

IX. Plato and Mass Words

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At *Charmides* 169E, Critias has this to say about knowledge: "When someone has knowledge (which knows) itself, he will be (in a condition of) knowing himself."¹ If we look at the exact wording of this and earlier parallel formulations,² we learn two things: first, there are two terms for knowledge, *γινώσκειν* and *ἐπίστασθαι* with their derivatives, used interchangeably by both Socrates and Critias. For the purposes of this paper, we shall pay no attention to this fluctuation of terms. Second, and more important to us: knowledge of *itself*, i.e., knowledge of knowledge, is considered identical with knowledge of *oneself*, i.e. a person's knowing himself. Here is the final presentation of this view, concluding a series of arguments deriving their validity from it (169D9 ff.). Critias: "For if a person has knowledge which knows itself, he would himself be such as is the thing which he has. For instance, if someone has speed, he is bound to be speedy; if he has looks, he is bound to be good-looking; if he has knowledge, he is bound to be knowing; and thus, if he has knowledge (which knows) itself, he will be (in a condition of) knowing himself." To this, Socrates' answer is: "I do not doubt this, that if someone has that which knows itself, he will know himself."³

Before we examine this startling conversion further, it should be noted that Socrates feels vaguely unhappy about the notion of a knowledge knowing itself. To illustrate the problematic character of a knowledge of knowledge, Socrates cites a long list of items, and asks whether they can be related to themselves as exercising their specific *δύναμις* upon themselves. In this list, 167C4–169A1, we find two types of data, here listed in two parallel columns.

¹ ὅταν δὲ δὴ γινώσιν αὐτὴν αὐτῆς τις ἔχῃ, γινώσκων που αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν τότε ἔσται.

² Specifically "to know oneself" (τὸ γινώσκειν ἑαυτὸν 164D4 and τὸ γινώσκειν αὐτὸν ἑαυτὸν 165B4), "knowledge of oneself" (ἐπιστήμη . . . ἑαυτοῦ 165E1), and "knowledge of itself" (ἐπιστήμη . . . αὐτῇ ἑαυτῆς 166C2–3; cf. also 169E1).

³ οὐ τοῦτο . . . ἀμφισβητῶ, ὥς οὐχ ὅταν τὸ αὐτὸ γινώσκόν τις ἔχῃ, αὐτὸς αὐτὸν γνώσεται. . . .

I

ὄψις
 ἀκοή
 αἰσθήσεις
 ἐπιθυμία
 βούλησις
 ἔρως
 φόβος
 δόξα
 κίνησις
 θερμότης

II

μείζον
 διπλάσιον
 πλέον
 βαρύτερον
 πρεσβύτερον

In column II, we have what Plato calls *μεγέθη* and *πλήθη*; they are comparative terms, signifying transitive asymmetrical relations, such as “more” and “double,” and Plato makes it quite clear that they cannot have *τὴν ἐαυτῶν δύναμιν πρὸς ἐαυτά*. Nothing can be the double of itself. But as regards the data of column I, which Plato seems to regard as in some sense parallel to the data of column II,⁴ the question is left undecided. Here we find, not comparative or quantitative terms, but abstractions or, as we shall later call them, nexus-substantives, derived from verbs (with one exception: *θερμότης*). In each case, the relatum in the reflexive relation envisaged is an object of action. Socrates apparently does not wish to decide whether an *ἀκοή ἀκοῆς* or an *ὄψις ὄψεως* is possible or not (168E9–11). As he puts it, some people might credit these things, others might not. Even in his final summation of the several stages of the dialogue (175B4 ff.) Socrates hesitates to commit himself: “We agreed on the existence of a knowledge of knowledge, though the *λόγος* would not let us and denied its existence. . . .”⁵ Here again the upshot seems to be that Socrates is in a quandary: further elenctic consideration showed the difficulties inherent in the notion of a knowledge of knowledge, and yet Socrates does not reject the possibility of such a relation, as he had unequivocally rejected the notion of a double of double.⁶

⁴ Cf. for this *Phaedo* 96B ff. (the *διὰ τί* alternatives), 104E and 105C, where similarly incongruous relations are paralleled, apparently because of the identity of grammatical construction.

