Statesman (up to 287b), following upon the Theaetetus as the second and third members of a trilogy,³⁰ introduce the method of collection and division in the mode of bifurcation. (2), the recognition of sameness, is most visible in the initial collection of a heterogeneous plurality under a comprehensive kind, while (3) is accomplished by a series of halvings, beginning with this comprehensive kind and disclosing narrower and narrower kinds until at last we reach one that includes only, or coincides with, the *definiendum*; in fact, (2) also recurs in each halving, for the same part or feature that analysis picks out to differentiate the *definiendum* from some things also serves to disclose its sameness with some others.³¹ With regard to (1), the key text is the Philebus (especially 16b-18d, 23b-27c); there Plato has Socrates take up again the examples of letters (17a-b, 18b-d) and musical notes (17b-e, also 26a) that, in the Theaetetus, he first invoked as background for the "dream" (202e ff., 206a-b). In the Philebus, however, he is not primarily concerned with syllables and words (or, by analogy, melodies); instead he focuses, on the one hand, on the whole fields of elements required by the notions of letter and pitch, respectively, and, on the

³⁰See the passages cited in n. 4.

³¹See my The Philosopher in Plato's STATESMAN [hereafter PPS], Martinus Nijhoff, 1980, ch.

II.1.

other hand, on the proportions of opposites that structure the instantiation of each of the elements, determining its place in the field. The main task of analysis, as Socrates now explicates it, is to disclose the definite number of elements that, by virtue of the fitness of each for interplay with each other, function as parts and comprise the field as a whole.³² With regard, finally, to the fit of the two methods and, so, of the two modes of analysis, there is the intriguing set of non-bifurcatory distinctions in the last part of the Statesman (287b-290e, 303d-305e). On the one hand, these complete the *differentiation* of statesmanship from all similar arts; on the other hand, they proceed analogously with the illustrative analyses of letter and musical pitch in the Philebus, spelling out the notion of "care for the city" by *distinguishing a field of elemental parts*, the various kinds of art, that are fit for interplay. What is the significance of this apparent confluence of the two methods? Plato has the Eleatic Stranger first remark that the reason for giving up bifurcation "will become evident to us as we proceed" (287c), then remain silent on the new form the method of division is taking. This leaves it up to the reader to reflect on the question, and we will attempt this in due course.³³

(iii) "Right judgment"—and the insight that orients logos. At the core of the conception of knowledge that emerges from the Theaetetus is the notion of "true" or "right judgment." If we ask directly and head-on, just *what* is the act of mind that fills the role of "right judgment" in constituting knowledge?, we find that Plato leaves this unthematized. This is at least³⁴ because of the dialectical pedagogical strategy of the Theaetetus. Socrates, as we've seen, works from within Theaetetus' presumption that the object of knowledge is sense perceptible; hence his last two examples of "right judgment" are the perceptual acts of seeing the sun and recognizing Theaetetus. If our reflections in (i) are well taken, however, his refutations subvert this presumption, making clear that knowledge requires forms, not sensibles, for its objects. With this it should also become clear that "right judgment" must be an intellectual, not a sense perceptual, recognition and that Socrates' examples must not be taken uncritically. As, in particular, the Parmenides will later show, relying on perceptual acquaintance as a model for insight into forms is one of the key ways in which one *fails* to make the "turn" from sensibles to forms.³⁵

³²I attempt to give this the sustained exegesis it requires in the paper cited in n. 3.

³³Again, see the paper cited in n. 3.

³⁴I must defer the deeper question of how fully this act of mind *can* be thematized. See, for instance, S. Rosen's discussion of intellectual intuition in Aristotle in The Limits of Analysis (Basic Books, 1980) and his capping remark on p. 63: "There is no possibility of a direct demonstration of the act of intuition in the sense of a discursive analysis of that act. This is because intuition is the necessary precondition for discursivity and, as an act, it has no structure."

³⁵See my PP, ch. II. For the Theaetetus, see Lee, UPT, on the struggle against "the paradigm of perceptual immediacy."

