

UNIVERSIDADE DE SÃO PAULO  
FACULDADE DE FILOSOFIA, LETRAS E CIÊNCIAS HUMANAS  
DEPARTAMENTO DE FILOSOFIA  
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM FILOSOFIA

Adriana Madriñán Molina

Plato's *Phaedrus*: Dialectic as the method of philosophical Inquiry

SÃO PAULO

2017

Adriana Madriñán Molina

Plato's *Phaedrus*: Dialectic as the method of philosophical Inquiry

Tese apresentada ao programa de pós-graduação em Filosofia do Departamento de Filosofia da Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo como parte dos requisitos para obtenção do título de Doutora em Filosofia.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Marco Antônio de Ávila Zingano.

SÃO PAULO

2017

Autorizo a reprodução e divulgação total ou parcial deste trabalho, por qualquer meio convencional ou eletrônico, para fins de estudo e pesquisa, desde que citada a fonte.

Catálogo na Publicação  
Serviço de Biblioteca e Documentação  
Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo

M722p      Madrinan Molina, Adriana Madrinan Molina  
Plato's Phaedrus: Dialectic as the method of  
philosophical Inquiry / Adriana Madrinan Molina  
Madrinan Molina ; orientador Marco Antônio de Ávila  
Zingano Zingano. - São Paulo, 2017.  
136 f.

Tese (Doutorado)- Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras  
e Ciências Humanas da Universidade de São Paulo.  
Departamento de Filosofia. Área de concentração:  
Filosofia.

1. Platão. 2. Dialéctica. 3. O Fedro. I. Zingano,  
Marco Antônio de Ávila Zingano, orient. II. Título.

Madriñán Molina, Adriana. *Plato's Phaedrus: Dialectic as the method of philosophical Inquiry*. 2017. 142 f. Tese (Doutorado) – Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas. Departamento de Filosofia, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2017.

Aprovado em:

Banca Examinadora

Prof(a). Dr(a). \_\_\_\_\_ Instituição: \_\_\_\_\_

Julgamento: \_\_\_\_\_ Assinatura: \_\_\_\_\_

Prof(a). Dr(a). \_\_\_\_\_ Instituição: \_\_\_\_\_

Julgamento: \_\_\_\_\_ Assinatura: \_\_\_\_\_

Prof(a). Dr(a). \_\_\_\_\_ Instituição: \_\_\_\_\_

Julgamento: \_\_\_\_\_ Assinatura: \_\_\_\_\_

Prof(a). Dr(a). \_\_\_\_\_ Instituição: \_\_\_\_\_

Julgamento: \_\_\_\_\_ Assinatura: \_\_\_\_\_

Prof(a). Dr(a). \_\_\_\_\_ Instituição: \_\_\_\_\_

Julgamento: \_\_\_\_\_ Assinatura: \_\_\_\_\_

*Para Jimmy*

## Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Marco António de Ávila Zingano. His support along these years played a pivotal role in the development of the present thesis.

I am very grateful to Professor Francesco Fronterotta for his attentive discussion of a previous version of the present work during my visit to *Sapienza-Università di Roma*.

I thank Professor María Isabel Santa Cruz for having me in her Seminar on Ancient Philosophy during my visit to Universidad de Buenos Aires. In particular, I am grateful for her attentive reading of the last version of the present work and her valuable suggestions.

I am very grateful to Professor Roberto Bolzani Filho and Professor Fabián Mié for their interesting and valuable observations to a previous version of the present work.

I am also grateful to the Department of Philosophy of the University of São Paulo. In particular, to Marie Marcia Pedroso and Geni Ferreira Lima.

I thank my parents, Raúl and Julia María, and my dear brother, Santiago, for their love and support during these years.

Finally, I would like to thank Jaime Alfaro Iglesias, my husband, for his continuous support, sharp criticism and, more importantly, for his love and patience. Without him, this work would have not been possible.

The present work was funded by **Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo-FAPESP** in the form of three doctoral scholarships: 2013/11656-4 (Bolsa no país), 2015/06205-9 (BEPE) and 2016/17525-7 (BEPE).

La rosa,  
la inmarcesible rosa que no canto,  
la que es peso y fragancia,  
la del negro jardín en la alta noche,  
la de cualquier jardín y cualquier tarde,  
la rosa que resurge de la tenue  
ceniza por el arte de la alquimia,  
la rosa de los persas y de Ariosto,  
la que siempre está sola,  
la que siempre es la rosa de las rosas,  
la joven flor platónica,  
la ardiente y ciega rosa que no canto,  
la rosa inalcanzable.

*Fervor de Buenos Aires (1923)*

Jorge Luis Borges

Madriñán Molina, Adriana. *Plato's Phaedrus: Dialectic as the method of philosophical Inquiry*. 2017. 142 f. Tese (Doutorado) – Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas. Departamento de Filosofia, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2017.

## RESUMO

Platão pensou que a dialética é o método de investigação filosófica. No entanto, não há consenso entre os estudiosos a respeito da sua visão da dialética. A interpretação dominante, que se remonta ao trabalho de Robinson *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, que eu chamo de interpretação "descontínua" (ID), pressupõe que há uma ruptura na visão de Platão sobre a dialética no decorrer dos seus diálogos. Isto significa que ele considerou a dialética como o método de investigação filosófica, mas o termo 'dialética' é apenas uma *façon de parler* para se referir ao método que considerou mais adequado em diferentes momentos. Portanto, (ID) implica o seguinte trilema: Deve-se identificar a visão de Platão sobre a dialética, enquanto o método de investigação filosófica, com o *Elenchus* (E), com a Hypotesis (H), ou com a Coleção & Divisão (C&D)? Por exemplo, Irwin (1988: 7) afirma que a dialética deve ser identificada com (E), enquanto Benson (2015: 238) afirma que a dialética deve ser identificada com (H). Em contraste com (ID), o objetivo do presente trabalho é defender uma interpretação "contínua" (IC): No *Fedro* Platão introduz uma visão unificada da dialética como método de investigação filosófica. Meu argumento para defender (IC) está baseado em três premissas: (1) os chamados três métodos, (E), (H) e (C&D) são realmente três *procedimentos* diferentes de uma *διαλεκτική τέχνη*; (2) a *τέχνη διαλεκτική* de Platão é o método de comunicação e descoberta da verdade; e (3) o *Fedro* (261a-266b) contém a visão unificada de Platão sobre a *διαλεκτική τέχνη*, concebida como uma amálgama de (E), (H) e (C e D), e o método de comunicação e descoberta da verdade.

**Palavras chave:** Platão, método de investigação filosófica, dialética, *O Fedro*, *elenchus*, hipótese, reunião (*sunagwgh*) e divisão (*diairesis*).

Madriñán Molina, Adriana. *Plato's Phaedrus: Dialectic as the method of philosophical Inquiry*. 2017. 142p. Thesis (Doctoral research) – Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas. Departamento de Filosofia, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2017.

## SUMMARY

Plato thought that dialectic is the method of philosophical inquiry. Yet there is no agreement between scholars regarding Plato's view of dialectic. The dominant interpretation, dating back to Robinson's *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, which I call the "discontinuous" interpretation (DI), assumes a significant gap between Plato's account of dialectic as it is presented in the course of the dialogues. As such, although Plato considered dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry, the term 'Dialectic' is just a *façon de parler* conveying the method he deemed most suitable at different moments. One should note that (DI) entails the following trilemma: Plato's dialectic, as the method of philosophical inquiry, must be identified with either *Elenchus* (E), Hypothesis (H) or Collection & Division (C&D). For example, Irwin (1988:7) argues that one should identify dialectic with (E) while Benson (2015:238) argues that one should identify dialectic with (H). In contrast with (DI), the goal of this dissertation is to defend a "continuous" interpretation (CI): Plato introduced a unified view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry in the *Phaedrus*. My argument supporting (CI) relies on three main premises: (1) The so-called three methods, (E), (H) and (C&D), are three different *procedures* of one *διαλεκτική τέχνη*; (2) Plato's *διαλεκτική τέχνη* is both a method of communication and a method of discovering truth; and (3) The *Phaedrus* (261a-266b) contains Plato's unified view of *διαλεκτική τέχνη*, conceived as an amalgam of (E), (H) and (C&D), and a method of communication and a method of discovering truth.

**Key terms:** Plato, method of philosophical inquiry, dialectic, *Phaedrus*, elenchus, hypothesis, collection (sunagwgh) and division (diairesij).

## ABBREVIATIONS

Dialogues of Plato cited in the present work:

*Ap.*

*Cra.*

*Euthphr.*

*Grg.*

*Meno*

*Phd.*

*Phdr.*

*Phlb.*

*Plt.*

*Rep.*

*Sph.*

*Tht.*

## Contents

Introduction.....	1
Part One: Toward an unified account of dialectic in the <i>Phaedrus</i> .....	16
Chapter 1: Elenchus, Hypothesis and Collection & Division as procedures of Plato's Dialectic.....	17
1. Introduction .....	17
2. Philosophical Inquiry in the Early and Middle Dialogues.....	20
2.1. The Elenchus.....	21
2.2. Hypothesis.....	27
3. Philosophical Inquiry in the <i>Phaedrus</i> and Late Dialogues.....	32
4. The Possibility of a Unified View of the Method.....	35
Chapter 2: Διαλεκτική τέχνη : A method of communication and truth- discovery in the <i>Phaedrus</i> .....	45
1. Introduction.....	45
2. Unifying the <i>Phaedrus</i> .....	47
3. Διαλεκτική τέχνη: Truth and Communication.....	54
3.1. A brief genealogy of the concept of Τέχνη.....	58
3.2. Truth and Persuasion.....	64

Part Two: The <i>Phaedrus</i> : Plato's unified account of Dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry.....	69
Chapter 3: From Puzzlement to Inquiry and from Inquiry to Knowledge.....	70
1. Introduction.....	70
2. From Puzzlement to Inquiry.....	71
3. From Inquiry to Knowledge.....	78
Chapter 4: Articulating the Method.....	90
1. Introduction.....	90
2. How one is to find the category to which <i>F</i> belongs?.....	91
3. How one is to find a suitable candidate <i>definiens</i> for <i>F</i> ?.....	100
4. How one is to assess the suitable candidate <i>definiens</i> for <i>F</i> according to the Form of <i>F</i> ? .....	110
Conclusion.....	127
Bibliography.....	132

## Introduction

How should we do philosophy? This question concerns metaphilosophy, which is the philosophical study of the nature of philosophy itself. Although the word “metaphilosophy” denotes a flourishing trend in contemporary analytic philosophy, it is just a new name for an old well-known problem. And, as with other well-known philosophical problems, Plato offered interesting insights concerning such metaphilosophical question. This dissertation concerns Plato’s view of how we should do philosophy as Plato presented it in the *Phaedrus*.

In short, Plato held that we should philosophize by using dialectic. Indeed, Plato held that dialectic is *the* method of philosophical inquiry. Here I use the word ‘Dialectic’ to convey Plato’s use of the expression *διαλεκτική τέχνη* (*Phdr.* 276e5).

Harvey Yunis makes this point lucidly in the following commentary:

The term *διαλεκτική* is rooted in the verb *διαλέγεσθαι* “to converse” or “to discuss”, so the face-to-face communicative aspect of dialectic is etymologically prominent (259 a1-2n). Dialectic is discourse by question and answer (*Cra.* 390c) and thus differs fundamentally from speech making (259 a1-2n, *Grg.* 447c, 448e). At least from the *Republic* on, the art of dialectic is for Plato both a method of communication and a method of discovering truth (*Rep.* 7.532a-533e, Robinson 1953: 61-92, Stemmer

1992:191-225). Earlier in the *Phaedrus* S. [Socrates] was concerned with dialectic's capacity for discovering truth (by means of the analytical procedures of collection and division) because rhetoric needs to discover the truth about its subject matter in order to construct persuasive arguments (265d4-266b2n). Here S. is concerned with dialectic as a method of oral communication with a receptive learner, a view that S. also suggested earlier (266 b4-c1). However, because it is not just any discourse but specifically "discourse along with knowledge" (276e6) that is being communicated, the truth-discovering capacity of dialectic is functionally intertwined with its communicative capacity. Yunis (2011:234).

As Yunis claims, the *Gorgias*, the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus* constitute indisputable evidence that dialectic is Plato's method of philosophical inquiry. Moreover, this means that Plato considered dialectic both a method of communication and a method of discovering truth. Hence, for Plato, the question "How should we do philosophy?" amounts to the question "How should we use dialectic?".

Yet it is surprising to find out that there is no consensus among scholars regarding Plato's view of dialectic. *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, published by Richard Robinson in 1941, remains one of the most influential studies on Plato's dialectic. However, as its title indicates, Robinson's seminal work is not concerned with Plato's "later" dialectic. Indeed, Robinson (1941:v) opens his preface by saying "This book is called *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, and not simply *Plato's Dialectic*, because it

contains no examination of the theory of synthesis and division prominent in certain late dialogues, namely the *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Philebus*." Hence, Robinson's book "attempts to examine the rest of what Plato has to say about method, that is to say, his presentation of *elenchus* in the early dialogues and his theory of dialectic in the middle dialogues." (ibid). From a careful reading of Robinson's goal, it becomes clear that Robinson made the crucial assumption that Plato regarded different methods as "dialectic" at different stages of his work.

Furthermore, Robinson's assumption has been pervasive in Plato scholarship. As a result, today it is widely accepted that Plato advanced three disjoined methods of philosophical inquiry in the course of his dialogues. Let me outline these methods briefly as follows:

**The method of Elenchus (E):** the method that examines the consistency of our doxastic commitments. It is associated with the early dialogues.

**The method of Hypothesis (H):** the method that explores the assumptions made in relation to a non-hypothetical first principle. It is associated with the middle dialogues.

**The method of Collection and Division (C&D):** the method that begins by gathering into one category a concept under inquiry; then, it examines whether this categorization is in accordance with reality establishing the definition of the concept. It is associated with the late dialogues.<sup>1</sup>

Now, the essential point here is that if one follows Robinson's assumption, then any study concerned with (E) and (H) would be a study in Plato's earlier dialectic while any study of (C&D) would be a study of Plato's later dialectic.

One should note that every study that takes for granted the above assumption is committed to what I shall call the "discontinuous" interpretation of Plato's view of the method of philosophical inquiry:

(DI) Plato thought that (E), (H) and (C&D) are individually separate and distinct methods belonging to different periods of his dialogues.

The gist of the (DI) is that Plato changed his fundamental view about dialectic at one or more points of his work in order to overcome certain weaknesses of his view of the method of philosophical inquiry. Consider two relevant examples of such interpretation. On the one hand, Hackforth (1952:135) claimed that "It should be realised that there can be no objection to Plato, or any philosopher, having two or

---

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity, hereafter I shall refer to the *Elenchus*; Hypothesis, and Collection and Division as (E), (H) and (C&D), respectively.

even more *διαλεκτικαὶ μέθοδοι*, according as he *διαλεκτικῶς μετέρχεται* this goal or that". On the other hand, Robinson (1953:70) claimed that "The fact is that the word 'dialectic' had a strong tendency in Plato to mean 'the ideal method, whatever that may be'. In so far as it was thus merely an honorific title, Plato applied it at every stage of his life to whatever seemed to him at the moment the most hopeful procedure". In other words, (DI) assumes a significant gap between Plato's account of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. A detailed reading of certain dialogues seems to support this claim. For example, the *Euthyphro*, *Laches* and *Charmides* feature (E); the *Phaedo* and *Republic* feature (H); and the *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, and *Politicus* feature (C&D).

In sum, Plato thought that dialectic is the method of philosophical inquiry. Yet there is no agreement between scholars regarding Plato's view of dialectic. The dominant interpretation, dating back to Robinson, which I have called (DI), assumes a significant gap between Plato's account of dialectic as it is presented in the course of the dialogues. Hence, if the discontinuous interpretation holds -as Hackford and Robinson contend above-, Plato considered dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry but the term 'Dialectic' is just a *façon de parler* conveying the method he deemed most suitable at different points in the course of his dialogues.

Although those who endorse the discontinuous interpretation are in good company, one should note that such interpretation entails the following trilemma: is Plato's ultimate view of dialectic to be identified with (E), (H) or (C&D)? Let us consider two answers to this problem briefly.

On the hand, Irwin answered the above question by claiming that Plato's ultimate view of dialectic should be identified with (E). He wrote:

'Dialectic' (*dialektikē*) is Plato's name for the sort of systematic discussion (*dialegesthai*) that is practised in Plato's Socratic dialogues (*dialogoi*). Socrates discusses common beliefs about ethical questions through a conversation that involves the systematic cross-examination of an interlocutor and his intuitive beliefs, exposure of the puzzles they raise, and several attempts to solve the puzzles by modifying the initial beliefs. In the Socratic dialogues the discussion often ends in puzzlement and apparent confusion. But in the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, and in many later dialogues, Plato does explicitly what he does implicitly in the earlier dialogues, using the Socratic method to argue for positive philosophical positions; he regards dialectic as the primary method of philosophical inquiry. Irwin (1988:7)

By contrast, Benson thinks that one should identify Plato's ultimate view of dialectic with (H) rather than (E). He wrote:

I maintain that the method of hypothesis as it is described in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* and applied in the *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*, continues to be Plato's recommended

method of philosophical inquiry and learning. Indeed, dialectic is the method of hypothesis, correctly employed. Benson (2015:238)

I agree with Irwin and Benson that Plato regarded dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. Yet I reject (DI). In particular, I reject the thesis that one should identify dialectic with either (E), (H) or (C&D).

Nevertheless, this dissertation is not *per se* a critique of (DI). The goal of this dissertation is to argue that Plato's dialectic is a method of communication and truth-discovery, conceived as an amalgam of (E), (H) and (C&D), and that Plato introduced this unified view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry in the *Phaedrus*.

In other words, in contrast with (DI), I shall defend a "continuous" interpretation of Plato's view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. I shall formulate this continuous interpretation as follows:

(CI) Plato introduced a unified view of dialectic in the *Phaedrus*.

As a result, by arguing in favour of (CI), I shall show that there is no gap between Plato's dialogues concerning his understanding of dialectic. In other words, my goal is to offer an interpretation of Plato's view of dialectic as a coherent whole. Hence, I shall show that (CI) is economic and has more explicative power than (DI).

My argument supporting (CI) relies on three main premises:

- (1) The so-called three methods, (E), (H) and (C&D), are three different *procedures* of one general *διαλεκτική τέχνη*.
- (2) Plato's *διαλεκτική τέχνη* is both a method of communication and a method of discovering truth.
- (3) The *Phaedrus* (261a-266b) contains Plato's unified view of *διαλεκτική τέχνη* (conceived as an amalgam of (E), (H) and (C&D), and a method of communication and a method of discovering truth).

And it is structured by a simple inference: If (1), (2) and (3), then (CI). There is good evidence for (1), (2) and (3). Therefore, it is plausible to hold (CI). I shall clarify from the outset that my argument only aims to show that (CI) is highly plausible and that it is the best available interpretation of Plato's view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry.

The overall structure of the present dissertation is in accordance with the structure of the above argument. Accordingly, the dissertation is divided in two main parts.

Part One, which contains Chapter 1 and 2, is devoted to offer evidence for (1) and (2), and to pave the way for a defence of (3).

Part Two, which contains Chapter 3 and 4, is devoted to offer evidence for (3) and to elaborate on problematic aspects of my argument in order to offer possible solutions to these problems.

Having stated the problem and the goal of the present work, I would like to end this introduction by presenting an outline of each chapter. However, before I do this, it is relevant to address briefly the issue of the chronology of the *Phaedrus*.<sup>2</sup>

Ritter's chronology (1888) classifies Plato's dialogues into three groups based on stylistic reasons. However, the order of the dialogues within each group is a matter of discussion. Researchers working independently of each other established this classification into three groups with different linguistic evidence, and Brandwood (1992) and Ledger (1989) recently confirmed it.

There is no clear explanation for these systematic stylistic variations other than the relative age of the author. Yet only the stylistic criteria have allowed different specialists to achieve similar results. At this point it is worth mentioning that de Vries (1969) himself, in his commentary on the *Phaedrus*, refers to specialists

---

<sup>2</sup> For the chronological order of the dialogues, see Annas, J. & Rowe, C. (2002); Brandwood, L. (1990); Ledger, G.R. (1989); Nails, P. (1992); Ritter, C. (1888); Ryle, G. (1966); Thesleff, H. (1982); Young, C.M. (1994).

who warn against a naive confidence in the stylometric tests. Nonetheless, he recognizes its cumulative weight (see de Vries 1969: 10-11).<sup>3</sup>

### Stylometric chronologies

		<i>Campbell</i> (1867)			<i>Brandwood</i> (1958, 1990)			<i>Ledger</i> (1989)
I		<i>Apology</i> <i>Charmides</i> <i>Cratylus</i> <i>Crito</i> <i>Euthydemus</i> <i>Euthyphro</i> <i>Gorgias</i> <i>Hippias Minor</i> <i>Ion</i> <i>Laches</i> <i>Lysis</i> <i>Menexenus</i> <i>Meno</i> <i>Phaedo</i> <i>Protagoras</i> <i>Symposium</i>	I		<i>Apology</i> <i>Charmides</i> <i>Crito</i> <i>Euthyphro</i> <i>Hippias Minor</i> <i>Ion</i> <i>Laches</i> <i>Protagoras</i>	390s		<i>Lysis</i> <i>Euthyphro</i> <i>Ion</i> <i>Hippias Minor</i> <i>Hippias Major</i> <i>Alcibiades 1</i> <i>Theages</i> <i>Crito</i>
			II		<i>Cratylus</i> <i>Euthydemus</i> <i>Gorgias</i> <i>Hippias Major</i> <i>Lysis</i> <i>Menexenus</i> <i>Meno</i> <i>Phaedo</i> <i>Symposium</i>	380s		<i>Gorgias</i> <i>Menexenus</i> <i>Meno</i> <i>Charmides</i> <i>Apology</i> <i>Phaedo</i> <i>Laches</i> <i>Protagoras</i>
II		<i>Republic</i> <i>Phaedrus</i> <i>Parmenides</i> <i>Theaetetus</i>	III		<i>Republic</i> <i>Parmenides</i> <i>Theaetetus</i> <i>Phaedrus</i>	Mid		<i>Euthydemus</i> <i>Symposium</i> <i>Cratylus</i> <i>Republic</i> <i>Parmenides</i> <i>Theaetetus</i> <i>Epistle 13</i>
III		<i>Sophist</i> <i>Politicus</i> <i>Philebus</i> <i>Timaeus-Critias</i> <i>Laws</i>	IV		<i>Timaeus</i> <i>Critias</i> <i>Sophist</i> <i>Politicus</i> <i>Philebus</i> <i>Laws</i> <i>Epinomis</i> <i>Epistles</i>	Late		<i>Phaedrus</i> <i>Philebus</i> <i>Clitophon</i> <i>Epistles 7, 3, 8</i> <i>Sophist</i> <i>Politicus</i> <i>Laws</i> <i>Epinomis</i> <i>Timaeus</i> <i>Critias</i>

<sup>3</sup> The above table is taken from Nails (1998: 168).