⁵ καὶ γὰρ ἐπιστήμην ἐπιστήμης εἶναι συνεχωρήσαμεν, οὐκ ἑώντος τοῦ λόγου οὐδὲ φάσκοντος εἶναι.

⁶ There are other non-liquets in this dialogue. For example, in the discussion and elaboration of the concept of a knowledge of knowledge, Socrates first proposes *ἄ οἶδεν*

Recent critics have not overlooked these difficulties. Tuckey, the latest and most thorough commentator of the dialogue, gives a good résumé of their views.⁷ They are, as is to be expected, chiefly concerned with the conversion listed at the beginning of this paper. Here Tuckey is inclined to agree with Pohlenz, who argued that the identification of *ἐπιστήμη αὐτοῦ* and *ἐπιστήμη αὐτῆς* is due to Critias, and that Plato doubts its correctness.⁸ Tuckey, like Pohlenz, thinks that, whatever the terms of the argument of Critias, and perhaps even of Socrates, Plato at least was fully aware of the logical error involved in the conversion. This, however, is quite wrong. Plato questions the usefulness and the feasibility of *ἐπιστήμη αὐτῆς*, and he wonders whether such a thing is possible, but he does not question the convertibility of the two expressions. Socrates' *τὸ αὐτὸ γιγνώσκον* (169E6), which Tuckey justly characterizes as a Thucydidean phrase, is by no means, as averred by Pohlenz, purposely vague. It is merely more general than the expression used by Critias, containing it as genus does species, and hence accrediting its reality. The truth is that for Socrates as well as for Critias — and that can only mean: for Plato — *γνώσις αὐτῆς* and *γνώσις αὐτοῦ* are convertible terms.

In an appendix (*App.* I), Tuckey tries to resolve the difficulty along a different line of approach. The two expressions are, after all, identical for Plato, he feels, because by knowledge Plato ultimately means virtue, and in the virtuous man, i.e., Socrates, the two become merged. This may be called the existential or embodiment solution of the logical difficulty: Socrates had knowledge of (his own non-) knowledge, and he knew himself as ignorant; he also had knowledge of knowledge, i.e., he knew the logical method whereby to control other people's knowledge irrespective of the subject involved. These, I take it, are the syntheses advanced by Pohlenz and Tuckey; and Stenzel, in another context, provides a similar existential escape.⁹ All this is no doubt correct in its way, but it is also irrelevant. For the dialogue is concerned with matters of logic and

as the object of *εἰδέναι*: 167A7. Later he tries to show that *οἶτι οἶδεν* might be a better formulation: 167B2 and 170D1-3. And yet, later he again uses *ᾶ*: 172C9. Thus, Plato never seems to decide for himself whether "knowledge of knowledge" is "knowledge of what one knows" or "knowledge that one knows"; actually, of course, *οἶτι* itself may mean either "what" or "that," a circumstance apparently not noted by the commentators. Again, the formulation *εἰδέναι ᾧ τε οἶδεν καὶ ᾧ μὴ οἶδεν* leaves the subject of *οἶδεν* unidentified; is it the knower, or the act of knowing? Example: 167A6-7, B2. The same query applies to *εἰδέναι οἶτι οἶδεν*: 170D1-3.

⁷ T. G. Tuckey, *Plato's Charmides* (Cambridge 1951) 33 ff.

⁸ M. Pohlenz, *Aus Platos Werdezeit* (Berlin 1913) 53.

⁹ *RE* 13.1 (1926) 1002, s.v. "Logik".

definition, not with the good life or matters of faith. What is more, by the policy of merging Socrates and knowledge into one living irrational whole, no light is shed on the long series of reflexive relations here collected in column I.