Suppose, therefore, that we scale back our question, asking not for the essence of the act of mind that is called "right judgment" but, rather, for its *function* in knowledge. Here, as we have seen, the Theaetetus is richly suggestive. Moreover, our reflections in (i) and (ii) permit us to bring some of our earlier analysis into new focus. To begin with, recall that in first discussing Socrates' wagon example, we noticed a kind of gap between the object of knowledge and the way logos brings it to light: logos discloses the "being" or "nature" of wagon by disclosing the whole-part structure it requires of *something else*, the things that have it as their nature; the "being" or "nature" *itself*, we observed, prescind from this structure. Does an analogous gap show up between the object and the way it is brought to light by a logos that spells out its sameness and difference with others? The object, we have seen, is unique. But, as Socrates showed by his stage-wise movement from the indeterminate and common to the determinate and distinctive at 209b-c, to pick out features that distinguish something from other things is also to bring the several things to light in terms of what they share; to single out Theaetetus' 'look,' for instance, by naming his "particular snub-nosedness" is, even while *calling up* that unique 'look,' to *speak* what Theaetetus shares with lots of others, snub-nosedness. Thus the logos discloses what is *itself* unique in terms that also apply to *something else*; it represents the object not as it is in itself but as it is in relation to others. Does this gap between object and logos suggest the unknowability of the object and, so, the impossibility of knowledge? If our interpretation of the nonredundancy of right judgment and logos is well taken, the answer is no. On the contrary, the gap is filled by the insight or awareness that orients logos. At its best, logos explicates a prior recognition of a simple and unique nature. To reverse our formulation of a few sentences ago: even while logos *speaks* of that nature as it is in relation to others, it *calls it up* in its uniqueness, as it is in itself. Indeed, a measure of the excellence of a logos is how fully it answers to and brings to mind the very presence that transcends it.

So, at least, the closing aporiai of the Theaetetus seem to suggest. Are these suggestions "reared" elsewhere? Three texts, in particular, warrant special attention. First, in the Parmenides there is a striking distinction between the characterizations of "the one" in the first and the fifth hypotheses: in the first hypothesis, "the one" is considered just in itself as a one and held *not* to be subject to sameness and difference; in the fifth hypothesis, by contrast, it is considered as the object of logos and held to *be* subject to sameness and difference.³⁶ If I am right to understand "the one" in these passages to refer us to each one form,³⁷ then Plato is giving us occasion to distinguish the form as it is in and of itself, as the one nature that it essentially *is*, and the form as logos, with its necessary reliance on relations, explicates it. This distinction appears to be reiterated in the Sophist. At 255e the Eleatic Stranger makes the striking remark that "each [form] is different from the others not

³⁶See 139b-e (discussed in my PP, ch. IV.C.1) and 160c-163b (PP, ch. V.B.2).

³⁷See my PP, ch. III, esp. pp. 76-77; ch. IV.B; and ch. V.B, esp. pp. 140-143.

by virtue of its own nature (οὐ διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν) but because it partakes of the form of difference." It is specifically in terms of its difference from others that the favored method of logos in the Sophist, collection and bifurcatory division, defines each form. Both of these texts thus describe the gap between the object of knowledge and the way logos discloses it that the Theaetetus suggests. Is there, then, text to show the way right judgment—as, at its best, insight into the "natures" of things—fills this gap? For this, we need to examine the practice of dialectic in the Sophist and the Statesman—the latter in particular, for there Plato has the Stranger indicate that their particular inquiry is structured in order to serve as an example of inquiry generally.³⁸ Especially in light of the confluence of the two methods of analysis at the close of the Statesman, a confluence called for, presumably, by the "nature" that is under study, it is tempting to wonder if Plato is there offering us an exemplary display of orienting insight at work.³⁹

³⁸See my PPS, pp. 69-70.

³⁹One further text is the Seventh Letter, 341b-344d. For a first indication of its relevance and, too, of its connection with the Statesman, see my PPS, pp. 80-82.