The three stylistic groups do not exactly correspond to the customary division into early or Socratic dialogues, intermediate dialogues and late dialogues.<sup>4</sup>

**Chronologies based on philosophical content**

<i>Guthrie (1975)</i>	<i>Irwin (1977)</i>	<i>Vlastos (1991)</i>	<i>Kahn (1981–1988)</i>	<i>Kraut (1992)</i>	<i>Fine (1992)</i>
<i>Apology</i>	<i>Apology</i>	<i>Apology</i>	<i>Apology</i>	<i>Apology</i>	<i>Apology</i>
<i>Crito</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>	<i>Charmides</i>	<i>Crito</i>	<i>Charmides</i>	<i>Crito</i>
<i>Laches</i>	<i>Crito</i>	<i>Crito</i>	<i>Ion</i>	<i>Crito</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>
<i>Lysis</i>	<i>Charmides</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>	<i>H. Minor</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
<i>Charmides</i>	<i>Laches</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>	<i>H. Minor</i>	<i>Laches</i>
<i>Euthyphro</i>	<i>Lysis</i>	<i>H. Minor</i>	<i>Menexenus</i>	<i>Ion</i>	<i>Lysis</i>
<i>H. Minor</i>	<i>H. Minor</i>	<i>Ion</i>		<i>Laches</i>	<i>H. Minor</i>
<i>H. Major</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>	<i>Laches</i>	<i>Laches</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>
<i>Protagoras</i>	<i>Ion</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>	<i>Charmides</i>		<i>Ion</i>
<i>Gorgias</i>		<i>Republic I</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Ion</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>		<i>Protagoras</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>	
	<i>Gorgias</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>	<i>Meno</i>	<i>H. Major</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>Meno</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>	<i>H. Major</i>	<i>Lysis</i>	<i>Lysis</i>	<i>Meno</i>
<i>Phaedo</i>	<i>H. Major</i>	<i>Lysis</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>	<i>Menexenus</i>	<i>H. Major</i>
<i>Republic</i>		<i>Menexenus</i>		<i>Republic I</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>
<i>Symposium</i>	<i>Meno</i>	<i>Meno</i>	<i>Symposium</i>		
<i>Phaedrus</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>		<i>Phaedo</i>	<i>Meno</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Euthydemus</i>	<i>Symposium</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Menexenus</i>	<i>Republic</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>	<i>Republic</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Cratylus</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>	<i>Symposium</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>	<i>Symposium</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
		<i>Republic II–X</i>		<i>Republic II–X</i>	
<i>Parmenides</i>		<i>Phaedrus</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Theaetetus</i>		<i>Parmenides</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Sophist</i>		<i>Theaetetus</i>		<i>Theaetetus</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>
<i>Politicus</i>			<i>Sophist</i>		<i>Critias</i>
<i>Timaeus</i>		<i>Timaeus</i>	<i>Politicus</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>	<i>Sophist</i>
<i>Critias</i>		<i>Critias</i>	<i>Timaeus</i>	<i>Critias</i>	<i>Politicus</i>
<i>Philebus</i>		<i>Sophist</i>	<i>Critias</i>	<i>Sophist</i>	<i>Philebus</i>
<i>Laws</i>		<i>Politicus</i>	<i>Philebus</i>	<i>Politicus</i>	<i>Laws</i>
		<i>Philebus</i>	<i>Laws</i>	<i>Philebus</i>	
		<i>Laws</i>		<i>Laws</i>	

<sup>4</sup> The above table is taken from Nails (1998: 170).

This is because the customary division is determined by philosophical content and thus presupposes some continuity and progress in approaching certain philosophical themes that become repetitive and relevant in the Platonic corpus, such as the theme of the dialectical method and the theme of the Forms. This is why it is assumed that in the Socratic dialogues, Plato's emphasis is placed on ethical questions and the search for definitions; in the intermediate dialogues, on the development of the ontological questions; and in the late dialogues, on the critical examination of ontological, epistemological and methodological views.

Yet, as Nails (1998:173) has argued, there is actual consensus regarding the transitional character of the *Phaedrus*. She summarizes this point as follows:

Uncontroversial dialogues in and across categories				
	<i>Stylometry</i>	<i>Philology</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>All categories</i>
<i>Early</i>	<i>Crito</i> <i>Euthyphro</i> <i>Hippias Minor</i> <i>Ion</i>	<i>Apology</i> <i>(Republic I)</i>	<i>Apology</i> <i>Crito</i> <i>Hippias Minor</i> <i>Ion</i>	 <i>Apology</i> 
<i>Transitional</i>	<i>Gorgias</i> <i>Menexenus</i> <i>Meno</i> <i>Phaedo</i>	<i>Gorgias</i> <i>Protagoras</i>		
<i>Middle</i>	<i>Parmenides</i> <i>(Phaedrus)</i> <i>Republic</i> <i>Theaetetus</i>	<i>Cratylus</i> <i>Euthydemus</i> <i>Menexenus</i> <i>Meno</i> <i>Phaedo</i> <i>Phaedrus</i> <i>(Republic II-X)</i> <i>Symposium</i> <i>Theaetetus</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i> <i>Symposium</i> <i>(Republic II-X)</i>	<i>(Phaedrus)</i> <i>(Republic II-X)</i>
<i>Late</i>	<i>Sophist</i> <i>Politicus</i> <i>Timaeus</i> <i>Critias</i> <i>Philebus</i> <i>Laws</i>		<i>Sophist</i> <i>Politicus</i> <i>Timaeus</i> <i>Critias</i> <i>Philebus</i> <i>Laws</i>	

Following Nails conclusion, I include the *Phaedrus* in the group of middle dialogues. Thus, I shall clarify from the outset that there is no evidence supporting the contention that Plato “developed” (C&D) after (H) or, for that matter, (E). Now, my point is that although considering the *Phaedrus* a middle dialogue is consistent with my thesis, I do not take chronological arguments as decisive for the present debate concerning Plato’s view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry.

Finally, I turn now to an outline of each one of the chapters. In Part I, which contains Chapters 1 and 2, I give reasons for the first two premises of my argument. In Chapter 1, I offer evidence in favour of Premise (1). In particular, I examine the plausibility of the claim that a single coherent theory of the method of philosophical inquiry can be found in the *Phaedrus* by contrasting the three main methods usually associated to the earlier, middle and later dialogues respectively: (E), (H) and (C&D). I argue that it is plausible to claim that one can conceive these as three procedures of the method rather than three different methods.

In Chapter 2, I offer evidence in favour of Premise (2). I consider Plato’s general discussion of dialectic as a method of communication and truth-discovery. The *Gorgias* outlines an early version of dialectic by contrasting rhetoric with having a dialogue (*dialegesthai*) to inquiry into what something is (448E). Here Plato argues

that rhetoric is not an art. Plato's objection amounts to the claim that rhetoric is a type of *empeiria* rather than a type of *τέχνη*. Here the main point is to show the problem of a method of communication that lacks a truth-discovering aspect. In addition, Plato introduced in the *Phaedrus* a distinction between "technical" and "a-technical" rhetoric and argued that truth is essential for a "technical rhetoric".

Hence, the goal of Chapter 2 is twofold. First, to outline the structure of the *Phaedrus* in relation to the discussion of dialectic. Second, to show Plato's use of the distinction between technical and a-technical rhetoric and to show how the *Phaedrus* introduces Plato's project of a "scientific" rhetoric or, simply, a method of philosophical inquiry, which is to be identified with dialectic.

In Part Two, which contains Chapter 3 and 4, I offer evidence in favour of Premise (3). In Chapter 3, I will argue that Plato's *Phaedrus* contains a well-developed account of the method of philosophical inquiry. More precisely, the dialogue provides an account of the method of philosophical inquiry as a *τέχνη* that leads minds toward the knowledge of the Forms. I will argue that Plato thought that dialectic, as the method of philosophical inquiry, consists in discovering the correct definition of a controversial predicate *F*.

Lastly, in Chapter 4, I attempt to articulate the three main procedures of the method. In particular, I will argue that if a group of dialecticians disagrees about certain predicate  $F$  and decides to inquiry into the definition of  $F$ , they shall begin by using (C) in order to agree upon the  $\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha$   $\iota\delta\acute{\epsilon}\alpha$  of  $F$ . Then, they shall use (H) to put forward a *definiens*, an expression that attempts to define  $F$  adequately. Then I argue that conceiving (H) as an intermediate step gives robustness to the method and makes the transition to (D) smoother, (D) being the process of testing a *definiens*.

## Part One

**Toward a unified account of Dialectic in the *Phaedrus***

## Chapter 1

### *Elenchus*, Hypothesis and Collection & Division as procedures of Plato's Dialectic

#### 1. Introduction

The question about the nature of the method of philosophical inquiry is present, both implicitly and explicitly, in all Plato's dialogues. Indeed, the earlier dialogues *exemplify* how one should practice (E); the middle dialogues *theorize* about (H), and the later dialogues both exemplify and theorize about (C&D).

Since Plato introduced rich and fruitful considerations regarding (E), (H) and (C&D), some scholars have assumed that Plato conceived at least three different methods of philosophical inquiry in the course of his dialogues. I call this interpretation of Plato's view of the method of philosophical inquiry the "discontinuous" interpretation (DI).

One should notice that under (DI), it makes sense to talk about Plato's different views about the method and to ask whether Plato advanced such different views in an attempt to overcome different theoretical problems.

In spite of its pervasiveness among Plato scholars, at least in the analytic tradition, I reject (DI) because it gives us a fragmented picture of Plato's view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry and, in addition, such picture is contrived and has little explicative power. As evidence that this is the case, consider the fact that there is no foreseeable consensus among Plato scholars regarding whether one should identify (E), (H) or (C&D) with dialectic as Plato's method of philosophical inquiry.

By contrast, my goal is to defend a "continuous" interpretation of Plato's view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. As I mentioned in the introduction, I formulate this interpretation as follows:

(CI) Plato introduced a unified view of dialectic in the *Phaedrus*.

As a result, as a first step in presenting a cogent case for (CI), I shall argue in this chapter that the so-called Plato's three methods of philosophical inquiry, (E), (H) and (C&D), can be understood as three different *procedures* of one general *διαλεκτική τέχνη* (*Phdr.* 276e5).

In other words, since there are seemingly obvious changes in Plato's approach to the question concerning the nature of the method, the goal of this

chapter is to examine the plausibility of the claim that the Plato conceived a unified view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry.

In order to accomplish this goal, after contrasting the three allegedly methods of philosophical inquiry usually associated to the earlier, middle and later dialogues, I shall offer two arguments for my contention.

The first argument relies on the distinction between *use* and *mention*. Accordingly, it shows that from the fact that Plato did not *mention* (E), (H) and (C&D) in the late dialogues and *vice versa*, it does *not* follow that he did not *use* them. The second argument begins by considering *a prima facie* case of "a method" and shows that there are good reasons to doubt that it is indeed a method of philosophical inquiry.

By means of these arguments, it will become clear that one can plausibly conceive these three so-called methods as three procedures of a single method, which is a first step toward supporting (CI).

The structure of this chapter is as follows. In section 2, I outline Plato's view of (E) and (H). In section 3, I outline Plato's view concerning (C&H). Lastly, in section 4, I argue for the plausibility of the claim that (E), (H) and (C&D) can be conceived as three procedures of a single method of philosophical inquiry.

## 2. Philosophical Inquiry in the Early and Middle Dialogues

In the earlier dialogues, especially in *Euthyphro*, *Laches* and *Charmides*, Plato did not discuss the method of philosophical inquiry. Rather, he took a practical approach by using the dialogues as exemplifications of (E). Indeed, Socrates uses repeatedly the verb εἰλέγω (to critically examine) in order to describe what he does.

By contrast, in the middle dialogues Plato takes mainly a metaphilosophical approach. Notably, he introduced, in the persona of Socrates, the “costumary method (τῆς εἰωθυίας μεθόδου)” or the method of inquiring from hypothesis (*Rep.* 596 a5)<sup>5</sup>. In the sequel, I shall outline each one of these methods in order to pave the way for the subsequent discussion of (C&D) in the *Phaedrus* and late dialogues.

### 2.1. The *Elenchus*

In the early dialogues, Plato’s practical approach concerning the method of philosophical inquiry relies on (E). For example, in the *Euthyphro* Socrates uses the verb ἐλέγω to describe *what he does*.<sup>6</sup> Let us consider a simple example from the following passage:

---

<sup>5</sup> In *Meno* 86e, Plato mentions εἰς ὑποθέσειν αὐτοσκοπεῖσθαι.

<sup>6</sup> See also *Ap.* 20c-23c.

**Σωκράτης**

ἔχθραν δὲ καὶ ὀργάς, ὧ ἄριστε, ἢ περὶ τίνων διαφορὰ ποιεῖ; ὧδε δὲ σκοπῶμεν. ἄρ' ἂν εἰ διαφεροίμεθα ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ περὶ ἀριθμοῦ ὀπότερα πλείω, ἢ περὶ τούτων διαφορὰ ἐχθροὺς ἂν ἡμᾶς ποιοῖ καὶ ὀργίζεσθαι ἀλλήλοις, ἢ ἐπὶ λογισμὸν ἐλθόντες περὶ γε τῶν τοιούτων ταχὺ ἂν ἀπαλλαγείμεν;

**Εὐθύφρων**

πάνυ γε.

**Σωκράτης**

οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ τοῦ μείζονος καὶ ἐλάττονος εἰ διαφεροίμεθα, ἐπὶ τὸ μετρεῖν ἐλθόντες ταχὺ παυσαίμεθ' ἂν τῆς διαφορᾶς;

**Εὐθύφρων**

ἔστι ταῦτα.

**Σωκράτης**

καὶ ἐπὶ γε τὸ ἰστάναι ἐλθόντες, ὡς ἐγῶμαι, περὶ τοῦ βαρυτέρου τε καὶ κουφοτέρου διακριθεῖμεν ἂν;

**Εὐθύφρων**

πῶς γὰρ οὐ;

**Σωκράτης**

περὶ τίνος δὲ δὴ διενεχθέντες καὶ ἐπὶ τίνα κρίσιν οὐ δυνάμενοι ἀφικέσθαι ἐχθροὶ γε ἂν ἀλλήλοις εἴμεν καὶ ὀργιζοίμεθα; ἴσως οὐ πρόχειρόν σοί ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἐμοῦ λέγοντος σκόπει εἰ τάδε ἐστὶ τό τε δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον καὶ καλὸν καὶ αἰσχροὺν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακόν. ἄρα οὐ ταῦτά ἐστιν περὶ ὧν διενεχθέντες καὶ οὐ δυνάμενοι ἐπὶ

ίκανήν κρίσιν αὐτῶν ἐλθεῖν ἐχθροὶ ἀλλήλοις γιγνώμεθα, ὅταν γιγνώμεθα, καὶ ἐγὼ καὶ σὺ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι πάντες; (*Euthphr.*, 7b-d).

**Socrates**

But what things is the disagreement about, which causes enmity and anger? Let us look at it in this way. If you and I were to disagree about number, for instance, which of two numbers were the greater, would the disagreement about these matters make us enemies and make us angry with each other, or should we not quickly settle it by resorting to arithmetic?

**Euthyphro**

Of course we should.

**Socrates**

Then, too, if we were to disagree about the relative size of things, we should quickly put an end to the disagreement by measuring?

**Euthyphro**

Yes.

**Socrates**

And we should, I suppose, come to terms about relative weights by weighing?

**Euthyphro**

Of course.

**Socrates**

But about what would a disagreement be, which we could not settle and which would cause us to be enemies and be angry with each other? Perhaps you cannot give an

answer offhand; but let me suggest it. Is it not about right and wrong, and noble and disgraceful, and good and bad? Are not these the questions about which you and I and other people become enemies, when we do become enemies, because we differ about them and cannot reach any satisfactory agreement? (*Euthphr.*, 7b-d).

Taking into account Socrates' use of εἰ ἐγὼ in the *Euthyphro*, let me briefly describe how (E) should be practiced. Let Proponent and Opponent be two speakers and let them start from a thesis, *A*, accepted by Proponent. Then, Opponent should ask questions that Proponent can answer by "yes" or "no" leading Proponent to accept further theses, say *B* and *C*. By using *B* and *C* as premises of an argument concluding  $\neg A$ , Opponent intends to show that although *A*, *B* and *C* are individually plausible, together constitute an *inconsistent* cluster of theses.

Notably, the most influential contemporary discussion of (E) is due to Vlastos (1994:1-38), who attempts to solve what he calls "*the problem of the Socratic elenchus.*" This problem consists in the tension between two claims. On the one hand, Vlastos's claim that Socrates' position in the dialogue is that he has "proved that the refutand is false." On the other hand, the fact that "all [Socrates] has established is [the refutand's] inconsistency with premises whose truth he has not tried to establish in that argument: they have entered the argument simply as

propositions on which he and the interlocutor are agreed." Vlastos (1994:3) Let me introduce Vlastos' solution to the problem of the Socratic *elenchus* briefly.

Based on textual evidence from the *Gorgias*, Vlastos' "standard *elenchus*" (1994:11) attempts to solve the above problem by proposing the following reconstruction of (E): the proponent asserts a thesis, *A*, which Socrates –the opponent- intends to *refute*. Socrates then secures the proponent's acceptance to further premises, say *B* and *C*. As a result, by using *B* and *C* as premises of an argument concluding  $\neg A$ , Socrates asserts that *A* is false. Thus, according to Vlastos, (E) is a method of *refutation* by which Socrates intends to show that the initial thesis putted forward by the proponent is *false*.

Is Vlastos' solution cogent? Recently, Castelnérac & Marion (2009:64) challenged Vlastos' standard *elenchus*. They argue that the following sequent strictly express the *elenchus*:

$$(1) A, B, C \vdash \perp;$$

where *A, B, C* have the same degree of acceptability (with  $\vdash$  standing for 'deducible'  $\perp$  standing for absurdity). By using the same formalism, it is clear that Vlastos' standard *elenchus* takes the form of

(2)  $B, C \vdash \neg A$ .

Castelnérac & Marion reject Vlastos' view by clearly pointing out that the situation described in the dialogues is that either the proponent and the opponent are not in a position to determine whether  $B$  and  $C$  are true or  $A$ ,  $B$ , and  $C$  have the same degree of acceptability. In both cases, the result is the same: we have no reason to favour (2) over

(3)  $A, C \vdash \neg B$ ;

or, for that matter,

(4)  $A, B \vdash \neg C$ .

As Castelnérac & Marion notice, Vlastos substantiates his interpretation on a single textual evidence from *Grg.* 472b in which, following our example, Socrates argues that  $\neg A$  is true. However, Castelnérac & Marion remark that Socrates "concludes with yet another avowal of ignorance [...]. Even [in the *Gorgias*] there is ultimately no claim that  $\neg A$  is true and  $A$  false." Castelnérac & Marion (2009:64) Accordingly, they conclude, pace Vlastos, that (E) is used to show Socrates' interlocutor not to be the expert he pretends to be, since he holds an inconsistent set of beliefs.

Regarding the above debate concerning the nature (E), I agree with Castelnérac & Marion that (E) does not aim at refuting the initial thesis. The Socratic dialogues put the emphasis not on whether the theses under examine are true or false but rather in whether we can find an *inconsistency*. Following this view about (E), it is plausible to claim that its purpose is to help the proponent to realize that he needs to examine critically her beliefs about certain topic. As such, (E) features a crucial element involved in philosophical inquiry: if there is no genuine controversy in respect to a topic, there is no point in inquiring about it.

In addition, by showing inconsistency, (E) clarifies that one knows only that some or the entire individually plausible thesis are false because together they conform an inconsistent premise-set. However, one does not know which theses are false. So constituted, (E) is relevant for inquiry as far as it makes us aware of the fact that we held inconsistent theses and thus motivate us to inquiry. In other words, (E) shows us the origin and motivation for philosophical inquiry.

## 2.2. Hypothesis

In the middle dialogues, particularly the *Meno* (86e4-87b2), *Phaedo* (99c5-d1; 99e5-100a7, 101d5-e1) and *Republic* (510c5-511e5), Plato developed (H). In this section, I shall elaborate on the main aspects of (H). It is worth to notice from the outset that Plato's introduction of (H) does not entail that (E) stopped playing a substantive role in the middle dialogues. There is no single textual evidence supporting either that Plato disregarded (E) in the middle/later dialogues or that he opposed (E) to (H).<sup>7</sup>

Plato introduced (H) for the first time in the *Meno*. At (80d-e), Socrates proposes a solution to a paradox advanced by Meno. One might reconstruct the paradox as follows: for any arbitrary subject matter *a*, either one knows *a* or one does not know *a*. On the one hand, if one knows *a*, then one cannot inquire about *a* because knowing what one knows is superfluous. On the other hand, if one does not know *a*, then one cannot inquire about *a* because knowing what one does not know is impossible. Since *a* was arbitrary, it follows that for all subject matters *M*, either inquiring into *M* is superfluous or inquiring into *M* is impossible.

---

<sup>7</sup> As Marion (2013) has argued, (E) is present in the *Republic*. Indeed, it should be clear from the start that (E) and (H) are complementary methods.

To resolve the paradox, Plato, in the persona of Socrates, notes that there are several ways in which one may say “to know” something. Indeed, there seems to be an equivocation in Meno’s use of the expression “knows”: one thing is to know the *question* you wish to answer and another thing is to know the *answer* to that question.

Yet the essential point is that inquiry aims to know *F*. Therefore, one must know how to pass from a simple opinion about *F* to knowledge of *F*. Plato introduces (H) in the context of the question concerning how to pass from mere opinion to knowledge or, in other words, how to inquiry properly.

Plato exemplified the use of (H) by inquiring into the nature of virtue. The question under investigation is whether virtue is teachable. At 86e4–87c3, Socrates proposes to investigate this question by positing the hypothesis that virtue is a form of knowledge. Since all knowledge is teachable, if the hypothesis is true, virtue is teachable. If it is false, virtue is not teachable. Thus, the inquiry concerning whether virtue is teachable can determine the truth-value of the hypothesis that virtue is knowledge.

In 87c11–89a5, Socrates presents a short argument for the contention that virtue is knowledge. The argument runs as follows: if virtue is something good, it

must be beneficial; but the only thing that is unqualifiedly beneficial is knowledge, so virtue must be knowledge. One should note, though, that this argument in turn rests on another hypothesis, namely, that virtue is something good (87d3). The essential point is that (H) starts with a specific question. Then, one finds a proposition whose truth or falsity will help determine the answer to it; but one then finds a “higher” hypothesis whose truth or falsity will determine the truth-value of our first hypothesis.

Indeed, in our example, Socrates stopped at the second hypothesis. He did not attempt to confirm it and he did not suggest how one might do so. However, it becomes clear that (H) consists in the postulation of a highly plausible supposition regarded as the provisional starting point of inquiry.

Plato returns to (H) in the *Phaedo* (99e4–102a2), where he showed more interest in the “upward” movement to higher hypotheses. The main point here is that we need to continue moving upwards until we come to something “sufficient” (101e1). In addition, Plato listed the steps that one should follow to apply correctly (H):

- (1) Admit plausible hypotheses and go to the conclusions that follow from those hypotheses.

(2) Reject the hypotheses from which follow contradictory conclusions.

(3) When you have to give an account of the hypothesis itself, repeat the process until you reach *something sufficient* (τι ἱκανὸν) (see 101d-e).