The suggestion to be advanced here is as follows: the convertibility of *γνώσις ἐαυτοῦ* and *γνώσις ἐαυτῆς* shows that *γνώσις*, or better, as Socrates puts it, *τὸ γιγνώσκον*, is not only the abstractly conceived activity of knowing, but the totality of all knowing, or rather the totality of all knowers-having-knowledge. This totality, directing its specific activity at itself as its affective object, might well be called a *γνώσις ἐαυτῆς*. In the terms of modern logic and grammar, where *γνώσις* would function exclusively as an abstraction, certain difficulties would follow from the contemplation of such a reflexive relationship; and these difficulties seem to be vaguely suspected if not realized in the sequel of the dialogue. But in the present passage of the *Charmides*, Plato does not, whatever the reason, distinguish sharply between the sum total of all conceivable knowers-having-knowledge ("collective"), and the act of all knowers as distinct from their persons ("abstraction").¹⁰

It has long been recognized that in the so-called early and middle dialogues of Plato the forms or proto-forms or incipient ideas such as "beauty" and "likeness" are almost all attributive, i.e., derived from verbal or adjectival bases. Psychologists may explain this as an echo of more primitive ways of thinking: "In primitive thinking, attributes play a much more important role, and substance a far less important role, than in the thought of cultured man."¹¹ However that may be, once an original predicate has become the grammatical subject of a sentence, certain difficulties of classification result. As C. I. Lewis puts it:¹² "By the idiom of language, there are certain words and phrases—e.g., predicate-adjectives like 'red'—which when they occur as grammatical subject are abstract terms, but which may occur as concrete terms in the predicate. Such words and phrases are sometimes called *attributive*. But this classification is primarily linguistic; the words and phrases in question are not strictly terms but only ambiguous symbolizations having now one, now another meaning. The classification 'attributive' is worth remarking only in order that certain confusions about abstract and

¹⁰ Actually, the terms "collective" and "abstraction" do violence to the perspective in which Plato regards the concept of knowledge, and vision, and hearing, and all the other terms collected in column I.

¹¹ F. Kainz, *Psychologie der Sprache* (Stuttgart 1941-1943) 2. 104.

¹² C. I. Lewis, "The Modes of Meaning" in L. Linsky, ed., *Semantics and the Philosophy of Language* (Urbana 1952) 53.

concrete terms may be avoided." To avoid precisely this confusion, Jespersen proposed to speak of "nexus-substantives."¹³ The function of these nexus-substantives is to simplify language. One clause full of such nexus-substantives, expressing an original verbal or adjectival nexus, i.e., predication, allows us to express a large number of original predicative clauses. To give one instance: "The speed of the ascent, and the thinness of the air, made our conquest of the mountain more painful than exhilarating" derives from an original compound period, employing causal clauses: "Because we ascended so quickly . . ." etc, etc. The example shows that it does not matter whether these nexus-substantives are in their origin verbal or adjectival, and in fact no sharp division is possible between the two. Greek, as Stenzel has shown,¹⁴ effaces the distinction between verbal and adjectival nexus-words even further than other languages. "All so-called ethical terms are structurally closely related to verbal terms." The Good, or the Just, is a kind of doing, an activity. The Good, and the good deed, are near-identical concepts.

Jespersen shows that these nexus-substantives, whether verbal or adjectival in origin, form a sub-group of a class of words he calls mass-words.¹⁵ They are the words "which do not call up the idea of some definite thing with a certain shape or precise limits. . . . They may be either material, in which case they denote some substance in itself independent of form such as *silver* . . . *air*, etc., or else immaterial, such as *leisure*, *music*, *traffic*, *success*, *lact*, *commonsense*. . . ." Now one of the important characteristics of our special type of mass-word, the nexus-word, is that it is "by a frequent semantic change used to denote ('concretely') the possessor of such and such a quality: *a beauty* = a thing of beauty . . . , *realities* = real things, . . . etc. . . . The transition is parallel to that of verbal substantives, as in *building*, *construction* = 'a thing

¹³ O. Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar* (London 1924) 133 ff.