I continue by considering (H) in the *Meno* 86d-89d and *Republic*. Indeed, it is worth mentioning that one can find a revealing parallel between the *Meno* 86d-89d and *Republic* 434d–437a concerning (H). In the *Meno*, Socrates puts forward for testing a candidate proposition, namely, “virtue is teachable”. Meno himself supplied such proposition in the form of a question. Likewise, in the *Republic*, Socrates puts forward for testing the candidate proposition “justice in the soul is a matter of each part performing its own function”.

The next stage, in both dialogues, begins when Socrates examines a second proposition, the truth of which is necessary for the truth of the original candidate proposition. In the *Meno*, this new proposition is that virtue is knowledge and, indeed, Socrates calls it a hypothesis (καὶ συγχώρησον ἐξ ὑποθέσεως αὐτὸ σκοπεῖσθαι, εἴτε διδακτόν ἐστιν εἴτε ὄπωσοῦν. *Meno* 86e). In the *Republic*, the analogous hypothesis is that the soul has the same three parts as the state.

Finally, in both *Meno* and *Republic*, Socrates identifies an additional proposition such that if this proposition is true, then the second proposition at stake

is true. In the *Meno*, this additional proposition is that virtue is something good while in the *Republic* it is the principle of opposites (*Rep.* 436b), which Socrates refers to as “hypothesis” (ἀλλ’ ὅμως, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ἵνα μὴ ἀναγκαζώμεθα πάσας τὰς τοιαύτας ἀμφισβητήσεις ἐπεξιόντες καὶ βεβαιούμενοι ὡς οὐκ ἀληθεῖς οὕσας μηκύνειν, ὑποθέμενοι ὡς τούτου οὕτως ἔχοντος εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν προῖωμεν, ὁμολογήσαντες, ἐάν ποτε ἄλλη φανῆ ταῦτα ἢ ταύτη, πάντα ἡμῖν τὰ ἀπὸ τούτου συμβαίνοντα λελυμένα ἔσεσθαι. *Rep.* 437a). At this point, in both dialogues, the positing of hypotheses stops.

It becomes clear that there is a common and essential feature of (H) in both the *Meno* and *Republic*: it explores the hypotheses made in relation to a non-hypothetical principle (ἀνυποθέτου ἀρχῆν).<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Philosophical Inquiry in *Phaedrus* and the Late Dialogues

In the *Phaedrus* (265a-266b) and later dialogues, in particular *Sophist* (219a to 237a), *Statesman* (258b-267c, 268c, 275d-e) and *Philebus* (16d-18d), Plato uses and discusses συναγωγή/and διαίρεσις. The purpose of these procedures is to establish definitions

---

<sup>8</sup> In Chapter 4, I will elaborate further on (H) by way of a comparison between the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*.

that convey what things are. Let me briefly introduce (C&D) as presented in these dialogues.

The *Phaedrus* presents (C&D) as twofold: first, by collecting, we reach the general category and, second, by dividing, we divide the general category in specific elements. In the first part of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates makes up two arguments about love and, in the second part, these arguments are repeated many times to show how to use the twofold methodical procedure (cf. 262c; 263c-d; 264e-265d). A collection (hereafter C) is the procedure by means of which inquirers “see” or “grasp” the common feature of the objects falling under certain kind (e.g. *love* following into the kind *madness*). It can be used at the starting point of an inquiry and, for that matter, at any step of a division (hereafter (D)). For the inquirer, the main thrust of (C) is to join a collection of disjoined items, or kinds of items, into one kind.<sup>9</sup> In complement, (D) cuts kinds of things by their natural joints.

In the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*, the Eliatic visitor uses (C&D) to define the sophist and the statesman, respectively. For example, consider the *Sophist*. Although the word “sophist” could refer to both the visitor and Theaetetus, the former notes

---

<sup>9</sup> I will elaborate on this point in Chapter 4.

that they may convey different senses to such word. Since the Eliatic visitor's aim is to identify the kind ascribed to the name, he wants to find a definition of "sophist":

εὖ λέγεις, καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἰδίᾳ βουλευσὴ προϊόντος τοῦ λόγου: κοινῇ δὲ μετ' ἐμοῦ σοι συσκευτέον ἀρχομένῳ πρώτον, ὡς ἐμοὶ φαίνεται, νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σοφιστοῦ, ζητοῦντι καὶ ἐμφανίζοντι λόγῳ τί ποτ' ἔστι. νῦν γὰρ δὴ σύ τε κἀγὼ τούτου πέρι τοῦνομα μόνον ἔχομεν κοινῇ, τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἐφ' ᾧ καλοῦμεν ἑκάτερος τάχ' ἂν ἰδίᾳ παρ' ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς ἔχοιμεν: δεῖ δὲ ἀεὶ παντὸς πέρι τὸ πράγμα αὐτὸ μᾶλλον διὰ λόγων ἢ τοῦνομα μόνον συνωμολογήσθαι χωρὶς λόγου. τὸ δὲ φύλον ὃ νῦν ἐπινοοῦμεν ζητεῖν οὐ πάντων ῥᾶστον συλλαβεῖν τί ποτ' ἔστιν, ὁ σοφιστής: ὅσα δ' αὖ τῶν μεγάλων δεῖ διαπονεῖσθαι καλῶς, περὶ τῶν τοιούτων δέδοκται πᾶσιν καὶ πάλαι τὸ πρότερον ἐν σμικροῖς καὶ ῥᾶστον αὐτὰ δεῖν μελετᾶν, πρὶν ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς μεγίστοις.

Very well; you will follow your own devices about that as the discussion proceeds; but now you and I must investigate in common, beginning first, as it seems to me, with the sophist, and must search out and make plain by argument what he is. For as yet you and I have nothing in common about him but the name; but as to the thing to which we give the name, we may perhaps each have a conception of it in our own minds; however, we ought always in every instance to come to agreement about the thing itself by argument rather than about the mere name without argument. But the tribe which we now intend to search for, the sophist, is not the easiest thing in the world to catch and define, and everyone has agreed long ago that if investigations of

great matters are to be properly worked out we ought to practice them on small and easier matters before attacking the very greatest. So now, Theaetetus, this is my advice to ourselves, since we think the family of sophists is troublesome and hard to catch, that we first practise the method of hunting in something easier, unless you perhaps have some simpler way to suggest. (*Sph.*, 218b–d).

Now, although the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* support the view that dialecticians should proceed to divide in a dichotomous way, the most important point is that the divisions are made in accordance with natural joints of the Forms (κατ' ἄρθρα ἧ πέφυκεν) (*Phdr.*, 265e; *Plt.*, 287c; *Phlb.*, 16d).<sup>10</sup>

The commitment to make the divisions in accordance with reality shows that the method is a technical procedure for definitional analysis, because the method is the procedure that breaks down the relations between the Forms following the structure of reality.

It follows that the Forms are not isolated but rather ordered, to the extent that they are *related* and, thus, in order to meet any of them, one must know their relationship with each other. Therefore, as a procedure to find correct definitions, Plato assumed that the correctness of (C&D) relies on the structural order of reality.

---

<sup>10</sup> I will elaborate on this notion in Chapter 4.

#### 4. The Possibility of a Unified View of the Method

In the previous sections, I have reviewed Plato's main changes in exposition and emphasis concerning (E), (H) and (C&D) along the early, middle and late dialogues. Although these changes obscure one's grasp of the possible theoretical articulation of (E), (H) and (C&D), one finds an implied continuity between them. In the sequel, I shall argue that the so-called three methods, (E), (H) and (C&D), are three different *procedures* or, more precisely, *procedures* of one general *διαλεκτική τέχνη*.

Taking into account that there is no evidence supporting the contention that Plato "developed" (C&D) after (H) or, for that matter, (E), my first argument relies on the distinction between *use* and *mention*. The essential point I would like to draw attention to is that from the fact that Plato did not *mention* (E), (H) and (C&D) in the late dialogues and *vice versa* it does *not* follow that he did not *use* them. For example, it is clear that in the *Republic* Plato uses (E): from 338c onwards an exchange between Socrates and Thrasymachus on the assertion "the just is nothing else than the advantage of the stronger", with (E) used at 343a and 354a.

I shall consider a more interesting case as evidence for my contention. In the *Euthyphro* (11e – 12e) Plato uses but not mentions (D). Let me quote the exchange between Socrates and Euthyphro *in extenso*:

**Σωκράτης**

ἄρ' οὖν καὶ πᾶν τὸ δίκαιον ὅσιον; ἢ τὸ μὲν ὅσιον πᾶν δίκαιον, τὸ δὲ δίκαιον οὐ πᾶν ὅσιον, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν αὐτοῦ ὅσιον, τὸ δέ τι καὶ ἄλλο;

**Εὐθύφρων**

οὐχ ἔπομαι, ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῖς λεγομένοις.

**Σωκράτης**

καὶ μὴν νεώτερός γέ μου εἶ οὐκ ἔλαττον ἢ ὅσω σοφώτερος: ἀλλ', ὃ λέγω, τρυφᾶς ὑπὸ πλούτου τῆς σοφίας. ἀλλ', ὦ μακάριε, σύντεινε σαυτόν: καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ χαλεπὸν κατανοῆσαι ὃ λέγω. λέγω γὰρ δὴ τὸ ἐναντίον ἢ ὃ ποιητῆς ἐποίησεν ὃ ποιήσας—  
 “Ζῆνα δὲ τὸν θ' ἔρξαντα καὶ ὃς τάδε πάντ' ἐφύτευσεν

“οὐκ ἐθέλει νεικεῖν: ἵνα γὰρ δέος ἔνθα καὶ αἰδώς. ”

ἐγὼ οὖν τούτῳ διαφέρομαι τῷ ποιητῇ. εἶπω σοι ὅπη;

**Εὐθύφρων**

πάνυ γε.

**Σωκράτης**

οὐ δοκεῖ μοι εἶναι ἵνα δέος ἔνθα καὶ αἰδώς' πολλοὶ γάρ μοι δοκοῦσι καὶ νόσους καὶ πενίας καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ τοιαῦτα δεδιότες δεδιέναι μὲν, αἰδεῖσθαι δὲ μηδὲν ταῦτα ἃ δεδίασιν: οὐ καὶ σοὶ δοκεῖ;

**Εὐθύφρων**

πάνυ γε.

**Σωκράτης**

ἀλλ' ἵνα γε αἰδῶς ἔνθα καὶ δέος εἶναι: ἐπεὶ ἔστιν ὅστις αἰδούμενός τι πράγμα καὶ αἰσχυνόμενος οὐ πεφόβηται τε καὶ δέδοικεν ἅμα δόξαν πονηρίας;

**Εὐθύφρων**

δέδοικε μὲν οὖν.

**Σωκράτης**

οὐκ ἄρ' ὀρθῶς ἔχει λέγειν: 'ἵνα γὰρ δέος ἔνθα καὶ αἰδῶς,' ἀλλ' ἵνα μὲν αἰδῶς ἔνθα καὶ δέος, οὐ μέντοι ἵνα γε δέος πανταχοῦ αἰδῶς: ἐπὶ πλέον γὰρ οἶμαι δέος αἰδοῦς. μόριον γὰρ αἰδῶς δέους ὥσπερ ἀριθμοῦ περιττόν, ὥστε οὐχ ἵναπερ ἀριθμὸς ἔνθα καὶ περιττόν, ἵνα δὲ περιττόν ἔνθα καὶ ἀριθμὸς. ἔπη γὰρ που νῦν γε;

**Εὐθύφρων**

πάνυ γε.

**Σωκράτης**

τὸ τοιοῦτον τοίνυν καὶ ἐκεῖ λέγων ἠρώτων: ἄρα ἵνα δίκαιον ἔνθα καὶ ὄσιον; ἢ ἵνα μὲν ὄσιον ἔνθα καὶ δίκαιον, ἵνα δὲ δίκαιον οὐ πανταχοῦ ὄσιον: μόριον γὰρ τοῦ δικαίου τὸ ὄσιον; οὕτω φῶμεν ἢ ἄλλως σοι δοκεῖ;

**Εὐθύφρων**

οὐκ, ἀλλ' οὕτω. φαίνη γὰρ μοι ὀρθῶς λέγειν.

**Σωκράτης**

ὄρα δὴ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο. εἰ γὰρ μέρος τὸ ὄσιον τοῦ δικαίου, δεῖ δὴ ἡμᾶς, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐξευρεῖν τὸ ποῖον μέρος ἂν εἴη τοῦ δικαίου τὸ ὄσιον. εἰ μὲν οὖν σύ με ἠρώτας τι τῶν

νυνδή, οἷον ποῖον μέρος ἐστὶν ἀριθμοῦ τὸ ἄρτιον καὶ τίς ὢν τυγχάνει οὗτος ὁ ἀριθμός, εἶπον ἂν ὅτι ὅς ἂν μὴ σκαληνός ἢ ἀλλ' ἰσοσκελής: ἢ οὐ δοκεῖ σοι;

**Εὐθύφρων**

ἔμοιγε.

**Σωκράτης**

πειρῶ δὴ καὶ σὺ ἐμὲ οὕτω διδάξαι τὸ ποῖον μέρος τοῦ δικαίου ὅσιόν ἐστιν, ἵνα καὶ Μελητήω λέγωμεν μηκέθ' ἡμᾶς ἀδικεῖν μηδὲ ἀσεβείας γράφεσθαι, ὡς ἱκανῶς ἤδη παρὰ σοῦ μεμαθηκότας τὰ τε εὐσεβῆ καὶ ὅσια καὶ τὰ μή.

**Εὐθύφρων**

τοῦτο τοίνυν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ μέρος τοῦ δικαίου εἶναι εὐσεβές τε καὶ ὅσιον, τὸ περὶ τῆν τῶν θεῶν θεραπείαν, τὸ δὲ περὶ τῆν τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὸ λοιπὸν εἶναι τοῦ δικαίου μέρος.

**Σωκράτης**

καὶ καλῶς γέ μοι, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, φαίνη λέγειν, ἀλλὰ<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> **Socrates**

But is everything that is right also holy? Or is all which is holy right, and not all which is right holy, but part of it holy and part something else?

**Euthyphro**

I can't follow you, Socrates.

**Socrates**

And yet you are as much younger than I as you are wiser; but, as I said, you are indolent on account of your wealth of wisdom. But exert yourself, my friend; for it is not hard to understand what I mean. What I mean is the opposite of what the poet said, who wrote: "Zeus the creator, him who made all things", "thou wilt not name; for where fear is, there also is reverence." Stasinus, author of the *Cypria* (Fragm. 20, ed. Kinkel) Now I disagree with the poet. Shall I tell you how?

---

**Euthyphro**

By all means.

**Socrates**

It does not seem to me true that where fear is, there also is reverence; for many who fear diseases and poverty and other such things seem to me to fear, but not to reverence at all these things which they fear. Don't you think so, too?

**Euthyphro**

Certainly.

**Socrates**

But I think that where reverence is, there also is fear; for does not everyone who has a feeling of reverence and shame about any act also dread and fear the reputation for wickedness?

**Euthyphro**

Yes, he does fear.

**Socrates**

Then it is not correct to say "where fear is, there also is reverence." On the contrary, where reverence is, there also is fear; but reverence is not everywhere where fear is, since, as I think, fear is more comprehensive than reverence; for reverence is a part of fear, just as the odd is a part of number, so that it is not true that where number is, there also is the odd, but that where the odd is, there also is number. Perhaps you follow me now?

**Euthyphro**

Perfectly.

**Socrates**

It was something of this sort that I meant before, when I asked whether where the right is, there also is holiness, or where holiness is, there also is the right; but holiness is not everywhere where the right is, for holiness is a part of the right. Do we agree to this, or do you dissent?

**Euthyphro**

No, I agree; for I think the statement is correct.

**Socrates**

Now observe the next point. If holiness is a part of the right, we must, apparently, find out what part of the right holiness is. Now if you asked me about one of the things I just mentioned, as, for example, what part of number the even was, and what kind of a number it was I should say, "that which is not indivisible by two, but divisible by two"; or don't you agree?

**Euthyphro**

I agree. Socrates. Now try in your turn to teach me what part of the right holiness is, that I may tell Meletus not to wrong me any more or bring suits against me for impiety, since I have now been duly instructed by you about what is, and what is not, pious and holy.

This then is my opinion, Socrates, that the part of the right which has to do with attention to the gods constitutes piety and holiness, and that the remaining part of the right is that which has to do with the service of men.

**Socrates**

I think you are correct, Euthyphro;

As it is clear in the above exchange, after repeated failures on the part of Euthyphro to give an account of piety, Socrates remarked that one can characterize the even as that part of number which is divisible into two equal parts. Then, he invited Euthyphro to characterize piety by saying what part of justice it is.

Using a different terminology, one can say that Socrates introduced above the basic roles of genus, differentia and species, respectively: number, divisible into two equal parts and even. This becomes clear since number is a kind and Socrates proposes to treat even as its subkind. Then he adds to the genus “divisible into two equal parts” functioning as the differentia characterizing the species.

Euthyphro tried to follow Socrates by answering that the pious is the part of the just concerned with assistance (θεοραπείαν) to the gods, while that concerned with assistance to men is the other part (12e). Euthyphro failed to support such characterization since he was not able to offer a plausible interpretation of the assistance one renders to the gods. Thus, as the textual evidence from the *Euthyphro* shows, Socrates uses but not mentions (D), which some scholars assume to be a method developed in the *Phaedrus* and the late dialogues.

Finally, I shall give a second argument, perhaps more compelling than the first. An efficient route to argue for the claim that (E), (H) and (C&D) can be

plausibly conceived as procedures of a general method of philosophical inquiry is to take a *prima facie* case of “a method” and show that we have good reasons to doubt that it is indeed a method of philosophical inquiry. Let me take (C&D) as case study (C&D), in particular (D).

To begin with, there is good textual evidence available to consider (D) a μέθοδος. Plato scholars ususally refer to (D) in Plato’s dialogues as a “method” mainly because the Eleatic visitor characterizes (D) in the *Sophist* as a μέθοδος. Hence, an obvious reason for calling (D) a method is the fact that one of Plato’s characters call it a μέθοδος. However, I shall note that this is fact is not enough to draw a definitive conclusion. What exactly is one saying by claiming that (D) is a μέθοδος?

On the one hand, it is unclear whether μέθοδος is akin to the notion of *method of philosophical inquiry*. One could take for granted that μέθοδος means “method of philosophical inquiry”. Yet this would be begging the question.

On the other hand, the methodological status of (D) has been the subject of a scholarly debate. For example, Ackrill argued that (D) is a “systematic and comprehensive procedure set up as an ideal”, for “Division certainly exhibits some important interrelationships of concepts and reveals some possibilities and

impossibilities of combining". Ackrill (1997: 108-109) Thus, for Ackrill, (D) is a method for moving from ignorance to knowledge. By contrast, Gilbert Ryle held that Platonic division amounts to an argumentative gymnastics, an exercise for newcomers to philosophy. Hence, it only constitutes "a preparation for dialectic". Ryle (1966: 141).

In the light of the above considerations, it becomes clear that there are three relevant alternatives concerning the meaning of μέθοδος in respect to (D) for present purposes. First, (D) could be a μέθοδος in the sense of a *procedure* that is integral to the philosopher's progress toward finding correct definitions. Second, (D) could be a μέθοδος in the sense of an argumentative gymnastics for a newcomer to philosophy. Third, (D) could be a μέθοδος in the sense of a method of philosophical inquiry and, as such, it should help us move from ignorance to knowledge.<sup>12</sup>

I shall show that (D) is a μέθοδος in the first sense above. In other words, it is my contention that (D) is a systematic way of doing something, namely, testing a candidate *definiens*. In order to support this contention, it will be useful to compare

---

<sup>12</sup> I will give evidence for this view of the method of philosophical inquiry at the end of Chapter 2. In short, I will show how this view is equivalent to the view that the method of philosophical inquiry should discover truth and communicate knowledge.

(D) with (E), which is considered by Plato scholars as a suitable candidate for the method of philosophical inquiry in Plato.

One should note that (E), in contrast with (D), portrays progress from ignorance to knowledge. Yet it achieves progress in the form of knowing that one *does not know* what one assumed to know. In other words, it achieves progress by identifying mistaken knowledge claims. Since (E) makes progress in the sense of giving us knowledge of ignorance, (E) would not be a method of philosophical inquiry (given the third sense of μέθοδος above), nor a mere argumentative gymnastic, but another procedure: a procedure that allows puzzlement and, thus, shows the necessity of inquiry in the presence of ignorance and legitimate controversy. Likewise, one can accept that (D) might give us knowledge by providing an evaluation of a candidate definiens in terms of cutting according to the natural joints of reality. Yet this is not enough for a movement from inquiry to knowledge.

Thus, (E) and (D), two suitable candidates for methods of philosophical inquiry in Plato, should not be regarded as such since if one uses them in isolation, one cannot move from ignorance to knowledge. Yet, it is clear that both are technical procedures. Moreover, (E) allows us to move from puzzlement to inquiry by giving

us knowledge of ignorance and (D) holds one of the elements that would allow us to move from inquiry to knowledge: it help us to test a candidate *definiens*.

Consequently, it is at least possible to conceive (E), (H) and (C&D) as procedures of a general method of philosophical inquiry. As such, it is possible to conceive them as *technical procedures* of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry.

## Chapter 2

### Διαλεκτική τέχνη : A method of communication and truth-discovery in the *Phaedrus*

#### 1. Introduction

Rhetoric is a central theme of Plato's *Phaedrus*, and it is present in the dialogue from the outset. Indeed, in the prelude, Phaedrus is strolling in the country after he had attended Lysias' speech. Following this scene, Phaedrus delivers a speech extracted from Lysias' speech and Socrates delivers two speeches.

While Socrates delivers his speeches, he transitions from an introduction of rhetoric to a discussion about rhetoric. Moreover, Socrates criticizes rhetoric as practiced by famous rhetoricians, for example, Socrates says that he will only deal with the rhetorical aspect of Lysias' argument and not its content (τῷ γὰρ ῥητορικῷ αὐτοῦ μόνῳ τὸν νοῦν προσεῖχον, *Phdr.* 235a1-2), and outlines a view of rhetoric as ῥητορική τέχνη (261a7; 263b6; 269b3; 271a5).

However, since the *Phaedrus* is the dialogue that chronologically introduces (C&D), scholars have studied the *Phaedrus* mainly as a primary source concerning Plato's "later" dialectic.

Yet, even if one assumes a discontinuous interpretation of Plato's view of the method of philosophical inquiry, the *Phaedrus* is important not just because of (C&D). Plato clearly linked ῥητορικὴ τέχνη to dialectic (διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη). As such, the *Phaedrus* also offers one of Plato's deeper discussions of the essential features of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. The main thrust of this discussion is that the method of philosophical inquiry should articulate two important procedures, namely, truth and communication.

Accordingly, the goal of this chapter is to introduce this discussion in the *Phaedrus*. In order to achieve this goal, I shall show that the *Phaedrus* follows up the main idea of the *Gorgias*, namely, that dialectic, as the the method of philosophical inquiry, is a method of truth-discovery and communication.

In Section 2, I shall briefly discuss the issue of the unity of the *Phaedrus* and I shall show that διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη rather than love is the main theme of the dialogue. Then, in Section 3, I shall argue that Plato's διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη is both a method of communication and a method of discovering truth. As part of my case for this contention, I consider the roots of the concept of τέχνη as well as Plato's argument in the *Phaedrus* for the claim that truth and persuasion are intimately related.

## 2. Unifying the *Phaedrus*

I shall begin this section by considering the issue of the unity of the *Phaedrus*.<sup>13</sup> The *Phaedrus* contains several themes: love, the nature of the soul, the theory of forms, sophistry, rhetoric and its method, writing, gods and philosophy, among others. Indeed, the *Phaedrus* is not only plural in themes; it is also plural in its discursive form, for it changes from one part to another part of the dialogue, oscillating between allegorical narratives and discourses of high argumentative complexity. What is it that holds together this mixture of themes and styles to the point of converging in the same dialogue?

The above question paves the way for the problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus*: How can the *Phaedrus* be coherent as a philosophical text despite its fragmentary structure?<sup>14</sup> Daniel Werner (2007) presents four types of approaches that attempt to answer this question:

**(1) Thematic approach:** this approach assumes that the problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus* is restricted to the problem of its thematic unity.

---

<sup>13</sup> I shall not rehearse here the dramatic structure of the dialogue. For a summary of the *Phaedrus*, see Yunis (2011).

<sup>14</sup> For excellent discussions of the problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus*, see Rowe (1989), Griswold (1986), Ferrari (1987), Heath (1989) and Werner (2007).

Most scholars adopt this position and distinguish between those adopting a monistic thematic approach and those adopting a pluralistic thematic approach. The former group defends a hierarchy of themes: there is a main theme, explicit or implicit in the dialogue, and other themes subordinate to this main theme. In the meantime, the latter group, the pluralists, consider different themes equally important.

**(2) Non-thematic approach:** this approach assumes that the problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus* is not restricted to the problem of its thematic unity.

Proponents of this approach argue that the unity of the *Phaedrus* is an issue that not only englobes the aspect of the subject matter. Other levels of non-thematic elements in which Plato also unifies dialogue, such as drama, space-time unity, formal structure and linguistic style consisting of recurring words, images and symbols.

**(3) Disruptive approach:** this approach regards the problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus* as a pseudoproblem.

Approaches (1) and (2) assume that the problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus* is a genuine textual problem and suggest modes of resolution. On the other hand, this approach does not share this assumption, because it denies the force of the problem in itself and, consequently, tries to dissolve it. Scholars who adhere to this approach

assert that the sense of unity that contemporary commentators seek to find in this dialogue is forcefully imposed by themselves and is not found in the text. Hence, this approach admits that the disunion and disintegration of the *Phaedrus* is real and inescapable, although there are historical reasons for this to be so and to admit otherwise is an anachronism.

**(4) Strategic approach:** this approach considers the plurality of the *Phaedrus* a deliberate philosophical and literary strategy.

This approach does not attempt to solve the problem of unity of the *Phaedrus* since, according to this view, it is not actually a problem. The apparent fragmentation of the dialogue is not a failure of Plato but a deliberate maneuver, a philosophical and literary strategy to think about love, rhetoric, etc.

In what follows, I shall not rehearse the arguments for these four approaches. I base my view of the problem of the unity of the *Phaedrus* on approaches (1). Contrary to what appears at first sight, the *Phaedrus* is a coherent and carefully organized text, just as Plato himself explains it with the expression "logographic necessity" in lines 264c.

The multiple themes are interrelated throughout the *Phaedrus*. In each of the two major sections, Socrates highlights one of these themes: love and rhetoric,

respectively. Yet some passages make explicit the relation between the two themes and the treatment given by Plato to each of these themes is not restricted to one of these sections, so that both themes are recurrent throughout the whole dialogue. The variety of styles, for example, the change from *palinodia* to dialogue, *shows* but does not *says* something about, the limitations of each style. In other words, the *mythos* vivaciously expresses metaphorical images, analogies and symbols. Meanwhile, the *logos* accurately expresses complex arguments. Therefore, textual diversity does not necessarily imply textual disunion.

Now, I adhere to the thesis of a monistic thematic. This is so because there is good evidence that one theme prevails and determines the order and relations between the other themes inside the *Phaedrus*. To support this contention, I should identify the main theme and to argue its primacy over its contenders. And that is exactly what I will do.

Confronted with the thematic diversity of the *Phaedrus*, I find that either love or rhetoric could be the main theme, and so I discard any other theme as the main one. Indeed, these two topics are recurring and have primacy throughout dialogue. In the *Phaedrus* there are two senses of the term rhetoric, a *lato sensu* that does not differentiate between the practice and routine promoted by the sophists and a *stricto*

*sensu* that alludes to the rhetorical art that seeks to discover the truth. Plato calls the latter rhetorical art (ἡ ῥητορικὴ τέχνη, 261a7; 263b6; 269b3; 271a5) or the art of opposition (ἡ ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη, 261d10). The relevant meaning of rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* concerns this second sense, which Socrates equates with dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. I will henceforth refer to it as *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη*.

Now, Socrates states that he has the sickly passion of listening to arguments (τῷ νοσοῦντι περὶ λόγων ἀκοήν, 228b6-7). He also asserts that he is a lover of arguments (ἐραστής τῶν λόγων or φιλόλογος, 228c1-2; 230d; 236e5). These claims, present from the beginning of the dialogue, show the close relationship between love and *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη*, because this art is relative to how to make good arguments and the love for the knowledge.

In order to know whether love is or not the main theme, it is necessary to determine whether one of them is subordinate to the other, by a careful review of the passages that explain the close connection between the two themes. Hence, I would like to ask: does the *Phaedrus* show a subordination of the theme of love to the subject *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη* or, instead, does it show a subordination of the subject of *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη* to the theme of love?

I will mention some passages that show the relationship between the topics I have just mentioned. In the first section of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says that he will only deal with the rhetorical aspect of Lysias's argument and not its content (τῷ γὰρ ῥητορικῷ αὐτοῦ μόνῳ τὸν νοῦν προσεῖχον, 235a1-2). Later, Socrates points out that what matters is not the novelty of what is said but how it is said (cf. 236a3-4). In the prelude to Socrates' two arguments, the two methodological principles that govern his argumentative procedure are simplified (cf. 237c-d). In the second section, the arguments of Lysias and Socrates are taken up again, in order to examine whether they are deprived of art and how the double methodical procedure is used in them (cf. 262c, 263c-d, 264e-265d).

These passages reveal that love is at the service of *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη* as it serves as an illustration of how (C&D) is employed. Although the arguments in the first section deal with love, they could have dealt with any other controversial subject, because the important thing is not so much to know the nature of the subject of these arguments as to examine whether its composition and organization follows the proper methodological procedure. Finally, the passage 277b-c suggests the scope of the *Phaedrus*:

πρὶν ἂν τις τό τε ἀληθές ἐκάστων εἰδῆ περὶ ὧν λέγει ἢ γράφει, κατ' αὐτό τε πᾶν  
 ὀρίζεσθαι δυνατὸς γένηται, ὀρισάμενός τε πάλιν κατ' εἶδη μέχρι τοῦ ἀτμήτου

τέμνειν ἐπιστηθῆ, περί τε ψυχῆς φύσεως διδών κατὰ ταῦτά, τὸ προσαρμόττον ἐκάστη φύσει εἶδος ἀνευρίσκων, οὕτω τιθῆ καὶ διακοσμῆ τὸν λόγον, ποικίλη μὲν ποικίλους ψυχῆ καὶ παναρμονίους διδοὺς λόγους, ἀπλοῦς δὲ ἀπλῆ, οὐ πρότερον δυνατόν τέχνη ἔσεσθαι καθ' ὅσον πέφυκε μεταχειρισθῆναι τὸ λόγων γένος, οὔτε τι πρὸς τὸ διδάξαι οὔτε τι πρὸς τὸ πείσαι, ὡς ὁ ἔμπροσθεν πᾶς μεμήνυκεν ἡμῖν λόγος.

A man must know the truth about all the particular things of which he speaks or writes, and must be able to define everything separately; then when he has defined them, he must know how to divide them by classes until further division is impossible; and in the same way he must understand the nature of the soul, must find out the class of speech adapted to each nature, and must arrange and adorn his discourse accordingly, offering to the complex soul elaborate and harmonious discourses, and simple talks to the simple soul. Until he has attained to all this, he will not be able to speak by the method of art, so far as speech can be controlled by method, either for purposes of instruction or of persuasion. This has been taught by our whole preceding discussion.

Hence, the main theme of the *Phaedrus* is *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη*, as the textual evidence presented so far suggests. Therefore, I assume that the subject of love is subordinate to the subject of *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη*, and thus the latter is the main theme of the *Phaedrus*.

I am now in a position to return to the gist of the *Phaedrus*. Taking into account the above considerations about the unity of the *Phaedrus* and the pre-

eminence of *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη* as the main theme, let me elaborate on the development of the dialogue more closely and how it lead us to the claim that a *τέχνη* of speeches is required, namely, a *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη* that intimately connects truth and communication.

### 3. *Διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη*: Truth and Communication

As part of the textual evidence for the second premise of the central argument of this dissertation, namely, that Plato's *διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη* is both a method of communication and a method of discovering truth, I shall begin this section by considering Plato's claim that effective persuasion depends on the truth.

Phaedrus identifies the science of rhetoric with that practised in lawsuits and public addresses. This strikingly resembles the *Gorgias*, where we find Gorgias affirming that his "art," rhetoric, "is the creator of persuasion" (*τὴν ῥητορικὴν δύνασθαι ἢ πειθῶν* 453a 3). Socrates interrupts his interlocutor to ask for clarity about the kind of persuasion that the rhetoric and the target audience. "I mean, Socrates, to persuasion which occurs in the courts and assemblies, as I said a moment ago, about what is just and unjust" (*ταύτης τοίνυν τῆς πειθοῦς λέγω, ᾧ*

Σώκρατες, τῆς ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ὄχλοις, ὥσπερ καὶ ἄρτι ἔλεγον, καὶ περὶ τούτων ἃ ἐστι δίκαιά τε καὶ ἄδικα 454b).

In reply, Socrates remarks that the art of antilogic (ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη) is the essence of every kind of rhetorical practice. And such art is practised both in public addresses and private dialogues. A notable example of the latter use of the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη was Zeno (τὸν οὖν Ἐλεατικὸν Παλαμήδην λέγοντα οὐκ ἴσμεν τέχνη, ὥστε φαίνεσθαι τοῖς ἀκούουσι τὰ αὐτὰ ὅμοια καὶ ἀνόμοια, καὶ ἐν καὶ πολλά, μένοντά τε αὖ καὶ φερόμενα 261d).

Let me briefly illustrate how the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη works. Consider a cat named Fido. By using the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη one can make Fido appear black at one time and white at another time. Hence, for any object  $a$  and any pair of opposite properties  $F$  and  $G$ , the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη consists in making  $a$  appear  $F$  at a time  $t_1$  and making  $a$  appear  $G$  at  $t_2$  (ἴσως. ἀλλὰ γὰρ τούτους ἐῷμεν: σὺ δ' εἰπέ, ἐν δικαστηρίοις οἱ ἀντίδικοι τί δρῶσιν; οὐκ ἀντιλέγουσιν μέντοι; ἢ τί φήσομεν 261c4).

Since antilogic is intelligible only for anyone who knows whether  $a$  is  $F$  or  $a$  is  $G$ , Socrates concludes that those who choose not to follow the truth of a speech are ἀτέχνων. Socrates recalls the previous speeches in order to identify unscientific

(ἀτέχνων) elements (βούλει οὖν ἐν τῷ Λυσίου λόγῳ ὃν φέρεις, καὶ ἐν οἷς ἡμεῖς εἶπομεν ἰδεῖν τι ὧν φάμεν ἀτέχνων τε καὶ ἐντέχνων εἶναι 262c5-7).

According to Socrates, the two speeches “contain an example of the way in which one who knows the truth may lead his hearers on with sportive words; and I, Phaedrus, think the divinities of the place are the cause thereof; and perhaps too, the prophets of the Muses, who are singing above our heads, may have granted this boon to us by inspiration; at any rate, I possess no art of speaking” (τὸ λόγῳ ἔχοντέ τι παράδειγμα, ὡς ἂν ὁ εἰδὼς τὸ ἀληθὲς προσπαίζων ἐν λόγοις παράγοι τοὺς ἀκούοντας. καὶ ἔγωγε, ὦ Φαῖδρε, αἰτιῶμαι τοὺς ἐντοπίους θεούς: ἴσως δὲ καὶ οἱ τῶν Μουσῶν προφηταὶ οἱ ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς ᾠδοὶ ἐπιπεπνευκότες ἂν ἡμῖν εἶεν τοῦτο τὸ γέρας: οὐ γάρ που ἔγωγε τέχνης τινὸς τοῦ λέγειν μέτοχος 262c10-d).

It becomes clear that Socrates is displaying the distinction between τέχνων and ἀτέχνων regarding rhetoric. Plato also explored this distinction in the *Gorgias*, where Socrates opposed rhetoric, as practiced by Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles, with having a dialogue (διαλέγεσθαι) to inquiry into what something is (*Grg.* 448e). Plato’s main point is that rhetoric, as a mere form of communication, practiced by Gorgias and his friends, is not a τέχνη but merely a false art. Rhetoric, in this sense, comes under heavy criticism in the dialogue as Socrates ridicules rhetoric by

comparing it to cookery and cosmetics. According to Socrates, genuine rhetoric would consist of a τέχνη, an art capable of identifying the nature of the good life as well as the appropriate means of obtaining it (*Grg.* 462b–466a, 500b–d).

Thus, one should understand Plato's claim that effective persuasion depends on truth in terms of the distinction between τέχνων and ἀτέχνων regarding rhetoric. One might object, using Ryle's distinction between *knowing how* and *knowing that*, that Plato's claim conflates rhetorical "technique", knowing how to persuade, with the content of speech or what is persuaded. Faced with this objection, I agree with Gadamer (1993:287) when he stated that "Es ist aber auch echter Plato (dem Aristoteles Ausführung und Begründung gewidmet hat), daß sich das Wesen der Rhetorik nicht in solchen als technische Regeln formulierbaren Künsten erschöpft". As Gadamer suggests, Plato's essential point is that one cannot reduce rhetoric to a set of rules for persuading an auditory. There is a commitment on the part of the rhetoricians to their addresses, a commitment to give reasons for what they say. This is the difference between a simple set of rules and a τέχνη.

Given Plato's use of the distinction between τέχνων and ἀτέχνων regarding rhetoric both in the *Gorgias* and, more importantly, in the *Phaedrus*, and its central importance for his argument in favour of a διαλεκτική τέχνη, a method of

communication and truth-discovery, it is relevant to ask the following question: did Plato commit a fallacy of redefinition regarding τέχνη? In order to answer this question, it is in order to discuss briefly the historical origins of the term τέχνη until the 5th century BC.

### **3.1. A Brief Genealogy of the concept of Τέχνη**

Τέχνη comes from the Indo-European root *τέκ'*. According to Pokorny (1994) *τέκ'* means "To fit together the woodwork of woven house". Kübe (1969: 13) states that "in its original form τέχνη probably means the building of a house wich was woven together from trunks and twigs and was erected by the family or tribe in a communal effort." Over the centuries, the division of labor consolidated and the construction of houses could not continue to be borne by families. In this context, the figure of the τέκτων, the carpenter, emerged. Accordingly, τέχνη in the pre-Homeric era refers to the ability of the τέκτων, which produces some wooden houses.

Why the carpenter, rather than the blacksmith, constituted the paradigm of the τέκτων? The activity of the carpenter distinguishes from that of the blacksmith

by its more “rational” character. Carpentry demands some rudimentary knowledge of geometry and, in general, the ability to devise solutions to specific problems.

According to the above considerations, the prehomeric concept of τέχνη obeys the following characteristics:

- (1.1) Τέχνη is a knowledge of a specific field. The knowledge of the τέκτων is restricted to working with wood.
- (1.2) Τέχνη is oriented toward a specific goal and produces something useful, such as houses for the community.
- (1.3) Τέχνη is a knowledge that is recognized and rewarded by the community.

In the Homeric poems, τέχνη has a variety of meanings. Homer uses it to convey the ability of the boat builder to work with wood, Hephaestus' technique to forge metal chains for catching the mighty Ares and the stratagem of Egisto to assassinate Agamemnon. In this sense, τέχνη covers other activities not restricted to working with wood.

Τέχνη appears only once in the *Iliad* (3.60) and retakes the original meaning of the prehomeric concept. In the *Odyssey* (5,259) finds a similar meaning, although the noun shifts to a verb. Under the guidance of Calypso, Odysseus makes a raft:

τόφρα δ' ἔνεικε τέρετρα Καλυψώ, δια θεάων: τέτηνεν δ' ἄρα πάντα καὶ ἤρμοσεν  
ἀλλήλοισιν, γόμφοισιν δ' ἄρα τήν γε καὶ ἀρμονίησιν ἄρασσεν. ὅσσον τίς τ' ἔδαφος

νηὸς τορνῶσεται ἀνήρ φορτίδος εὐρείης, ἐν εἰδῶς τεκτοσυνάων, τόσσον ἔπ' εὐρεῖαν σχεδίην ποιήσατ' Ὀδυσσεύς. ἴκρια δὲ στήσας, ἀραρῶν θαμέσι σταμίνεσσι, ποίει· ἀτὰρ μακρῆσιν ἐπηγκενίδεσσι τελεύτα. ἐν δ' ἰστὸν ποίει καὶ ἐπίκριον ἄρμενον αὐτῶ· πρὸς δ' ἄρα πηδάλιον ποιήσατο, ὄφρ' ἰθύνοι. φράξε δέ μιν ῥίπεσσι διαμπερὲς οἰσιῖνησι κύματος εἶλαρ ἔμεν· πολλὴν δ' ἐπεχεύατο ὕλην. τόφρα δὲ φάρε' ἔνεικε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων, ἰστία ποιήσασθαι· ὁ δ' εὖ τεχνήσατο καὶ τά. ἐν δ' ὑπέρας τε κάλους τε πόδας τ' ἐνέδησεν ἐν αὐτῇ, μοχλοῖσιν δ' ἄρα τὴν γε κατείρυσεν εἰς ἄλα δῖαν.

Meanwhile Calypso, the beautiful goddess, brought him augers; and he bored all the pieces and fitted them to one another, and with pegs and morticings did he hammer it together. Wide as a man well-skilled in carpentry marks out the curve of the hull of a freight-ship, broad of beam, even so wide did Odysseus make his raft. And he set up the deck-beams, bolting them to the close-set ribs, and laboured on; and he finished the raft with long gunwales. In it he set a mast and a yard-arm, fitted to it, and furthermore made him a steering-oar, wherewith to steer. Then he fenced in the whole from stem to stern with willow withes to be a defence against the wave, and strewed much brush thereon. Meanwhile Calypso, the beautiful goddess, brought him cloth to make him a sail, and he fashioned that too with skill. And he made fast in the raft braces and halyards and sheets, and then with levers forced it down into the bright sea.

Τέχνη is mentioned eight more times in the *Odyssey*, namely, in 3,433, 4,455, 4,429, 6,234, 8,327, 8,332, 11,614, 23,161. Most of these passages are related to Hephaestus,

who is κλυτοτέχνης (8.286), that is, famous for his τέχνη. Perhaps the story that best illustrates this ability is when Hephaestus makes an invisible net to catch his wife, Aphrodite, in the arms of the powerful Ares, with the purpose of exposing them to the mockery of Olympus.

Two different uses of τέχνη appear in *Odyssey*, since they do not refer specifically to the activity of the carpenter or blacksmith. The first in reference to Proteus: "ἡμεῖς δὲ ἰάχοντες ἐπεσσύμεθ', ἀμφὶ δὲ χεῖρας βάλλομεν: οὐδ' ὁ γέρον δολῆς ἐπελήθετο τέχνης, ἀλλ' ἦ τοι πρώτιστα λέων γένετ' ἠυγένειος, αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα δράκων καὶ πάρδαλις ἠδὲ μέγας σῦς: γίγνεται δ' ὕγρον ὕδωρ καὶ δένδρεον ὑψιπέτηλον: ἡμεῖς δ' ἀστεμφέως ἔχομεν τετληότι θυμῶ." ("Thereat we rushed upon him with a shout, and threw our arms about him, nor did that old man forget his crafty wiles. Nay, at the first he turned into a bearded lion, and then into a serpent, and a leopard, and a huge boar; then he turned into flowing water, and into a tree, high and leafy; but we held on unflinchingly with steadfast heart.") *Odyssey* (4,455). Note that the unique ability of Proteus does not have a defined product, analogous to a house. The second refers to the murderer of Agamemnon: "[...]αὐτίκα δ' Αἴγισθος δολίην ἐφράσσατο τέχνην: κρινάμενος κατὰ δῆμον ἐείκοσι φῶτας ἀρίστους εἶσε λόχον, ἐτέρωθι δ' ἀνώγει δαῖτα πένεσθαι." ("[...]")

and Aegisthus straightway planned a treacherous device (δολίην τέχνην). He chose out twenty men, the best in the land, and set them to lie in wait, but on the further side of the hall he bade prepare a feast.”) *Odyssey* (4,529). Here the word refers to a plan, a purely intellectual elaboration, to a stratagem that has not been carried out yet.

On the other hand, Roochnik (1996: 24) mentions that according to *Odyssey* (17,381) τέχνη relates to the *dēmiourgoi*, the one who works for the demos rather than for himself. These men are “called to the immense earth.” In this way, according to the Homeric poems:

(2.1) Each τέχνη has a given field. Different τέχναι are directed to the achievement of something specific.

(2.2) Τέχνη is not necessarily a productive activity.

(2.3) Their results are beneficial and are “for the people”. The *technai* belong to the *dēmiourgoi*, whose work is recognized and admired by the *dēmos*.

(2.4) Τέχνη requires a mastery of rational principles that can be explained and taught. The carpenter and the pilot, for example, employ rudimentary elements of applied mathematics. Cf. Roochnik (1996: 26)

At the turn of the fifth century BC, one finds τέχνη linked to the paradigm of the physician. Nowadays the Greek term τέχνη is often translated by “technique” or “art”. However, τέχνη is not “technical” in the modern sense, linked to mechanical developments and the transformation of nature in order to control it, nor it is “art” as in the “fine arts”. Yet since the fifth century BC, the term τέχνη conveys, broadly speaking, a set of rules to obtain certain results or exercise certain activity. Rules that in turn are based in the knowledge of the sector of the reality in question. Medicine, agriculture or navigation are examples of τέχνη. According to Jaeger:

The Greeks used τέχνη far more widely than we use art: they used it for any profession based on special knowledge-not only painting and sculpture, architecture and music, but just as much, or even more, medicine, strategy, or helmsmanship. The word thus connotes the practice of a vocation or profession based not merely on routine experience but on general rules and fixed knowledge; and so it is not far from theory -the sense which it often has in Plato's and Aristotle's philosophical terminology, especially when contrasted with plain experience. On the other hand, *techné* differs from *theoria* ('pure knowledge') by being always connected with practice. (Jaeger, 1947: 129-130)

In the ancient writings on medicine, one finds reflections about τέχνη. Hippocrates proclaims, for example in *De prisca medicina*, that the physician is an artisan

(τεχνίτης) of medicine (τέχνη ἰατρικός). This τέχνη ἰατρικός sometimes receives in medical treatises the title of “wisdom” (σοφία), and even that of ἐπιστήμη.