¹⁴ J. Stenzel, "Ueber den Einfluss der griechischen Sprache auf die philosophische Begriffsbildung," *NJbb* 24 (1921) 161. — Cf. the presence of *θεμύρις* in a series of verbal nexus-substantives, above, 89, col. I.

¹⁵ Jespersen (above, note 13) 198. The difference between a thing-word and a mass-word is that the former is countable, whereas the latter is quantifiable only by such terms as little, much, more, some, etc. E.g., "some cloth" (thing-word): *irgendein Tuch*; but "some cloth" (mass-word): *etwas Tuch*. Cf. also p. 200: "Through the term 'mass-word', and through the restriction of the term 'collective' to a well-defined class of words, so that the two terms are consistently opposed to one another (the notion of number being inapplicable to mass-words, while it is doubly applicable to collectives), I hope to have contributed something towards clarifying a difficult subject."

built, constructed.' ”¹⁶ “Other examples, in which the same word has to do duty now as a mass-word, and now as a thing-word, are seen in:

a little more cheese	two big cheeses
some earth stuck to his shoes	the earth is round
little talent	few talents
much experience	many experiences.” ¹⁷

We may be critical of Jespersen’s way of saying: “when x comes to be used for y.” His developmental assumptions make him write as if there were a proper and a figurative use of certain words. For him, *beauty* is proper; *a beauty* is figurative. But perhaps this ought not to be pressed. For the understanding of Plato’s class terminology, I believe that Jespersen’s remarks about mass-words and nexus-substantives have considerable value, particularly his comment that mass-words are not quantifiable in the same way in which thing-words are,¹⁸ and his showing that frequently a nexus-substantive may signify both an “abstract” entity or quality and a thing having this quality or exercising this function.

To return to the Greek language. In an excellent statement of the case against universals in Plato, R. S. Bluck points out that in Greek τὸ ἀγαθόν is “that thing which has the property of being good in an eminent degree.”¹⁹ In the light of what we have said earlier about the ultimate identity of the adjectival and the verbal on this level, we should perhaps add to “being good”: “and doing good deeds.” Similarly δικαιοσύνη and ὁσιότης represent entities which may have the predicates “just” and “holy,” i.e., “just action” and “holy action” predicated of them. Bluck states that such entities (he calls them “things,” properly enough; in this paper I shall speak of “entities,” to avoid confusion with “thing-words”) are members of a class: a particular member, any member, or a standard member. What is more, as nexus-words τὸ ἀγαθόν and ἡ δικαιοσύνη, etc., etc., stand not only for the members of a class, but also for the class itself.²⁰

This, then, is the situation: when Plato uses mass-words, particularly when he uses nexus-substantives, two things prevent him from handling these terms as mere abstractions. First, the verbal or dynamic char-

¹⁶ *Id.* 138, note 1.

¹⁷ *Id.* 199.

¹⁸ Cf. above, note 15.

¹⁹ R. S. Bluck, *Plato's Phaedo* (London 1955) *App.* 7, pp. 174 ff.

²⁰ Cf. the remarks of W. K. C. Guthrie, *Greek Philosophy: The Hub and the Spokes* (Cambridge 1953) 29 ff., on “the black of the wood” and “the bright of the sun.”