Just as carpentry was in the prehomeric era the paradigm of τέχνη, medicine was the paradigm of τέχνη in the fifth century BC. Both carpentry and medicine are based on a knowledge that is oriented to a practical good. The carpenter produces artifacts in wood and the doctor heals the sick body. Hence, it is coincident that Plato thought of medicine as the paradigm of τέχνη. Moreover, for Plato, if the physician is the paradigm of the “artisan” that exercises a τέχνη over the body, the philosopher is the paradigm of the “artisan” that exercises a τέχνη over the mind.

Thus, there is no evidence supporting the claim that Plato incurred in a fallacy of redefinition concerning the term τέχνη in the *Gorgias*, and, for that matter, in the *Phaedrus*.

### **3.2. Truth and Persuasion**

So far, I have shown that Plato considered dialectic a τέχνη. Indeed, Plato employed the distinction between τέχνων and ἀτέχνων regarding rhetoric in both the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. This distinction is crucial for his argument in favour of a διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη because if dialectic is a τέχνη, then it is a method of communication and truth-discovery. Yet, Plato acknowledged that a distinction

between truth and communication is possible. Evidence for this distinction comes from actual practice of rhetoric as depicted in both the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*: rhetoricians and politicians appeal to the appetites of their addressees without caring for the truth of the subject matter at stake. In other words, truth is not a necessary condition for persuasion.

Yet antilogic, the art of arguing both sides of a question, can be practiced in both public and private speeches. Since antilogic is intelligible only for anyone who knows whether *a* is *F* or *a* is not *F* given the question "Is *a* *F*?", Socrates concludes that those who choose not to follow the truth of a speech are ἀτέχνων.

Hence, a last step in Plato's case for a διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη is to show how truth and persuasion are conceptually related. Plato's argumentative strategy was not to deny that truth and persuasion can be escinded. His point is that such separation is proper of *bad* rhetoric. Indeed, *good* rhetoric entails a type of persuasion that only communicates truth. In the sequel, I shall elaborate on this point.

In *Phdr.* 265d, Socrates claims "εἰς μίαν τε ιδέαν συνορῶντα ἄγειν τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα, ἵνα ἕκαστον ὀριζόμενος δῆλον ποιῆ περὶ οὗ ἂν ἀεὶ διδάσκειν." Here "διδάσκειν" conveys the essential idea of communicating truth and not mere opinion. This use of "διδάσκειν" lead us again to the *Gorgias*, where

Socrates claims that every τέχνη is μάθησις since every τέχνη must *give reasons* of what it does. The point is that knowledge is different from belief because a belief may be false or true but knowledge is necessarily true. Consider the following passage from the *Gorgias*:

**Σωκράτης**

ἴθι δὴ καὶ τόδε ἐπισκεψώμεθα. καλεῖς τι μεμαθηκέναι;

**Γοργίας**

καλῶ.

**Σωκράτης**

τί δέ; πεπιστευκέναι;

**Γοργίας**

ἔγωγε.

**Σωκράτης**

πότερον οὖν ταῦτόν δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι μεμαθηκέναι καὶ πεπιστευκέναι, καὶ μάθησις καὶ πίστις, ἢ ἄλλο τι;

**Γοργίας**

οἶομαι μὲν ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἄλλο.

**Σωκράτης**

καλῶς γὰρ οἶε: γνώση δὲ ἐνθένδε. εἰ γὰρ τίς σε ἔροιο: 'ἄρ' ἔστιν τις, ὦ Γοργία, πίστις ψευδῆς καὶ ἀληθῆς;' φαίης ἄν, ὡς ἐγὼ οἶμαι.

**Γοργίας**

ναί.

**Σωκράτης**

τί δέ; ἐπιστήμη ἔστιν ψευδῆς καὶ ἀληθῆς;

**Γοργίας**

οὐδαμῶς.

**Σωκράτης**

δηλον ἄρ' αὖ ὅτι οὐ ταῦτόν ἐστιν.

**Γοργίας**

ἀληθῆ λέγεις. (*Grg.* 454c - d).<sup>15</sup>

As the above passage shows, one might distinguish between two types of persuasion: persuasion that communicates belief (455a 2) and persuasion that communicates knowledge (διδασκαλικός is the adjectivation of διδασκαλία 455a 2).<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> **Socrates**

Come then, let us consider another point. Is there something that you call “having learnt?”

**Gorgias**

There is.

**Socrates**

And again, “having believed”?

**Gorgias**

Yes.

**Socrates**

Then do you think that having learnt and having believed, or learning and belief, are the same thing, or different?

**Gorgias**

In my opinion, Socrates, they are different.

**Socrates**

And your opinion is right, as you can prove in this way: if some one asked you—Is there, Gorgias, a false and a true belief?—you would say, Yes, I imagine.

**Gorgias**

I should.

**Socrates**

But now, is there a false and a true knowledge?

**Gorgias**

Surely not.

**Socrates**

So it is evident again that they are not the same.

**Gorgias**

You are right. (*Grg.* 454c - d).

<sup>16</sup> For an excellent study of these two types of persuasion, see Santa Cruz (2003: 39-47).

Accordingly, Plato opposes a διδασκαλική persuasion, as that of arithmetic, which can be used to communicate knowledge, to a mere persuasion (πειθοῦς), as that of the demagogues, which seeks to communicate belief. As Santa Cruz (2003:43) remarks, “la aritmética enseña todo lo relativo al número, pero ella también persuade (πείθει: 453e4). Gorgias acepta entonces que la aritmética, como muchas otras artes, es πειθοῦς δημιουργός y que la suya es una persuasión didáctica (διδασκαλικός) respecto de lo par y lo impar”. Therefore, by parity of reason, as the textual evidence from the *Phaedrus* shows, Plato argued that the true science of rhetoric, the διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη persuades knowledge or, in other words, the διαλεκτικὴ τέχνη must communicate truth.

This conclusion, based on the textual evidence from the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias*, confirms that dialectic, as the method of philosophical inquiry, should move the dialectician from ignorance to knowledge, which was the view I advanced concerning the method of philosophical inquiry in Chapter 1. Of course, only if one recognizes one’s state of ignorance, one is motivated to move forward to inquiry and, then, from inquiry to knowledge.

## Part Two

**The *Phaedrus*: Plato's unified account of Dialectic as the method of  
philosophical inquiry**

## Chapter 3

### From Puzzlement to Inquiry and from Inquiry to Knowledge

#### 1. Introduction

In Chapter 1, I evaluated the claim that Plato advanced three different methods of philosophical inquiry in the course of his dialogues. The main outcome of this evaluation is that one need not consider (E), (H) and (C&D) as three different methods.

Moreover, I argued that it is plausible to conceive them as three different *procedures* of a method of philosophical inquiry. In Chapter 2, after presenting the structure and main themes of the *Phaedrus*, I argued that if Plato conceived such unified method of philosophical inquiry, it is a method of both communication and truth-discovery.

Accordingly, the question I will tackle in the present chapter is the following: did Plato offer a unified account of the method of philosophical inquiry? I give an affirmative answer to this question by arguing that Plato offered such unified

account in the *Phaedrus*. I base my case for this claim on Plato's view of dialectic in *Phaedrus* (261a-266b).

In this passage, Plato analysed the workings of rhetoric as the art of influencing the mind. The majority of scholars believe that Plato's discussion of rhetoric in this passage is just a way of touching upon the importance of (C&D). For example, Yunis says explicitly "S.'s speeches are based on dialectic, consisting of collection and division" (2011: 178). I will attempt to show that this reading of (261a-266b) is misleading. It is my contention that Plato's *Phaedrus* contains a well-developed account of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. More precisely, the dialogue provides an account of dialectic as a *τέχνη* that leads us from puzzlement to inquiry and from inquiry to knowledge.

## 2. From Puzzlement to Inquiry

In 263a1, Plato distinguished between uncontroversial (ὁμονοητικῶς) and controversial (στασιωτικῶς) words (ἄρ' οὖν οὐ παντὶ δῆλον τό γε τοιόνδε, ὡς περὶ μὲν ἓνια τῶν τοιούτων ὁμονοητικῶς ἔχομεν, περὶ δ' ἓνια στασιωτικῶς). According to Plato, "when we say 'iron' or 'silver', we all understand the same thing" (ὅταν τις ὄνομα εἴπη σιδήρου ἢ ἀργύρου, ἄρ' οὐ τὸ αὐτὸ πάντες

διενοήθημεν; 263a5).<sup>17</sup> By contrast, when we say ‘justice’ or ‘goodness’, “we disagree with each other and with ourselves” (τί δ’ ὅταν δικαίου ἢ ἀγαθοῦ; οὐκ ἄλλος ἄλλη φέρεται, καὶ ἀμφισβητοῦμεν ἀλλήλοις τε καὶ ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς; 263a10).

Let me illustrate Plato’s distinction by way of a simple example. Suppose that Lara and Jim are dining. While eating her salad, Lara raises the question whether the fork she is using is made of silver. Plato’s distinction makes clear that such question poses no issue, for the correct application of the predicate ‘is a silver fork’ is uncontroversial. It is clear that one can determine whether a fork is a silver fork or not by a simple method.

Suppose now that Jim raises the question whether the death penalty is just. Following Plato’s distinction, it is clear that this question poses a serious issue, for the correct application of the predicate ‘is just’ is controversial. Indeed, in contrast with Lara’s silver fork case, it is not possible to determine whether the *death penalty* is *just* or not by a simple method.

I would like to draw attention to two points about Plato’s distinction between uncontroversial and controversial words. First, it is a distinction concerning *predicates*. Let me elaborate on this point. Suppose that Jim utters, “Eve is beautiful”.

---

<sup>17</sup> “263a3-4 τῶν τοιούτων: the reference is initially unclear, as Ph.’s response confirms (a5); but S. clarifies in a momento (a6) that he is talking about words (i.e. nouns, ὀνόματα)” Yunis (2011: 190).

To be sure, if Lara does not know the person to whom Jim is referring by the name 'Eve', she might ask "Who is Eve?". But this question hardly expresses disagreement. One succeeds or fails in *referring* to a particular object. Yet if one's addressee points out one's failure in referring to an object, this does not mean that there is disagreement concerning names. The point is that a failure in referring to an object is not equivalent to *disagreeing* about the use of singular terms.

In the context of Socrates' discussion, one can interpret ὄνομα as belonging to one of the following two categories of expressions: singular terms and predicates. A singular term is usually the subject of a sentence. As such, it is a linguistic expression of a natural language (or a formal language) one uses for referring to a particular object.

Accordingly, singular terms include proper names like "Cleopatra" or "Brazil", singular definite descriptions like "the teacher of Alexander the Great", and demonstratives like "that cat". Accordingly, when one uses a singular sentence, one also uses a singular term as the subject of the sentence and a predicate in order to ascribe some property to the object referred by the use of the singular term.

Hence, the sentences "That fork is made of silver", "The death penalty is just", "Eve is beautiful" are all singular sentences. Since success or failure in

referring to a particular object by using a singular term is not equivalent to *disagreeing* about the use of singular terms, it is clear that if we disagree about certain words, such words are predicates.

Let me clarify this conclusion by returning to our example above. Suppose that Lara replies, "I don't think so" to Jim's utterance "Eve is beautiful". This reply certainly expresses disagreement. But, disagreement about what? It seems that Lara disagrees with Jim about whether Jim is correctly representing Eve as an attractive woman. In other words, Lara and Jim disagree concerning the correct application of the predicate 'beautiful' to Eve. They give opposite answers to the question "Is Eve an instance of beautifulness?". In contrast with referring terms, one might disagree, in this sense, about predicates. Therefore, when Plato distinguished between uncontroversial and controversial words, the category of words at issue are predicates.

Second, Plato's crucial point is that we disagree about predicates such as 'love', 'justice', 'beauty', etc., and this sort of disagreement is not easily resolved. As a result, Plato's distinction between uncontroversial and controversial predicates raises a crucial question: is there a method to resolve disagreement about the correct application of controversial predicates?

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Plato perspicuously made the above point in the *Euthyphro*. Indeed, in *Euth.* 7b-c, he presented two cases in which disagreement is easily resolved. Such cases resemble those of the use of “iron” and “silver” in *Phdr.* 263a5.

In the first case, Socrates says that if we disagree about “which of two numbers were the greater”, we can easily reach an agreement by using arithmetic (ἔχθραν δὲ καὶ ὀργάς, ὧ ἄριστε, ἢ περὶ τίνων διαφορὰ ποιεῖ; ὧδε δὲ σκοπῶμεν. ἄρ’ ἂν εἰ διαφεροίμεθα ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ περὶ ἀριθμοῦ ὁπότερα πλείω, ἢ περὶ τούτων διαφορὰ ἐχθροὺς ἂν ἡμᾶς ποιῶι καὶ ὀργίζεσθαι ἀλλήλοις, ἢ ἐπὶ λογισμὸν ἐλθόντες περὶ γε τῶν τοιούτων ταχὺ ἂν).

In the second case, Socrates considers disagreement about “the relative size of things”. In the face of such situation, “we should quickly put an end to the disagreement by measuring the disputed quantity” (οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ τοῦ μείζονος καὶ ἐλάττονος εἰ διαφεροίμεθα, ἐπὶ τὸ μετρεῖν ἐλθόντες ταχὺ παυσαίμεθ’ ἂν τῆς διαφορᾶς;).

Now, Plato’s point in the *Euthyphro* as well as in the *Phaedrus*, I shall stress again, is that certain predicates are a source of puzzlement and controversy: “Is it not about right and wrong, and noble and disgraceful, and good and bad? Are not

these the questions about which you and I and other people become enemies, when we do become enemies, because we differ about them and cannot reach any satisfactory agreement?" (σκόπει εἰ τάδε ἐστὶ τό τε δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον καὶ καλὸν καὶ αἰσχροὺν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακόν. ἄρα οὐ ταῦτά ἐστιν περὶ ὧν διενεχθέντες καὶ οὐ δυνάμενοι ἐπὶ ἰκανὴν κρίσιν αὐτῶν ἐλθεῖν ἐχθροὶ ἀλλήλοις γιγνώμεθα, ὅταν γιγνώμεθα, καὶ ἐγὼ καὶ σὺ καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἄνθρωποι πάντες; *Euthy. 7d*).

Of course, in both the *Euthyphro* and the *Phaedrus* Plato is introducing the necessity of a methodical or technical treatment of such disagreement. In the *Euthyphro*, Plato emphasized on the practice of (E) while in the *Phaedrus* he emphasized on (C&D). Yet the point is the same: controversial predicates are a source of puzzlement. And such puzzlement is the source of philosophical inquiry. In this sense, philosophical inquiry is about controversial predicates.

Taking into account the textual evidence from the *Euthyphro*, I would like to elaborate on the relation between controversial predicates and (E), namely, puzzlement. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I agree with Castelnérac & Marion (2009) that (E) does not aim at refuting the initial thesis. Thus, (E) puts the emphasis not on whether the theses under examine are true or false but rather in whether we can

find an *inconsistency*. Following this view about (E), it is plausible to claim that its purpose is to help the proponent to realize that he needs to examine critically his beliefs involving certain predicates. This is a key element involved in philosophical inquiry: if there is no genuine controversy in respect to a topic (περὶ ᾧν διενεχθέντες), there is no point in inquiring about it.

This last point is not superfluous. Indeed, to talk about genuine controversy is not equivalent to the triviality that people often disagree and, less often, attempt to resolve the disagreement. Plato's point is deeper: as far as our own perspective goes, there is no disagreement; our opponent is simply mistaken. That is why we need a distinction between uncontroversial and controversial *predicates* (which is not a distinction between uncontroversial and controversial people) and a technical way to show those who believe they know something that they do not know it (i.e. (E)). The rationale of (E) is not to claim victory over an opponent by refutation. On the contrary, its rationale is to realize that we have inconsistent beliefs and that we should start inquiring.

In addition, by showing inconsistency, those who employ (E) help their opponents to realize that they only know that some or all of the individually plausible propositions at stake are false, because together they conform an

inconsistent premise-set. So constituted, (E) is relevant for inquiry as far as it makes us aware of the fact that we held inconsistent views and thus motivates us to inquiry. In other words, (E) shows us the origin and motivation of philosophical inquiry.

Therefore, Plato's distinction between uncontroversial and controversial predicates in *Phaed.* 263 a1, which is already present in *Euthyd.* 7b-d, articulates the relevance and importance of (E), one of the main aspects of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry.

### **3. From Inquiry to Knowledge**

It seems plausible to claim that Plato's distinction between uncontroversial and controversial predicates, and consequently (E) as an aspect of dialectic, ignites a movement from puzzlement to inquiry. How to move forwards from inquiry to knowledge?

Let me start to answer this question by stating a corollary of Plato's distinction between uncontroversial and controversial predicates: this distinction would make no sense if Plato did not presuppose that it is possible to *resolve* disagreements about controversial predicates. Accordingly, I should rephrase our

general question as follows: What would constitute the resolution of a disagreement about controversial predicates?

In introducing the distinction between controversial and uncontroversial predicates, Plato suggested that we disagree about the application or instances of controversial predicates because we disagree about the *meaning* of such predicates. If we disagree about whether the death penalty is just, for example, we disagree because we hold opposing interpretations of 'Justice'.

Unfortunately, once we have admitted that we possess inconsistent beliefs about justice and that we shall inquiry into such matter (and, thus, that we are controverting not simply because YOU are wrong and I am right), there is no simple method to determine the meaning of 'Justice' as there is one simple method to determine the meaning of 'Even' and resolve our disagreement, say, about whether 0 is an even number. Indeed, for a mathematician, the simplest way to prove that zero is even is to check that it fits the definition of 'Even'. Thus, the most plausible hypothesis is the following: for every controversial predicate  $F$ , the resolution of a disagreement about  $F$  is the correct definition of  $F$ .

Before attempting to confirm this hypothesis, I shall note from the outset that it does not entail that philosophical disagreement is *merely* about meaning. The

crucial point is that if one does not understand the meaning of 'Justice', then one cannot determine whether the proposition expressed by the utterance of "The death penalty is just" is true or false. As this example illustrates, it is necessary to understand the meaning of controversial predicates in order to determine whether the sentences in which they occur are *true* or *false*.

Dancy (2004:36) refers to the above hypothesis as the "Intellectualist Assumption".<sup>18</sup> Following Dancy, I shall formulate this assumption as follows:

(IA) To know that . . . *F* —, one must be able to say what the *F*, or *F*-ness, is.

"Here '*. . . F* —' is to be any declarative sentence containing '*F*' (or '*F*-ness,' or 'the *F*'). For example, if '*F*' is 'pious,' then '*. . . F* —' could be 'this action is pious' or 'piety is a good thing.'" Dancy (2006:72) One should note that saying what the *F* or *F*-ness is amounts to *defining* it. As Dancy illustrates, "to say whether prosecuting one's father for murder under circumstances such as Euthyphro's is the pious thing to do, one must define the pious or piety" Dancy (2006:72), as it is shown in (*Euthphr.* 4d9–e8, 5c8–d5).

Thus, if Plato endorsed (IA) in the *Phaedrus*, which, given the the textual evidence presented so far, is highly plausible, then the method to resolve

---

<sup>18</sup> This assumption is also referred to as the "Principle of the Priority of Definition".

disagreement is equivalent to the method to find correct definitions of controversial predicates.

I will now examine the adequacy of (IA). As it is widely known, definitional knowledge is a leitmotif of the Socratic dialogues. In these dialogues, Socrates asks an alleged expert to answer questions of the form 'What is *F*?', where '*F*' stands for predicates such as 'Piety', 'Courage', 'Moderation', 'Beauty', etc. Exemplifying the use of (E), it is shown how the alleged expert proposes a definition of *F*. After Socrates examines and rejects the proposed definition, the alleged expert proposes another definition that Socrates examines and rejects, and so on. At the end of the dialogue, Socrates and his interlocutor end up either exhausted or frustrated, leading the investigation to *aporia*.

Geach (1966) argued that (IA) is a fallacy, the so-called "Socratic fallacy", which consists in claiming that for one to identify the instances of a predicate one requires to possess *definitional knowledge* of such predicate. In other words, the "Socratic fallacy" states that one cannot know whether one should apply a predicate *F* to an individual (e.g. whether one should apply 'Pious' to Socrates) if one is not able to define *F*. Geach wrote:

Let us rather concentrate on two assumptions Socrates makes: (A) that if you know you are correctly predicating a given term 'T' you must "know what it is to be T," in the sense

of being able to give a general criterion for a thing's being T; (B) that it is no use to try and arrive at the meaning of 'T' by giving examples of things that are T. (B) in fact follows from (A). If you can already give a general account of what 'T' means, then you need no examples to arrive at the meaning of 'T'; if on the other hand you lack such a general account, then, by assumption (A), you cannot know that any examples of things that are T are genuine ones, for you do not know when you are predicating 'T' correctly. The style of mistaken thinking-as I take it to be- that comes from accepting these two assumptions may well be called *the Socratic fallacy* [...]" . Geach (1966:372)

To be sure, Geach is right in claiming that one knows, in an ordinary sense of the word 'knows', that something is *F* (e.g. that Peter is a coward) without requiring a definition of *F*. In other words, one need not to possess definitional knowledge of a predicate to identify its instances.

The Socratic fallacy has been widely discussed by Plato scholars (e.g. Beverlius (1987); Benson (1990); Vlastos (1990); Prior (1998); Benson (2000: 112–63); Dancy (2004: 35–64)). I shall not rehearse here all the arguments and counterarguments concerning it. Instead, I shall follow Prior's response to Geach's Socratic fallacy. Prior states his objection as follows:

The "Socratic fallacy" arises from the "Priority of Definition" principle (PD). Plato is committed to (PD) in the *Meno*. The *Meno* also contains a famous discussion of the difference between episteme and doxa (97a ff.). If we understand what Plato meant by

episteme we can see that he must be committed to (PD); but we can also see that (PD) has none of the harmful consequences Geach attributes to it. Geach's view is indebted to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language. (PD) is implausible on this reading of the verb "to know", but not on Plato's. Plato claims that a demand for an explanation is appropriate wherever a claim to knowledge is made. Plato links the concept of episteme explicitly with the concept of logos; the connection between the terms may have been analytic. It does not follow from the Platonic conception of knowledge, as Geach argues, that it is "no use" using examples to establish general definitions. All that follows is that one cannot know that an alleged example of a term T is a genuine example until one has a general account of what it is to be T. Without the stronger conclusion, Geach cannot establish that the "Socratic fallacy" is a fallacy. Prior (1998:97)

There are two important points to consider in Prior's objection to Geach. First, the Socratic fallacy is not a fallacy in the logical sense of the word 'fallacy', that is, an invalid form of argument. Indeed, Geach really means by 'fallacy' a "style of mistaken thinking" about knowledge. Yet, according to Plato's commitment to (IA), which Prior calls (PD), is not a "style of mistaken thinking", for it is consistent with his view of knowledge and all it says is that we cannot know whether *a* is a genuine example *F*, as conveyed in "*a* is *F*", until it is clear what it is to be *F*.

Second, although Geach (1966:371) is right in pointing out that one knows "heaps of things" one cannot define, he is wrong in attributing certain view of

knowledge, namely, as justified true belief, to Socrates. One should not interpret 'episteme' in the sense Geach attributes to Socrates. In particular, I take that "knowing heaps of things one cannot define" just means that one is able to recognize instances of predicates. However, there is nothing wrong with admitting the importance of both semantic "knowing how" (i.e. knowing how to apply a predicate in certain context) and semantic "knowing that" (i.e. knowing the definition of a predicate). The second kind of knowledge is a kind of knowledge that is compatible but not reducible to knowledge of instances.

Thus, taking into account Prior's objections to Geach, I see no unplausibility in (IA). I shall note, though, that even if (IA) were implausible, I have already enough evidence in order to assume that Plato endorsed (IA) in the *Phaedrus*.<sup>19</sup>

I return now to the method of philosophical inquiry. As I have mentioned, if Plato endorsed (IA) in the *Phaedrus*, then the method of philosophical inquiry *consists* in finding correct definitions of controversial predicates. Let me elaborate on this point. I have mentioned that Plato held that defining a controversial predicate *F* is saying what it is. Hence, whether the definition of *F* is correct depends

---

<sup>19</sup> See Benson (1990) for another compelling defense of (IA).

on how the Form *F* is. For example, whether the definition of ‘is pious’ or ‘piety’ is correct depends on how the Form of Piety is.

It is crucial to note at this point that the need for a method of philosophical inquiry reflects an asymmetry between predicates and Forms: Forms make predicates meaningful and, consequently, propositions involving those predicates are true when Forms are instantiated. However, definitions cannot make Forms be. As Socrates remarks: “Περὶ παντός, ὦ παῖ, μία ἀρχὴ τοῖς μέλλουσι καλῶς βουλευέσθαι· εἰδέναι δεῖ περὶ οὗ ἂν ᾗ ἡ βουλή, ἣ παντὸς ἀμαρτάνειν ἀνάγκη (My boy, if anyone means to deliberate successfully about anything, there is one thing he must do at the outset: he must know what it is he is deliberating about; otherwise he is bound to go utterly astray)” (237b7-c2).<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, Harvey Yunis notes about this passage: “[...] this deliberative speech begins by considering what constitutes good deliberation (καλῶς βουλευέσθαι) in general (περὶ παντός); contrast Lysias’ abrupt opening (230e6-231a1n)” Yunis (2011:113). Therefore, what is at issue is not the possibility of defining controversial predicates, but the need to specify a *reliable* method to do it so. In other words, a method that takes into account the asymmetry between predicates and Forms.

---

<sup>20</sup> Hackforth (1952:38)

It becomes clear that construing the method of philosophical inquiry as the method of finding correct definitions of controversial predicates poses a new problem: Can one determine the correctness of a controversial predicate's definition reached by the method?

The simple presumption is that one begins with a candidate *definiens*: a suitable expression putted forward to define adequately some controversial predicate *F*, which is, of course, the *definiendum*. The point is that one is to put to test this candidate *definiens*.

To be sure, this is an acceptable presumption, for the parties involved in philosophical disputes concerning a thesis or definition engage in the practice of giving and asking for reasons. In other words, the parties in philosophical debates always advance a variety of arguments and counterarguments. There are three obvious outcomes of this practice: the parties reach an agreement (one party convinces the other), the parties remain in disagreement (no party convinces the other), or the parties suspend judgement (both parties cast serious doubts between them).

Let me elaborate on the above point. Consider two parties, a proponent and an opponent, in a dispute concerning the definition of a predicate *F*. Suppose that

the proponent claims that *F is G* in the absence of reasons and, then, that the opponent claims that *F is not G* also without offering any argument. Both proponent and opponent advanced unsupported claims. In other words, both proponent and opponent did not offer any reason as to why *F is G* or *F is not G* is the case. Since unsubstantiated disagreement is just a brute collision of opposing claims, the ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη (*Phdr.* 261d) is essential to dialectic.

The ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη, the practice of giving and asking for reasons concerning a candidate *definiens* is an essential element of the method of philosophical inquiry. This ἀντιλογικὴ τέχνη is a necessary condition for the correctness of Plato's method of philosophical inquiry construed as the method of finding correct definitions of controversial predicates.

However, two further problems thus arise. First, if there are equally good arguments supporting each side of the dispute, how to tell which definition is correct? Second, what is suitable evidence in favor of a definition?

Regarding the first question, one should note that the possibility of not resolving a controversy is entirely reasonable. We might never resolve our disagreement concerning the meaning of a controversial predicate. Both parties might suspend judgement concerning their dispute. However, this outcome does

not entail some sort of skepticism. Plato regards such possibility as merely an *epistemological* possibility rather than an ontological possibility. In other words, although in *circumstance* we might never resolve our disagreement concerning the meaning of a controversial predicate, in *principle* we might resolve such disagreement. In other words, for every controversial predicate *F* there is (in principle) a correct definition of *F*. This last point suggests an answer to the second question. The suitable evidence for a definition depends on the Forms, which are *not* the result of our psychology or our persuasive skill. Plato's essential point is the following: if a definition is correct, it is so because of how reality is.

Finally, let me recapitulate the main points I have established so far. Starting from Plato's distinction between controversial and uncontroversial predicates in *Phaedr.* 263a1, I have suggested that (E) helps one to move from puzzlement to inquiry. In addition, by endorsing (IA), I have showed that Plato conceived the method of philosophical inquiry as the method of finding correct definitions of controversial predicates. This conception of the method poses several problems regarding the possibility of its correctness. I have proposed to resolve them by making the following two plausible assumptions:

- (I) For every controversial predicate  $F$  there is definition  $D$  such that  $D$  correctly defines  $F$ .
- (II) For every definition  $D$  of a predicate  $F$ ,  $D$  is correct if and only if  $D$  corresponds to the Form of  $F$  (i.e.  $D$  says what it is  $F$ ).

The above two points codify the general thrust of Plato's method of philosophical inquiry in the *Phaedrus*.

## Chapter 4

### Articulating the Method

#### 1. Introduction

In Chapter 3, I argued that Plato conceived the method of philosophical inquiry as the method of finding correct definitions of controversial predicates. In addition, as part of the unified picture of dialect I am advocating, I showed how Plato's distinction between controversial and uncontroversial predicates relates to (E) concerning the transition from puzzlement to inquiry. Accordingly, I am now in a position to locate (H) and (C&D) into the general picture of the unified account of method of philosophical inquiry as depicted by Plato in the *Phaedrus*.

Since the goal of the method of philosophical inquiry is to reach a correct definition of a controversial predicate, at least three *procedural* questions concerning the method arise at this point. Let  $F$  be a controversial predicate under dispute. One should ask:

- (i) How one is to find the category to which  $F$  belongs?
- (ii) How one is to find a suitable candidate *definiens* for  $F$ ?

- (iii) How one is to assess the suitable candidate *definiens* for *F* according to the Form of *F*?

In the sequel, I shall show that the answers to (i), (ii) and (iii) are Collection (hereafter (C)), (H) and (D) respectively.

## 2. How one is to find the category to which *F* belongs?

In this section, I shall argue that (C) is the procedure to find the category to which certain controversial predicate *F* belongs. For example, where does an investigation into a controversial predicate such as 'love' begin? Plato told us in the *Phaedrus* that skilled dialecticians seek to concur about the Form to which they apply the predicate 'love', and they aim to find a correct definition of love. This means that they aim to find a definition that is exhaustive and informative. If a definition is exhaustive and informative, it should help us grasp the property or set of properties that make the Form what it is.

What sorts of individuals does a predicate pick out? In the Socratic dialogues, Socrates asks "What is *F*?", where *F* stands for predicates such as "justice", "virtue", etc., and the interlocutor often answers by listing items he regards as instances of the predicate under inquiry. For example, Socrates asks Theaetetus "What do you

think knowledge is?" (τί σοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἐπιστήμη;) and he replies: "Well then, I think the things one might learn from Theodorus are knowledge—geometry and all the things you spoke of just now—and also cobblery and the other craftsmen's arts; each and all of these are nothing else but knowledge." (δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι καὶ ἅ παρὰ Θεοδώρου ἂν τις μάθοι ἐπιστήμαι εἶναι, γεωμετρία τε καὶ ἄς νυνδὴ σὺ διήλθες, καὶ αὖ σκυτοτομική τε καὶ αἱ τῶν ἄλλων δημιουργῶν τέχναι, πᾶσαί τε καὶ ἐκάστη τούτων, οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ ἐπιστήμη εἶναι) (*Tht.*, 146c–d). In this situation, Socrates replies by saying that his interlocutor offered a mere list. Evidently, a definition in terms of a list is neither exhaustive nor informative. The point of our example is that Socrates wants to know the common feature that all the items on the list share and what makes all the items on the list instances of one Form. Following this point, inquirers should "see" or "grasp" the common feature of the objects falling under certain kind.

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato called the technique to grasp the common features of the objects falling under a predicate (e.g. red roses falling under the predicate 'Red'), and the common features of predicates falling under a category (e.g. 'x is a cat' and 'x is a lion' falling under the category 'x is a feline'), συναγωγή. This is the aspect of the method I have referred by '(C)' (265d–266b).

εἰς μίαν<sup>21</sup> τε ἰδέαν συνορῶντα ἄγειν τὰ πολλαχῆ<sup>22</sup> διεσπαρμένα<sup>23</sup>, ἵνα ἕκαστον ὀριζόμενος δῆλον ποιῆ περὶ οὗ ἂν ἀεὶ διδάσκειν<sup>24</sup> ἐθέλη. ὥσπερ τὰ νυνδῆ περὶ Ἐρωτος—ὃ ἔστιν ὀρισθέν—εἴτ' εὖ εἴτε κακῶς ἐλέχθη<sup>26</sup>, τὸ γοῦν σαφές καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτῷ ὀμολογούμενον διὰ ταῦτα ἔσχεν εἰπεῖν ὁ λόγος. (*Phdr.*, 265d).

<sup>21</sup> There is no exact translation of the expression εἰς μία. Firstly, it does not denote a Form because the method does not operate with entities. Secondly, it does not denote a class because a class is a collection of objects that can be defined without ambiguity by a property shared by all its members. Thirdly, it does not denote *genera* because a εἰς μία it is not absolute.

<sup>22</sup> One can translate the word πολλαχῆ by 'many times', 'many ways' or 'many places' in order to convey a temporal plurality, a modal plurality or spatial plurality, respectively. I use a modal interpretation here. Plato scholars usually point out that 'the things' (τὰ) refer to sensitive individuals, Forms or both, De Vries (1969: 216). Therefore, there is no doubt that the complete expression "τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα" is ambiguous. Both individuals and Forms have various aspects or characteristics, but only Forms are timeless and outside the phenomenal world. Therefore, the translation encompassing both entities and the various characteristics that each of them can display, including their spatio-temporal characteristics, is the translation 'many ways'.

<sup>23</sup> Infinitival noun clause without the article: τινὰ with συνορῶντα ἄγειν. Harvey Yunis proposes to translate it as follow: "that a person perceives all together the things scattered in many places and gathers them into one form" (2011:197). Meanwhile, Hackforth proposed to translate it as follow: "The first is that in which we bring a dispersed plurality under a single form, seeing it all together: the purpose being to define so-and-so, and thus to make plain whatever may be chosen as the topic for exposition. For example, take the definition given just now of love: whether it was right or wrong, at all events it was that which enabled our discourse to achieve lucidity and consistency." (1952: 132).

<sup>24</sup> De Vries affirmed that διδάσκειν is absolute, ἀεὶ is distributive (cf. 1969: 216).

<sup>25</sup> According to Harvey Yunis, the verb διδάσκειν "is used, and not πείθειν, because Socrates is describing dialectical reasoning. Whereas rhetoric leads to persuasion in the sense of *psychagogia*, dialectic leads to instruction or learning in the sense of the auditor's gaining a clear and stable understanding of things (265d7n., 278a2-6)" (2011: 197-8). This sense of διδάσκειν is, as I have shown at the end of Chapter 2, linked to that of the *Gorgias*.

<sup>26</sup> En la frase τὰ νυνδῆ περὶ Ἐρωτος ὃ ἔστιν ὀρισθέν εἴτ' εὖ εἴτε κακῶς ἐλέχθη (d5-6), "Schanz's τό for τὰ accepted by Vollgraff and defended by Hackforth, makes the sentence too smooth" De Vries (1969: 216). Hackforth's explanation for this change is cogent: "I accept Schanz's τό for τὰ in d5 and would remove Burnet's dashes, which seem inhelpful: τό περὶ Ἐρωτος ὃ ἔστιν ὀρισθέν is perfectly normal Greek for 'the definition which stated what love is'. By 'definition' here, we should understand no more than the determination of the genus of ἔρωτος, viz. μανία (1952: 132, n.5).

That of perceiving and bringing together in one idea the scattered particulars, that one may make clear by definition the particular thing which he wishes to explain; just as now, in speaking of Love, we said what he is and defined it, whether well or ill. Certainly by this means the discourse acquired clearness and consistency. (*Phdr.*, 265d).

The first point to note about (C) is that it can happen from the outset of an inquiry and, as I shall show later, in the course of any division. By employing (C), an dialectician gathers a number of separate objects or types of objects (τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα) into one Form (μία ἰδέα).<sup>27</sup> It becomes clear that the dialectician uses collection to establish the Form or category to which *definiendum* (ἕκαστος) belongs. For example, consider the controversial predicate ‘love’. Its μία ἰδέα, the Form to which love belongs, is mania.

La expresión τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα es ambigua y Platón no explica a qué hace referencia con dicha expresión. De Vries afirma: “The question is whether at this point Plato is thinking of particulars or of ideas” De Vries (1969: 216). Hermias (234, 20 ff.) remarks that Plato seems to opt for particulars in 246b6 ff., but leaves open the question in 265d3-4. For Hackforth, (C) is concerned with both the bringing of particulars under a single Form

---

<sup>27</sup> Collection has been interpreted as “intuition” by F. M. Cornford (1960: 186-7, 267) and W.K.C. Guthrie (1975). Richard Robinson (1953) has interpreted collection as a systematic procedure accompanied by intuition. W.D. Ross (1951), Hackforth (1952), and David White (1993) have interpreted collection just as a systematic procedure.

or classes of particulars under a single Form. On the other hand, (D) is not concerned with particulars (cf. 1952: 132, n.4). R. S. Bluck, siguiendo una anotación de Hackforth (1945), señala lo siguiente: “Phaedrus 265d may refer to a collection of Forms, or to a preliminary collection of sensible particulars, it may even be intentionally ambiguous, being intended to cover both” (1955: 147, n.4). Por lo tanto, muchos especialistas debaten si lo múltiplemente disperso refiere particulares sensibles, propiedades de estos particulares o formas. Algunos de ellos incluyen los sensibles<sup>28</sup> y otros los excluyen<sup>29</sup>.

I disagree with these views; based on my interpretation of 263a, I contend that both (C) and (D) are concerned with general terms, and specifically, controversial predicates. Now, the phrase εἰς μίαν τε ἰδέαν συναγοῶντα ἄγειν τὰ

---

<sup>28</sup> Hackforth remarks that συναγωγή operates at two levels: 1. from individuals to a class or form: to gather multiple experiences in a particular property, and 2. from classes or forms to a form: to gather different properties of individuals into a single form (cf. 1952: 132, n.4). Robinson (1953) describes an ascending process that goes from the particular to the most universal, and the particular can be the sensations. Robinson subscribes to the interpretation of Rodier, for whom the process of meeting is empirical, part of the sensations to his unit in the reasoning, while the division proceeds dispensation of the senses. In Robinson's terms, συναγωγή gathers the general feature of particulars, and these particulars can be sensations (cf. 1953: 163). On the other hand, Christopher Rowe (1986) understands συναγωγή by putting together in the reasoning the things that are dispersed in the sensory experience. For David White (1993), the first procedure starts from a plurality of things and this plurality can refer to the sensations or the forms.

<sup>29</sup> According to F. M. Cornford, the method deals with Forms: "The new method of Collection and Division is thus wholly confined to the world of Forms; and Collection must not be confused with the Socratic muster of individual instances (συναγωγή). Collection is a survey of specific Forms having some prima facie claim to be members of the same genus "(1960: 186). Raven claims that the method has no contact with individuals, he works exclusively with Ideas (cf. 1965: 190). For Santa Cruz, the dialectic of the *Phaedrus* operates with concepts that exclude any intervention of sensation as a point of departure (cf. 1990: 151).

πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα is about gathering a plurality into "one form". However, for the method, only controversial predicates involving certain plurality are relevant. In addition, predicates convey Forms or categories rather than particular objects.

The method of philosophical inquiry is a way to tackle important questions arising from controversy. This is patent for several reasons and, to be sure, it would make no sense that someone applied such method to know what is already clear and uncontroversial. In this way, the method begins with controversy and proceeds systematically to dispel it. Objects are not controversial, both sensitive particulars and forms, because things constitute ontological entities and the controversy does not occur on an ontological ground but on an epistemological one.

It becomes clear that the extension of 'controversial' are predicates. Consequently, I propose a different translation of the expression τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα as "certain predicates that are disaggregated in many ways". "Certain predicates" (τὰ) belong to the controversial predicates mentioned by Plato in 263a-b, which are characterized by being opposite predicates.

Paragraph 265d indicates that what is dispersed in many ways is joined in order to establish a μία ἰδέα. The concept of μία ἰδέα is a relational one. A μία ἰδέα is

always the *μία ιδέα* of a *definiendum*. For example, *mania* is the *μία ιδέα* of love. As this example illustrates, the *μία ιδέα* of *F*-particulars is a common feature shared by all of them. In turn, the *μία ιδέα* of the Form *F*, the Form that collects all *F*-particulars, is a common feature shared by all kinds to which *F* belongs, say, the *G*-Form. For example, consider a bouquet of red roses. The *μία ιδέα* of the rose-particulars is 'rose' and the *μία ιδέα* of 'rose', a Form, is 'rosaceae'. Of course, the *μία ιδέα* cannot be an accidental common feature (e.g. 'red') but a general and essential feature.

It is arguably clear *how* collection works. However, it is difficult to grasp *why* it works. This is a much-debated issue. Many specialists approach this debate in relation to the paragraph of the *ἀνάμνησις*: *δεῖ γὰρ ἄνθρωπον συνιέναι κατ' εἶδος λεγόμενον, ἐκ πολλῶν ἰὸν αἰσθήσεων εἰς ἓν λογισμῶ συναιρούμενον* (249b-c). Both paragraphs have to do with the verb *συναίρω* because both refer to the action of assembling the manifold in a unity. But while the expression *πολλῶν αἰσθήσεων* makes it clear that the meeting has its starting point in the sensations, the expression *τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα* leaves the question open whether the multiple predications concern sensations or not.

The difference is that the paragraph including *ἀνάμνησις* presents a general description of *συναγωγή*, without considering it as a method or a procedure.

Although the act of gathering consists in unifying the manifold by reasoning, in 249b-c it is not mentioned how this occurs. Instead, the paragraph describes how the soul gathers in order to know. This procedure establishes a *μία ιδέα*. In addition, the multiple sensations (*πολλῶν αἰσθήσεων*) are the starting point of knowledge, while opinions and other controversial predicates are the starting point of the method. However, to affirm that sensations are the starting point of knowledge is not the relevant point of the paragraph including *ἀνάμνησις*, but the fact that the *ἀνάμνησις* is the *foundation* of the knowledge that is reached through the method<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, the relationship is not only between *ἀνάμνησις* and *συναγωγή*; it is also between *ἀνάμνησις* and the method in general.

My position in this debate takes as starting point a corollary of the notion of *μία ιδέα*: the *μία ιδέα* of *F* is a necessary condition to be an *F*, but not a sufficient condition. For example, it is necessary to be a feline to be a cat, but it is certainly not sufficient. We are in the process of reaching a correct definition of *F* and, as I have mentioned, such definition must be *informative*. Thus, one conjectures what *F* is in a

---

<sup>30</sup> The word *ἀνάμνησις* is often translated as "recollection". Such translation conveys the human capacity to learn or to know or, more specifically, to "recall" the Forms. In *Meno* 81c-85d y *Phd.* 72e-77a Plato used *ἀνάμνησις*. For a closer look to this notion, see Scott (1995: 3-85) and Kahn (2006). For a study of the relationship between *συναγωγή* and *ἀνάμνησις*, see Norman Gulley (1962: 108-9) and David White (1993:216).

general sense, but this is just the first step in the process to reach a correct definition.

I mean by 'conjecturing' not the action of guessing but rather an action similar to that of conjecturing in mathematics. For example, mathematicians grasp by simple inspection whether or not both  $n$  and  $2^n - 1$  are prime for each integer  $n$  from 2 to 10. Indeed, a pattern emerges as the following table shows:

$n$	Is $n$ prime?	$2^n - 1$	Is $2^n - 1$ prime?
2	yes	3	yes
3	yes	7	yes
4	no: $4 = 2 \cdot 2$	15	no: $15 = 3 \cdot 5$
5	yes	31	yes
6	no: $6 = 2 \cdot 3$	63	no: $63 = 7 \cdot 9$
7	yes	127	yes
8	no: $8 = 2 \cdot 4$	255	no: $255 = 15 \cdot 17$
9	no: $9 = 3 \cdot 3$	511	no: $511 = 7 \cdot 73$
10	no: $10 = 2 \cdot 5$	1023	no: $1023 = 31 \cdot 33$

Mathematicians would *conjecture* that if  $n$  is an integer larger than 1 and  $n$  is prime, then  $2^n - 1$  is prime.<sup>31</sup> The next step is to test such conjecture by attempting to prove it or disprove it. Likewise, dialecticians can grasp instances of love by inspection and conjecture that every instance of love is also an instance of mania. However, the converse does not hold. Thus, *ex hypothesi*, love is *not* every other form of mania.

---

<sup>31</sup> The above table is a simple record of a mathematical pattern generated by the iterative operations of the form  $2^n - 1$  where  $n$  can be substituted for a number in the series 2, 3, ..., 10. The number  $2^n - 1$  is called "Mersenne prime" and was named after Marin Mersenne, a XVII century French mathematician. See *Encyclopedia of Mathematics*.

Accordingly, the dialectician must test such conjecture and find the feature that divides or “cuts” love from other sorts of mania *if* love is indeed a form of mania.

Now, to say of love that it is a mania is to say that mania is the *μία ιδέα* of love. However, the Form “mania” is divided into two sorts: beneficial and harmful. Thus, if one compares all instances of love and all instances of gluttony, but one does not specify which sort of mania is each one of them, then it is uninformative both to say “love is mania” and “gluttony is mania”.

Another, perhaps clearer, way to make this point is to say that the *μία ιδέα* of *F* is not its definition but rather “certain part” (*μανίαν τινα*, 265a6) of its definition: in defining *F*, the *μία ιδέα* of *F* satisfies the condition of exhaustiveness but not the condition of informativeness. For example, the definition of love is not mania *simpliciter* but certain Form of mania (*μανίαν τινα*, 265a6), of course. This means that *F* is a part of its *μία ιδέα* and what is left of the *μία ιδέα* is *not F*.

### **3. How one is to find a suitable candidate *definiens* for *F*?**

In this section, I shall argue that (H) is the procedure to find a suitable candidate *definiens* for certain controversial predicate *F*. I begin by defending that (H) is the meeting point between (C&D) in the *Phaedrus*. I hope to show that if one accepts this

thesis, one can offer an organic picture of the method, and that this picture is attractive enough to lend plausibility to my contention. Finally, I shall make a brief comparison between the *Phaedrus* and *Republic* regarding Hypothesis.

I base my case for the thesis that (H) is the meeting point between (C) and (D) on (236a8-b4), (237b7-d3) and (238d8-e2). My strategy is to show that in these passages Plato *uses*, but not *mentions*, (H) in order to make a transition between (C) and (D). My starting point is that one should accept that from the fact that Plato does not mention (H) in the *Phaedrus* it does not follow that he did not use it.

I shall begin by assessing (236a8-b4). I shall note from the outset that although Plato does not mention the noun ‘hypothesis’ here, he uses the verb ὑποτίθημι to convey “to lay down as a principle” or “take for granted”. Let us consider the passage in question:

τὸ μὲν τὸν ἐρώντα τοῦ μὴ ἐρώντος μᾶλλον νοσεῖν δώσω σοι  
 ὑποτίθεσθαι, τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν ἕτερα πλείω καὶ πλείονος ἄξια εἰπὼν  
 τῶνδε [Λυσίου] παρὰ τὸ Κυψελιδῶν ἀνάθημα σφυρήλατος ἐν  
 Ὀλυμπίᾳ στάθητι.

I [Phaedrus] will allow you [Socrates] *to take it for granted* that the lover is less sane than the non-lover: and for the rest, if you can replace what we have here

by a fuller speech of superior merit, up with your statue in wrought gold beside the offering of the Cypselids at Olympia.<sup>32</sup>

It is clear that the candidate *definiens* that Socrates is going to take for granted is that lovers are less sane than non-lovers. The essential point I would like to draw from the above passage is that in order for the speech to take course it is required to postulate a candidate expression that defines adequately the *definiendum*. And this requisite is satisfied by postulating a candidate *definiens* for examination

I turn now to 237b7-d3. I would like to draw attention to Plato's use of μία ἀρχὴ and ὁμολογία θέμενοι ὄρον in the following passage:

Perii pantoj, wlpail mia arxh\toij mel l ousi kal wj: boul eusesqai: eidehai deil perii oula\h v\h(boul h/ h\ipantoj a\martahen a\hagkh. touj del pol l ouj l el hqen o\i ouk isasi thh ou\si\an ekastou. wj ouh eidoten ou\diomol ogou\ntai eh arxv= thj skeyewj, proel qo\tej del tol eiko\j apodido\asin: ou\te gar e\autoi\j ou\te a) l h\l oij o\mol ogousin. egw\louh kaii sulmh\paqwmn ola\ l oij e\pitimw\hen, a) l ' e\peidh\ soii kaii e\moi\ o\ l o\goj prokeitai potera e)w\h\ati h\mh\ma\ l on eij fil i\an itebn, perii elrwto\j o\idh t' e\sti kaii h\h ekei duhamin, o\mol ogi\# qemeno\i olon, eij tou\to apobl eponte\j kaii a\hafefonte\j thh skey\in poiwmeqa eite w\fel i\an eite bl abhn parekei.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Hackforth (1952:34).

<sup>33</sup> Hackforth (1952:38).

My boy, if anyone means to deliberate successfully about anything, there is one thing he must do at the outset: he must know what it is he is deliberating about; otherwise he is bound to go utterly astray. Now most people fail to realise that they don't know what this or that really is: consequently when they start discussing something, they dispense with any agreed definition, assuming that they know the thing; then later on they naturally find, to their cost, that they agree neither with each other nor with themselves. That being so, you and I would do well to avoid what we charge against other people; and as the question before us is whether one should preferably consort with a lover or a non-lover, we ought to agree upon a definition of love which shows its nature and its effects, so that we may have it before our minds as something to refer to while we discuss whether love is beneficial or injurious.

According to Socrates, it is a mistake not to agree upon a candidate *definiens* from the outset of the speech. The parts involved in the discussion should not assume that they already know the subject matter. The aim of the method is to reach a correct definition. Accordingly, the first step in this direction is to find the μία ἰδέα of the *definiendum*. However, as I have shown in the previous section, the μία ἰδέα of *F* satisfies the condition of exhaustiveness but not the condition of informativeness. As a result, we need a candidate *definiens* in order to start a process of deliberation. The reason for this is that without such candidate *definiens* it would be impossible to start dividing in order to find a correct definition. The point I have

attempted to draw from (237b7-d3) is that dialecticians reach the candidate *definiens* by way of (H).

Finally, let me connect this last point with (238 d8-e2). In (237d3-4), Socrates agrees with Phaedrus that the *μία ιδέα* of love is *ἐπιθυμία* (desire), which is evident and commonly accepted (*ἅπαντι δῆλον*). However, it is clear that simply saying that love is desire is uninformative. Accordingly, Socrates continues by putting forward a candidate *definiens* (*εἴρηται τε καὶ ὄρισται*, 238d8): love is irrational desire upon beautiful things (see 238b6-c4). Hackforth remarks about this *definiens*:

It is not said that ὕβρις is a Form of ἐπιθυμία: rather it is the name of that psychical state which results from the victory of irrational desire for pleasure over rational belief, which aims at good; nevertheless the connexion of ὕβρις with ἐπιθυμία is so close that the speaker treats the species of the one as species of the other, and in the end arrives at a definition of love which, as were led to expect at the outset, makes it a Form of desire, and carefully states its specific difference" (1952: 40-41).

The crucial point, as Hackford remarks, is that Socrates reaches a candidate *definiens* of love that carefully includes its specific difference. Yet I contend that this particular move, which is made possible by (C), is the product of (H). The purpose of using (C) is to find the *μία ιδέα* of the *definiendum*. In turn, the purpose of using (H) is to find a suitable a candidate *definiens*. For it is clear, and this is the essential

point here, that without such candidate *definiens* it would be impossible to start dividing in order to find a correct definition. Indeed, in the *palinode* Socrates makes Phaedrus realize that the candidate *definiens* he putted forward in 238d8 is incorrect.

In order to lend more plausibility for my contention, it is in order to make a brief comparison between the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic* regarding the role of (H).<sup>34</sup> In *Rep.* VI, Plato introduces the simile of the line, which describes a line divided into four unequal and proportional segments representing four types of knowledge in ascending order of clarity and reality: conjecture (εἰκασία), belief (πίστις), mathematical reasoning (διάνοια) and dialectical reasoning (νόησις). Plato uses the simile of the line to clarify certain important epistemological issues such as the relationship between different types of knowledge and the long process of acquiring knowledge that starts from the perception of confusing images and ends with the noetic vision of a non-hypothetical principle (ἀρχὴ ἀνυπόθετος, 510b7).

However, this simile is interrelated with other two similes: the simile of the sun (504e-509c) and the simile of the cave (514a-518b). These similes intend to clarify not only epistemological questions, but also to greater extent ontological questions. This means that the gradual process of knowledge, which tends to the form of

---

<sup>34</sup> For an interesting discussion of (H) in the *Republic*, see Fronterotta (2011:62).

knowledge, culminates in the apprehension of the form of the good (ἰδέα τῶγαθοῦ).

The form of the good is the ultimate foundation of reality because it is the *raison d'être* of all other forms and explains their relationships.

The word ὑποθέσις appears at the top of the two line segments corresponding to mathematical reasoning and dialectical reasoning (τῆ' του' διαλεγεσθαι δυναμει) respectively. Plato contrasts the way mathematicians and dialecticians treat hypotheses. Mathematicians treat hypotheses as first principles (τὰς ὑποθέσεις ποιούμενος οὐκ ἀρχὰς) and, consequently, they take the truth of hypotheses for granted.

In other words, they make hypotheses not thinking it necessary to give a proof of them, as though they were clear to all (ταύτης ἦν γράφουσιν). Accordingly, mathematicians move up-bottom from hypotheses to a conclusion (510d2–3). By contrast, dialecticians move bottom-up by taking hypothesis as starting points (ἐπιβάσεις) in order to move upwards from them to a “non-hypothetical” first principle (μέχρι τοῦ ἀνυποθέτου ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ παντός ἀρχήν). Having grasped this non-hypothetical principle, the dialectician goes downwards to a conclusion (τελευτήν) (511b7–8).

According to Plato, both dianoetic and dialectic proceed to a conclusion from hypotheses. The difference consists rather in how mathematicians and dialecticians treat the hypotheses with which they begin their movement to a conclusion. Mathematicians treat hypotheses as axioms, as it were. By contrast, dialecticians treat hypotheses as starting points not already known or as assumptions. This means that, for dialecticians, the hypotheses at stake are still in need for rational vindication.

The *Republic* thus develops the idea of (H) as an upward movement that culminates in something “sufficient” or adequate. In particular, there are two important differences between dianoetic and dialectic based on different uses of the notion of hypothesis:

- (1) The mode of reasoning of the mathematician advances of hypotheses to conclusions; the contrary, the dialectical mode moves hypothesis to the first principle, which is not hypothetical.
- (2) The Mathematician admits hypotheses as evident and true. By contrast, the dialectician questions the hypotheses and tests if they are not contradictory with the first non- hypothetical principle.

Thus, the first principle is not hypothetical. It is the clearest knowledge we can achieve and the condition of possibility of all that we know. This is how this first principle is the epistemological foundation that must match the form of the good, which in turn constitutes the ontological foundation.

In terms of the model of (H) found in the *Phaedrus*, the dialectician of the *Republic* finds a suitable candidate *definiens*, which is “something sufficient”, and then, by a process of evaluation, reaches the non-hypothetical principle in order to test the candidate *definiens*. What is common concerning (H) in the *Phaedrus* and *Republic* is that dialecticians do not attempt to establish the truth of opening hypotheses by deducing such hypotheses from higher hypotheses, which play the role of axioms, about the nature of a concept. In this respect, the main point made by Plato concerning (H) is that it can provide an answer to the original question by means of hypotheses. Still, these hypotheses need to be tested.

However, as the above contrast suggests, there is an important difference between the *Republic* and *Phaedrus* regarding (H). In the *Republic*, the process of finding a candidate *definiens* and the confirmation of its correctness from the non-hypothetical principle is part of a single movement. By contrast, (H) is in the *Phaedrus* an interim step between (C), the process of agreeing concerning the  $\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha$

ἰδέα of the *definiendum*, and (D), the process of testing the candidate *definiens* advanced in (H) by dividing it “according to the natural joints” of the Forms. This point is also suggested by Scolnicov as follows:

In order that love as madness be beneficial, there must be, first, an idea or an *eidos* to which it can belong alongside other types or cases of madness. Because there is one name, ‘love’, we assume that all that is thus designated belongs together (cf. *Rep.* VII 596a). But this is a provisional move. In his first too, Socrates started from ‘collection’, i.e. from an attempt at subsuming the facts to be accounted for under one single idea. This is their *hypothesis*. But the very act of collecting already implies the distinctions which are to follow, and similarities are assumed which will have to be subsequently brought into the open, testing the ‘one name one idea’ rule of thumb. Love as ‘right-hand side’ mania, in contradistinction to Lysias’ pursuit of empirical self-interest is possible if there is a single idea with the required articulations. Scolnicov (1992:251).

In sum, the difference between dianoetic and dialectic, as Plato conceived the latter in the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, is not about the procedure; it is about the use of hypotheses. The mathematician, for example, takes hypotheses as evident truths while the dialectician takes hypotheses as assumptions, which are starting points for arguments. However, as I have shown above, there is a procedural difference between the *Republic* and *Phaedrus* concerning Hypothesis and (H), respectively. In the former dialogue, it is a two-step procedure whose outcome one should test

against a non-hypothetical principle. In the latter dialogue, it is an intermediate step between (C) and (D).

Thus, it is necessary to clarify the import of (D) in what follows in order to get a clearer picture of the general theory of the method of philosophical inquiry in the *Phaedrus*.

#### **4. How one is to assess the suitable candidate *definiens* for *F* according to the Form of *F*?**

In this final section, I shall argue that (D) is the procedure to assess the suitable candidate *definiens* for certain controversial predicate *F* according to the Form of *F*. At the end of Lysias' speech, Phaedrus is "lit up by the speech," which he calls it "extraordinary, both in language and other respects" (τί σοι φαίνεται, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὁ λόγος; οὐχ ὑπερφυῶς τά τε ἄλλα καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασιν εἰρησθαι;) (234c-d). Phaedrus declares that no other could "make a greater or better speech on the same theme" (εἰπεῖν ἕτερα τούτων μείζω καὶ πλείω περὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πράγματος;) (234e), for Lysias "didn't leave out any of the items that are naturally implied by the topic" and "everything was given a worthy treatment" (τῶν γὰρ ἐνόμων ἀξίως ῥηθῆναι

ἐν τῷ πράγματι οὐδὲν παραλέλοιπεν, ὥστε παρὰ τὰ ἐκείνῳ εἰρημένα μηδέν' ἄν ποτε δύνασθαι εἰπεῖν ἄλλα πλείω καὶ πλείονος ἄξια) (235b).

However, later in the dialogue (263d-266d), Socrates introduces a criterion of adequacy for a good speech in order to clarify his criticisms of Lysias' speech. Such criterion is "organic unity" He says: "But I do think you will agree to this, that every discourse must be organized, like a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole." (ἀλλὰ τόδε γε οἶμαί σε φάναι ἄν, δεῖν πάντα λόγον ὥσπερ ζῶον συνεστάναι σῶμά τι ἔχοντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ, ὥστε μήτε ἀκέφαλον εἶναι μήτε ἄπουν, ἀλλὰ μέσα τε ἔχειν καὶ ἄκρα, πρέποντα ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ γεγραμμένα) (264c).<sup>35</sup>

In addition, Socrates appeals to the notion of "logographic necessity" (ἀνάγκη λογογραφική), with which a speech ought to be composed (264b7). In this sense, there are "two forms or procedures", which contribute to the organic unity of a speech. First, one should begin, as Socrates did in his first speech, with a *definiens* of the controversial predicate under discussion (265d). Beginning with a *definiens* allows for "the speech to progress with clarity and internal consistency"

---

<sup>35</sup> Hackforth (1952:128).

(265d). Of course, there is no *definiens* without a μία ἰδέα. A suitable *definiens* is comprised of both a μία ἰδέα and a difference of the Form that corresponds to the *definiendum*. A suitable *definiens* purports adequately to define the predicate under discussion. I have argued that dialecticians make this step by means of (H), for it allows them to put forward a candidate *definiens*.

Second, one should proceed to test the correctness of a *definiens* by dividing it “according to the natural joints” of the Forms (κατ’ ἄρθρα ἢ πέφυκεν):

τὸ πάλιν κατ’ εἶδη<sup>36</sup> δύνασθαι διατέμνειν κατ’ ἄρθρα ἢ πέφυκεν<sup>37</sup>, καὶ μὴ ἐπιχειρεῖν καταγνύναι<sup>38</sup> μέρος μηδέν, κακοῦ μαγείρου τρόπῳ χρώμενον<sup>39</sup>: ἄλλ’ ὥσπερ ἄρτι τῷ λόγῳ τὸ μὲν ἄφρον τῆς διανοίας<sup>40</sup> ἐν τι κοινῇ εἶδος ἐλαβέτην<sup>41</sup>, ὥσπερ δὲ σώματος ἐξ ἐνός διπλᾶ καὶ ὁμώνυμα πέφυκε, σκαιά,

<sup>36</sup> M. Schanz accepts Madvig’ reading of καὶ τὰ εἶδη and Vollgraff even eliminates κατ’ εἶδη.

<sup>37</sup> The expression κατ’ ἄρθρα ἢ πέφυκεν also appears in *Cratylus* 386d y ss.; y en the *Stateman* 259d, 261a, 287c.

<sup>38</sup> In accordance with the expression μὴ ἐπιχειρεῖν καταγνύναι, Cicero, *De Fin.* II 9,26, claimed “hoc est non dividere, sed frangere”. Likewise Séneca, *Ep.* 89,2, claimed “philosophiam in partes, non in frusta dividam; dividi enim illam, non concidi utile est”.

<sup>39</sup> In the same way as in 265d4, another infinitival noun clause, this time with the article and coordinate main infinitives (δύνασθαι ... καὶ ... ἐπιχειρεῖν):τινα as subject of the infinitives and χρώμενον. Harvey Yunis proposes to translate it as follow: “that one is able in the opposite direction [i.e. opposite to collecting] to cut up [the general form] into its sub-classes at joints where it is natural [to cut it up], and tries not to shatter any part [of the general form] by performing in the manner of an incompetent butcher.” (2011: 198).

<sup>40</sup> The expression τὸ ἄφρον τῆς διανοίας is equivalent to the expression τῆν μανίαν.

<sup>41</sup> The verb ἐλαβέτην conveys “conceived of” *De Vries* (1969: 217). Hackforth translate it as “postulated” (1952: 133). I agree with Hackforth’s translation given that the subject of this verb is τῷ λόγῳ.

τὰ δὲ δεξιὰ κληθέντα, οὕτω καὶ τὸ τῆς παρανοίας ὡς ἐν ἐν ἡμῖν<sup>42</sup> πεφυκὸς εἶδος ἡγησαμένω τῷ λόγῳ, ὁ μὲν τὸ ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ τεμνόμενος μέρος, πάλιν τοῦτο τέμνων οὐκ ἐπανῆκεν<sup>43</sup> πρὶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐφευρῶν ὀνομαζόμενον σκαιόν<sup>44</sup> τινα ἔρωτα ἐλοιδόρησεν μάλ' ἐν δίκῃ, ὁ δ' εἰς τὰ ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μανίας ἀγαγὼν ἡμᾶς, ὁμώνυμον μὲν ἐκείνω, θεῖον<sup>45</sup> δ' αὖ τινα ἔρωτα ἐφευρῶν καὶ προτεινόμενος ἐπήνεσεν ὡς μεγίστων αἴτιον ἡμῖν ἀγαθῶν. (*Phdr.*, 265e-266b).

That of dividing things again by classes, where the natural joints are, and not trying to break any part, after the manner of a bad carver. As our two discourses just now assumed one common principle, unreason, and then, just as the body, which is one, is naturally divisible into two, right and left, with parts called by the same names, so our two discourses conceived of madness as naturally one principle within us, and one discourse, cutting off the left-hand part, continued to divide this until it found among its parts a sort of left-handed love, which it very justly reviled, but the other discourse, leading us to the right-hand part of madness, found a love having the same name as the first, but divine, which it

---

<sup>42</sup> Following De Vries (1969), ἐν ἡμῖν is equivalent to ἐν ἀνθρώποις.

<sup>43</sup> Following L.S.J. II 2, ἐπανῆκεν is the intransitive of ἐπανήμι.

<sup>44</sup> Here the term σκαιόν has a metaphorical sense (L.S.J. III 2).

<sup>45</sup> Here the term θεῖον is employed as in 265b2.

held up to view and praised as the author of our greatest blessings. (*Phdr.* 265e-266b).

This passage, which is the core textual source for interpreting (D), entails an interpretative issue concerning the number of cuts: are cuts according to the natural joints necessarily dichotomous? Plato used the verbs διατέμνειν and τέμνειν to refer to the action of cutting, separating, dividing, some concepts of others. But what is it to divide? How to divide?

Hermias uses the expression "τέμνοντα καί διαίροῦντα" (235, 10) to refer to the modus operandi of the διαίσεις of the *Phaedrus*. If we give primacy to the verb τέμνειν, the cuts can be in two, three or more parts. But if the verb διατέμνειν prevails, the cuts must be in two parts or at least try to be in two. According to De Vries, the verb διατέμνειν is the most appropriate to characterize the operation (cf. 1969: 216). However, the term πάλιν in 266a4 suggests that, after separating the concept of mania into two parts, each of them must be separated again. The question is whether it re-separates into two further parts. Here the adverb πάλιν generates doubts as to whether all methodical divisions are dichotomous. How many divisions must be made for the method to come to an end?

There are three main types of answer to this question.<sup>46</sup> I shall name and formulate them as follows:

**Dichotomous view:** dialecticians employing (D) should perform dichotomous cuts.

**Polytomous view:** dialecticians employing (D) should perform as many cuts as required by the nature of the Form at stake.

**Definitional view:** dialecticians employing (D) should perform as many cuts as required by the definitional process.

Let me elaborate on each one of these types of views of the issue concerning the number of cuts in (D).

A notable proponent of the Dichotomous view is Hackforth. He defended the view that dialecticians employing (D) should perform successive dichotomous divisions. He based this view on a strict reading of *Phdr.* 261e1 – 266b2. According to Hackforth, in this passage, Plato describes (D) as a process consisting of successive dichotomous divisions. Hackforth states that the division procedure operates as follows:

A writer with more concern for exact statement than Plato had, would have made

---

<sup>46</sup> See Hackforth (1952: 133); Nuño (1962: 93-94), Ackrill (1953: 279; 1997: 93-109); Philip (1966: 345-6), Moravcsik (1973: 324-348) and White (1993: 219-20).

Socrates say something to the following effect: 'I can illustrate these two procedures, Collection and Division, by reference to my two speeches; if you think of them together, you will agree that I was in fact, though not explicitly, operating with a generic concept, μανία, under which I contrived to subsume two sorts of ἔρωϛ; though I grant you that my actual procedure was very informal, and in particular that I tended to leap from genus to *infima species*, without any clear indication of intermediate species.' (1952: 133).

Hence, Hackforth distinguishes between formal and informal cuts in order to avoid the obvious criticism of the possibility of an indeterminate number of species. Dialecticians can perform cuts in an informal way in order to accomplish such task. For example, in his first argument, Socrates begins by gathering love in the mania genus, which has many species, which leads to show that love is a kind of mania. Yet Socrates does not reach this by successive dichotomies, but by an informal discrimination from an indefinite number of other species. Ackrill criticized Hackforth's reading of 265e-266b by pointing out that the inconsistency and difficulty of this reading lies in assuming a dichotomous division procedure. It does not follow from the analogy offered in that paragraph that the analysis done by means of (D) is dichotomous. In addition, the first division of mania is made in two parts, one left and

one right, just as we have two hands with these characteristics. Yet the subsequent division does not have to be dichotomous (see Ackrill (1953: 279)).

White has defended the Polytomous view. He summarized his argument for this view as follows:

Nothing is said here about dividing dichotomously- rather, divisions proceed according to the thing's nature, i.e. an arrangement by classes (or Forms) governed by a unifying principle. Thus, if a thing has a complex nature, then the appropriate divisions will isolate and identify all constitutive Forms of that nature, arraying them side by side as it were, with no apparent generic hierarchy established. From this standpoint, any dichotomy depends on whether or not the thing's natural joints are dichotomously arranged; if they are not, then according to Socrates' current theory dichotomous division would distort the thing's nature. Such division would dismember the nature of the thing, just as a bad carver would mangle something by slicing it down the middle rather than at the joints (1993: 220).

White asserts that divisions proceed according to the nature of things. If a thing has a composite nature, then the appropriate divisions will be those that identify all the forms that compose it. For if we divide each form necessarily into two others, we run the risk of mutilating in half whenever this cut does not obey its juncture, thus distorting the nature of the forms. White concludes that

dichotomous divisions depend on whether the natural junctions of things are dichotomously arranged. Therefore, for White, the dissolution of the dichotomy problem lies on a different reading of the expression "divide according to the natural junctions of forms" (265e1-2) concerning (D).

Finally, according to Ackrill (1997), there are abundant Platonic passages that assert that divisions are not necessarily dichotomous, such as *Philebus* 16d, various passages of the *Phaedrus* (265e, 270c) and *Statesman* 287c. He wrote:

In the *Philebus* passage already quoted, Plato recommends looking for a division into two, 'if the case admits of there being two, otherwise for three or some other number' (16d). None of the subsequent examples is dichotomous; nor does the later discussion of types of pleasure and knowledge seek dichotomous kind-ladders. The *Phaedrus* account stresses the crucial importance of following the natural articulation of the item under examination (265e); and though the illustrative description of the division of madness refers to left-hand and right-hand lines of division, the actual practice followed was not dichotomous (e.g. 238a-c; 244-5). Later on (270c) Socrates says that the way to think about the nature of anything is to ask whether it is simple or multiform, and if it is multiform, to enumerate the forms. The principle is then applied to types of speech and types of soul, in which discussion there is no suggestion of dichotomous division. The Stranger's recommendation of division in the *Statesman* makes no reference to dichotomy, and it is immediately followed by an enquire into kinds of productive skill which is explicitly non-dichotomous. 'It is

difficult to cut them into two... So since we cannot bisect, let us divide them as we should carve a sacrificial victim into limbs. For we ought always to cut into the number as near as possible to two' (287c). The metaphor of the natural carving of a joint is that of the *Phaedrus*; the principle of minimizing the cuts is that of the *Philebus* (1997: 102-3).

For Ackrill, Plato recommends that anyone using (D) make two or more cuts. Yet Ackrill claim that Plato's suggestion is to reduce the cuts to the smallest possible number, in order that the divisions correspond to the natural or real structure of the Form to be defined. For Ackrill, (D) does not seek to know the structure of a complete genera, but to reach the definition of a particular species. For this goal, it is necessary to assign the relevant subgenera to the higher genus, leaving aside irrelevant subgenera.

Which is my position concerning the above debate? I take as starting point from my view about the cuts in (D) the essential point Plato conveyed in *Phdr.*265e-266b through the image of the butcher: dialecticians should perform (D) at the natural joints of a Form. Otherwise, it is like hacking off bits like a bad butcher. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, this image conveys an *asymmetry* between predicates and Forms: Forms make predicates meaningful but definitions cannot make Forms be. Therefore, I reject the Definitional view.

Now, my view is an attempt to reconcile the Dichotomous view and the Polytomous view. According to *Phdr.* 265e-266b, dialecticians divide the *μία ιδέα* according to the Form into two parts: a sinister part (*σκαίος*) and a proper part (*δεξιά*). Plato's use of the terms *σκαίος* and *δεξιά* is evocative of opposition. For example, since madness is the *μία ιδέα* of love, love is a Form of madness (*μανίαν ...tina* 265a8). Then, in order to know what kind of madness love is, dialecticians should cut madness itself at its natural joints. The outcome of this cut gives us the proper positive part of love or "divine madness", and, by opposition, its *sinister* negative part or "human madness". Yet the Form of divine madness divides into four parts, namely, prophetic, inspirational, poetic and erotic. Therefore, love is erotic (divine) madness (*ἐρωτική μανία* 265b2).

It becomes clear that 265a8-265b2 lends plausibility to the Polytomous view and that 265e-266b lends plausibility to the Dichotomous view. In order to avoid contradiction, I contend that every division is dichotomous in a trivial *logical* sense and it could be polytomous depending on the nature of the Form in question.<sup>47</sup> In other words, I agree with Ackrill that there is good evidence supporting that

---

<sup>47</sup> By "trivial", I mean that it is a corollary of any cut that the proper part of the definition of a controversial predicate *F* is identical with itself and thus none of the objects that fall under *F* also fall under not-*F*.

division, metaphysically speaking, is not necessarily dichotomous. Yet, considering 265e-266b, every division is dichotomous in a logical sense. In the sequel, I shall present my case for this interpretation.

How to interpret philosophically Plato's image of the butcher and Plato's use of the terms σκαίος and δεξιὰ in (265e)? I interpret these elements as meaning that the dialectician must divide methodically, that is, with certain rational principle in mind. Accordingly, if a dialectician "cuts" correctly, he will find the "sinister part" of a predicate *F*, which is its contradictory, namely, not *F*, and "the proper part" of a predicate *F*, which is its content. Let me elaborate on this point.

One should distinguish between two kinds of opposites. The first kind is contrary opposites, for example, "the rose is red" and "the rose is green". The second kind is contradictory opposites, for example, "the rose is red" and "the rose is not red."<sup>48</sup>

A pair of contrary opposites are mutually inconsistent but not necessarily exhaustive. Hence, they may be simultaneously false but they cannot be simultaneously true. For example, it is not true that all apples are red or green. Some

---

<sup>48</sup> See Horn (1989).

apples are yellow. However, no apple can be red *and* green in respect of the same part of it and at the same time.

By contrast, a pair of contradictory opposites are mutually inconsistent and necessarily exhaustive. Hence, they cannot be simultaneously true nor simultaneously false; one must be true and the other must be false. For example, an apple is either red or not red in respect of the same part of it, in relation to the same thing and at the same time.

Hence, the difference between contrary and contradictory opposites is that a pair of contrary opposites are exclusive, but need not be exhaustive while a pair of contradictory opposites are exclusive and exhaustive.

As I mentioned, I interpret the “sinister part” of a predicate *F* and the “proper part” of a predicate *F* as contradictory opposites. My point is that a positive “proper” part of a predicate, its content, always stands correlative to a negative “sinister” part. In other words, to define a predicate in some way or other is to contradistinguish it from that to which that definition does not apply. It makes no sense to attribute a feature to something if this feature does not “cut”, divide, or distinguish what it involves from what it does not involve.

Now, if the “proper part” and the “sinister part” of a predicate  $F$  are contradictory opposites, that is, the “proper part” involves what  $F$  is and its “sinister part” involves what  $F$  is not, then the principle behind (D) is the principle of non-contradiction (PNC). This principle says that contradictory predicates cannot belong to the same object at the same time and in the same respect. In other words, contradictory opposites are mutually inconsistent.

Accordingly, (PNC) is the principle granting correct cuts or cuts according to the “natural joints”. The reason this seems to be so is that if one cuts like an inexperienced butcher, one might include in the definition of  $F$  features that are not part of the content of  $F$ . In other words, one might conflate what  $F$  is with what  $F$  is not. This confusion is in a sense “sinister” or negative for cognition and action. Entertaining in the meaning of  $F$  what  $F$  is not derives a contradiction. Therefore, in a *logical* sense, every cut is dichotomous.

Let me clarify the above point by way of an example. Consider a proponent and an opponent inquiring into the definition of ‘Whale’. They both agree that if  $x$  is a whale, then  $x$  is a marine animal. Then, the proponent proposes the following “cut” to the candidate *definiens*: if  $x$  is a whale, then  $x$  is a fish. The opponent rejects this “cut” as inadequate; he claims that although all whales are marine animals,

whales are not fishes but mammals: whales are warm blooded while fish are cold-blooded. Whales use their blowholes to breathe air with lungs while fish get oxygen directly from the water through their gills. Whales have follicles and hair on their smooth skin while fish have scales. Whales milk their babies while fish cannot. As this example illustrates, a bad dialectician is like a bad butcher: they both make wrong cuts by including in the definition of *F* features that are not part of the content of *F*.

The view that every cut is dichotomous in a logical sense has notable advantages over the Dichotomous view, which says that every cut is dichotomous in a metaphysical sense. First, it does not contradict the textual evidence showing polytomous cuts, as Ackrill remarked. Second, the Dichotomous view entails the existence of negative Forms. This is so because if every cut is dichotomous and it reflects the nature of the Form in question, it follows that every Form is a complex object having a positive part and a negative part and that those parts are ontologically substantial. A moment of reflexion shows that these consequences entail serious problems. On the one hand, since one is ontologically committed to negative Forms, one is committed to assign truth-values to sentences containing negative predicates such as "There are non-dogs". On the other hand, the

endorsement of negative Forms generates a multiplication of entities without necessity.

Finally, having explained the logical sense of dichotomous divisions, let me consider the sense in which it is possible to admit polytomous cuts by returning to a previous example. The Form of divine madness divides into four parts, namely, prophetic, inspirational, poetic and erotic. Thereofe, this is a clear case of a polytomous cut.<sup>49</sup> The simple explanation for these cuts is that there are cases of each kind of madness that would constitute counterexamples to other candidate definitions. For example, if one were to cut divine madness into three kinds, say, prophetic, inspirational and erotic, an interlocutor could offer a case of poetic madness and show that the use of (D) has been inadequate. Therefore, cuts can be polytomous in a metaphysical sense, namely, according to the nature of the Form at stake.

One might object that the example of madness can be interpreted as a counterexample to the claim that every cut is dichotomous in a logical sense, for there is no obvious "logical cut" in such example. However, this objection falls short

---

<sup>49</sup> And, as Ackrill remarked, this is not an exceptional case for Plato, see *Philebus* 16d and *Statesman* 287c.

because there is a trivial dichotomous cut in such example: one can cut divine madness into erotic divine madness and non-erotic divine madness. Indeed, love is *neither* prophecy, inspiration *nor* poetry. In this sense, it is clear that the proper part of love concerning divine madness is erotic in *opposition* to everything that is divine madness but is not erotic. Hence, Socrates defines love this way.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have defended a “continuous” interpretation of Plato’s view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry, namely, that (CI) Plato introduced a unified view of dialectic in the *Phaedrus*. As a result, by arguing in favour of (CI), I have attempted to undermine the wide spread interpretation that there is a huge gap between Plato’s earlier and later dialogues concerning his understanding of dialectic, which I have called the “discontinuous interpretation” (DI).

In chapter 1, I argued that the so-called three methods, (E), (H) and (C&D), are three different procedures of one general *διαλεκτική τέχνη*. I gave two arguments in favour of this claim. The first argument relies on the distinction between *use* and *mention* and shows that from the fact that Plato did not *mention* (E), (H) and (C&D) in the late dialogues and *vice versa*, it does *not* follow that he did not *use* them. The second one, which I consider the stronger, takes as a starting point the assumption that a method of philosophical inquiry for Plato should help us move from ignorance to knowledge. Yet neither (D) nor (E), which I used for comparison purposes, are methods—at least in this sense. While (D) is not a procedure for moving

from ignorance to knowledge, (D) does remain a procedure in the sense of constituting a systematic way of doing something, namely, of “cutting” according to reality. In other words, (D) is a method only in the sense of being an ordered manner in which to articulate an aspect of dialectical method. Therefore, it is at least possible to conceive (E), (H) and (C&D) as procedures of a general method of philosophical inquiry. As such, it is possible to conceive them as *technical procedures* of the dialectical method.

In chapter 2, I argued that Plato’s *διαλεκτική τέχνη* is both a method of communication and a method of discovering truth. After introducing the structure and themes from the *Phaedrus*, as well as my view on the problem of its unity, I discussed the textual evidence showing the core importance of Plato’s view of dialectic as a *τέχνη* that combines persuasion and truth. As such, dialectic is the method that can help us move from puzzlement to inquiry and from inquiry to knowledge.

In chapter 3 and 4, I argued that the *Phaedrus* (261a-266b) contains Plato’s unified view of *διαλεκτική τέχνη* (conceived as an amalgam of (E), (H) and (C&D), and a method of communication and a method of discovering truth).

In Chapter 3, I argued that Plato's *Phaedrus* provides an account of the method of philosophical inquiry as a *τέχνη* for discovering the correct definition of a controversial predicate *F*. Starting from Plato's distinction between controversial and uncontroversial predicates in *Phaedr.* 263a1, I have suggested that (E) helps one to move from puzzlement to inquiry. In addition, by endorsing (IA), I have showed that Plato conceived the method of philosophical inquiry as the method of finding correct definitions of controversial predicates. This conception of the method poses several problems regarding the possibility of its correctness. I have proposed to resolve them by making the following two plausible assumptions:

- (II) For every controversial predicate *F* there is definition *D* such that *D* correctly defines *F*.
- (III) For every definition *D* of a predicate *F*, *D* is correct if and only if *D* corresponds to the Form of *F* (i.e. *D* says what it is *F*).

Since the goal of the method of philosophical inquiry is to reach a correct definition of a controversial predicate, at least three *procedural* questions concerning the method arise at this point. Let *F* be a controversial predicate under dispute. One should ask:

- (i) How one is to find the category to which *F* belongs?

- (ii) How one is to find a suitable candidate *definiens* for *F*?
- (iii) How one is to assess the suitable candidate *definiens* for *F* according to the Form of *F*?

Accordingly, in Chapter 4, I showed that the answers to (i), (ii) and (iii) are (C), (H) and (D) respectively. In other words, I showed how the technical procedures are articulated. In particular, I have argued that conceiving Hypothesis as an intermediate step gives robustness to the method and makes the transition to (D) smoother and, after discussing three influential interpretations of (D), I came to the conclusion that there are two types of cuts regarding (D): logical cuts, which are necessarily dichotomous, and metaphysical cuts, which can be polytomous.

Finally, I have defended the thesis that the *Phaedrus* articulates a unified view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry. Three reasons seem to support this assertion. Firstly, the *Phaedrus* integrates the key element involved in the *elenchus* of the early dialogues, namely that if there is no controversy in respect to a topic, there is no point in inquiring about it. Secondly, the *Phaedrus* highlights the importance of hypothetical reasoning involved in (H). Thirdly, the *Phaedrus* introduces new elements such as division and develops further collection, which are also present in the *Sophist*, *Statesman* and *Philebus*.

In sum, I came to the following picture of the unified account of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry: in a first movement, a proponent and an opponent disagree concerning a proposition, say, "Socrates loves Xanthippe". By means of (E), they realize that they have inconsistent beliefs about what knowledge is and, accordingly, they face puzzlement about such controversial predicate. Then, in a second movement, they decide to inquiry about *Love*. They begin such inquiry by using (C) in order to agree upon the  $\mu\acute{\iota}\alpha$  ἰδέα of *Love*. Then, they use (H) to put forward a candidate *definiens*. Finally, they test this *definiens* by means of (D) and, if it is the case, they shall repeat the process until they find the correct definition of *Love*.

I would like to end by remarking that in arguing for a unified view of Plato's view of dialectic as the method of philosophical inquiry in the *Phaedrus*, I have not attempted to explore all the implications and objections to this interpretation. To do so would constitute a much more intricate project, which I hope to undertake in a future research project. Here I hope only to have taken a step forward in the task of clarifying Plato's view of dialectic and to have offered some reasons to believe that (CI), or perhaps another continuous interpretation of Plato's account of dialectic, can shed light on the distinctive character of Plato's metaphilosophy.

## Bibliography

### 1. Bibliography about Texts, Commentaries and Translations

Burnet, J., 1901, *Platonis Opera*, Oxford.

de Vries, G.J., 1969, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato*. Amsterdam.

Hackforth, R., 1952, *Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge.

Hermias: in P. Couvreur, 1901, *Hermiae Alexandrini in Platonis Phaedrum scholia*. Paris.

Homer, 1919, *The Odyssey with an English Translation by A.T. Murray*, in two volumes. Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press.

Liddell, H.G.; Scott, R., 1948, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford.

Plato, 1966, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Translated by Harold North Fowler, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Yunis, H., 2011, *Plato, Phaedrus*. Cambridge.

## 2. Bibliography about other literature cited

Ackrill, J. L., 1953, "Review "Plato's Phaedrus" by R. Hackforth", *Mind* 62: 277-79.

Ackrill, J.L., 1997, "In Defence of Platonic Division", *Essays on Plato and Aristotle*, ed. J. L. Ackrill, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 93–109.

Annas, J. & Rowe, C. (eds.), 2002, *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Benson, H., 1990, "The priority of definition and the Socratic *elenchus*", in *OSAPh*, VIII, 19-65.

Benson, H., 2002, "Problems with Socratic method", in Scott. G., ed., *Does Socrates have a method?* University Park. Pp.101-113.

Benson, H., 2015, *Clitophon's Challenge: Dialectic in Plato's Meno, Phaedo, and Republic*, Oxford University Press.

Beverlius, J. (1987) "Does Socrates commit the Socratic fallacy", in "APhQ", XXIV, 211-23.

Blondell, R., 2002, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brandwood, L., 1958, 'The Dating of Plato's Works by the Stylistic Method: A Critical and Historical Survey'. University of London: unpublished Ph.D. dissertation.

Brandwood, L., 1990, *The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brandwood, L., 1992, 'Stylometry and Chronology', In Kraut (1992: 90-120), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Campbell, L., 1867, *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Castelnérac, B., & Mathieu M., (2009) 'Arguing for Inconsistency: Dialectical Games in the Academy' In *Acts of Knowledge: History, Philosophy and Logic*, G. Primiero & S. Rahman (éd.). London: College Publications, p. 37-76.

Cornford, F.M., 1960, *Plato's theory of knowledge*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

Dancy, R. M., 2004, *Plato's Introduction of Forms*. Cambridge University Press.

*Encyclopedia of Mathematics*. "Mersenne number". URL:  
[http://www.encyclopediaofmath.org/index.php?title=Mersenne\\_number&oldid=36008](http://www.encyclopediaofmath.org/index.php?title=Mersenne_number&oldid=36008)

Ferrari, G. R. F., 1987, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato's Phaedrus*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Fine, G., 1992, "Inquiry in the Meno" In Kraut (1992: 200-226).

Frede, M., 1992, "Plato's Arguments and the Dialogue Form," in Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Supplementary Volume 1992, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 201–220.

Fronterotta, F., 2011, "Υπόθεσις ε διαλέγεσθαι. Metodo ipotetico e metodo dialettico in Platone", in *Argument from Hypothesis*. Edited by Angela Longo. Bibliopolis, pp. 43-74.

Gadamer, H. G., 1993, *Hermeneutik II Wahrheit und Methode*. J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen.

Geach, P., 1966, "Plato's Euthyphro: an analysis and commentary", in *Monist*, L, 369-82.

Griswold, C. L., Jr., 1986, *Self-knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus*. New Haven.

Griswold, C., (ed.), 1988, *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings*, London: Routledge.

Gulley, Norman, 1962, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*. London: Methuen  
New York : Barnes & Noble.

Guthrie, W.K.C., 1975, *Plato the Man and His Dialogues: Earlier Period. A History of Greek Philosophy IV*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heath, M., 1989, 'The Unity of Plato's *Phaedrus*', OSAP 7, 151 – 73.

Hippocrates, 1868, *The Genuine Works of Hippocrates*. Charles Darwin Adams.  
New York:Dover.

Horn, L., 1989, *A Natural History of Negation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Irwin, T. H., 1977, *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Irwin, T. H., 1988, *Aristotle's First Principles*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Jaeger, W., 1947, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, Oxford University Press.

Kahn, C., 1981, "Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?", *Classical Quarterly* 31:2, 305-320.

Kahn, C., 1988, "On the Relative Date of the Gorgias and the Protagoras", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 6, 69-102.

Kahn, C., 1996, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kahn, C., 2003, "On Platonic Chronology," in Julia Annas and Christopher Rowe (eds.), *New Perspectives on Plato: Modern and Ancient*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, chapter 4.

Kahn, C., 2006, "Plato on Recollection," in *A Companion to Plato* edited by Hugh H. Benson. Blackwell Publishing, p.119-132.

Klagge, J., and Smith, N., (eds.), 1992, *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogue*, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Supplementary Volume 1992, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kraut, R., ed. 1992, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kube, J, 1969, *TEXNH und ARETH. Sophistisches und Platonisches Tugendwissen*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co.

Ledger, G., 1989, *Re-Counting Plato: A Computer Analysis of Plato's Style*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marion, M., 2013, ‘Republic and the *Elenchus*’ In *Dialogues on Plato's Politeia (Republic)*. Selected Papers from the Ninth Symposium Platonicum, L. Brisson & N. Notomi (éd.). Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, p. 283-287.

Moravcsik, J.M.E, 1973, ‘Plato's Method of Division’, In *Patterns in Plato's Thought*, ed. J.M.E. Moravcsik. Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 158-80.

Nails, P., 1992, ‘Platonic Chronology Reconsidered’ In *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 3: 314–27.

Nails, D., 1995, *Agora, Academy, and the Conduct of Philosophy*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Nails, D., 1998, ‘The Early Middle Late Consensus: How Deep? How Broad?’ In *Plato Critical Assessments*, Edited by Nicholas D. Smith, Volume I, Routledge, London and New York.

Nightingale, A., 1993, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construction of Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nuño Montes, J. A., 1962, *A Dialéctica Platónica*. Universidad Central de Venezuela.

Philip, J., 1966, "Platonic Diairesis" in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 97, pp. 335-358.

Pokorny, J., 1994, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*. 3rd edition  
Tübingen und Basel: Francke Verlag.

Press, G. (ed.), 2000, *Who Speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity*,  
Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Prior, W.J., 1998, "Plato and the 'Socratic fallacy'", in *Phronesis*, XLIII, 97-113.

Ritter, C. (1888) *Untersuchungen über Platon: Die Echtheit und Chronologie der Platonischen Schriften*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Robinson, R., 1953, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford  
University Press.

Roochnik, D., 1996, *Of Art and Wisdom*, University Park: The Pennsylvania  
State Press.

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

Rowe, C.J., 2007, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ryle, G., 1966, *Plato's Progress*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Santa Cruz, M. I., 1990, "División y Dialéctica en el *Fedro*", In *Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía* XVI.2, pp. 149-64.

Santa Cruz, M. I., 2003, "Sobre el empleo de pístis y empeiría en Platón", In *Apuntes Filosóficos*, pp. 39-47.

Sayre, K., 1995, *Plato's Literary Garden*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Scolnicov, S., 1992, "Love and the Method of Hypothesis" In *Understanding the Phaedrus: Proceedings of the II Symposium Platonicum*, Edited by Livio Rossetti, Academia Verlag.

Scott, D., 1995, *Recollection and experience: Plato's theory of learning and its successors*. Cambridge.

Thesleff, H., 1982, *Studies in Platonic Chronology*, Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum 70, Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica.

Vlastos, G., 1991, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vlastos, G., 1990, *Is the 'Socratic fallacy' Socratic?*, in "AncPhil", X, 1-16.

Vlastos, G., 1994, *Socratic Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Young, C. M., 1994, "Plato and Computer Dating," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 12: 227–250.

Werner, D., 2007, "Plato's Phaedrus and the Problem of Unity" in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Volume xxxii (Summer 2007). Edited by David Sedley. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

White, N. P., 1976, *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

White, N. P., 1992, "Plato's Metaphysical Epistemology", R. Kraut (ed.), 277–310.

White, D.A., 1993, *Rhetoric and Reality in Plato's Phaedrus*. New York, State University of New York Press.

Yunis, H., 2005, "Eros in Plato's *Phaedrus* and the shape of Greek rhetoric", *Arion* 13: 101-25.

Yunis, H., 2009, "Dialectic and the purpose of rhetoric in Plato's *Phaedrus*",  
*Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 24: 229-48.