acter of the original predicate concept from which the term derives remains unabated in the new function; and second, the area of reality signified by the mass-word is larger and more comprehensive than modern meticulousness would allow: it embraces both class and member, both entity and group, both thing and mass, both concrete act and abstraction. Hence knowledge, in the *Charmides*, is both an act of knowledge and knowledge in the abstract, it is both the thing known and the class of all knowers. And the verbal carryover, as under "first," sees to it that it is the class of all knowers exercising their activity of knowledge. Thus what has been called self-predication is to be explained along similar lines as the puzzling circumstance that often in Plato's dialogues, and particularly in the *Phaedo*, we wonder whether he is talking about an Idea or a physical reality. The truth is that the use of mass-words without an awareness of modern grammatical subdivisions makes such a lack of differentiation inevitable. In the end, Plato had recourse to *χωρισμός* in order to avoid this lack of differentiation. But he himself seems to have felt that the choristic differentiation was suitable only for certain areas of discussion, for in some of the so-called later dialogues, such as the *Sophist* and the *Philebus*, *χωρισμός* appears to recede into the background. Aristotle's frequent charge that Plato's ideas were merely eternal sensibles (e.g. *Met.* B 997B6 ff.) is a contraction of the perspective in the opposite direction; he fixes on the thing-content of the mass-word rather than on the pure abstraction, as *χωρισμός* does, to make the mass-word manageable in his own world of discourse.

To indicate the range of function exercised by the mass-word in Plato's class terminology, it would be possible to draw examples from all the dialogues. Obviously it will not be feasible to do more than cite a few instances by way of illustration.

At *Parm.* 128E6 ff. we read the following: "Don't you think there is a separate idea of similarity, and again another one opposite to this sort of idea, one which is dissimilar (or: the real dissimilar)?"²¹ Depending on the accentuation of *ἑστίιν* the interpretation of the last three words may differ. But even if we allow an acute accent to *ῥ*, we have here a case where predication and identification are practically indistinguishable; "an opposite which is dissimilar" or "an opposite, the dissimilar"? This indeterminacy as between predicate and subject status is, of course, not infrequent in Plato's discussion of ideas.

²¹ οὐ νομίζεις εἶναι αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ εἶδος τι ὁμοιότητος, καὶ τῷ τοιούτῳ αὐτὸ ἄλλο τι ἐναντίον ὃ ἔστιν ἀνόμιον;

A little later in the same dialogue, *Parm.* 133c8 ff., Plato gives us a famous programmatic statement concerning relations: the slave is related to the master and vice versa 1) on the formal level, and 2) on the phenomenal level; and the two levels are strictly distinct. This is the fruit of the choristic formulation of the theory of ideas, and perhaps a criticism of loose usage in other Platonic writings, though the choristic position is, of course, equally prominent in some of those other writings. And yet, how curious: Plato relates, not the idea of slave and the idea of master, but *δεδουλωμένη* and *δουλεία*: 133E3. Plato goes on to establish a similar relation between *ἐπιστήμη* and *ἀλήθεια* 134A6: the idea of knowledge, the form of knowledge as such, knows the various kinds of being. Cornford is inclined to believe that Socrates ought not to have accepted this notion of knowledge as such knowing.²² But in the light of our discussion Socrates' acquiescence in Parmenides' formulation was most natural. Cornford is right in showing that Parmenides' choristic extreme—that we cannot have an (imperfect) knowledge of the ideas—runs counter to Plato's philosophy, and does not follow from Parmenides' own formulation. Yet it may perhaps be granted that we have here the first inkling of Plato's becoming aware of the self-predication difficulty presented by the use of nexus-substantives. Still, he does not seem to be aware of the problem posed by substituting the idea of slavery for the idea of slave.²³ Thus, in spite of various attempts at organization and subdivision, the comprehensive or synthetic scope of the mass-word continues to shape his thinking.²⁴

In the *Symposium*, the humor of Socrates' argument to the effect that Love lacks beauty (201B) is not based on an insight into the spurious logic of this sort of deduction, but rather on his insight that contradictory results can be deduced from the premise "Love equals Man-of-Love," depending on whether Man is seen as Lover or as Beloved. The equation itself is not rejected; "Love loves," or rather "Love is in love," like "Justice is just," remains a fundamental assumption of Socrates' thought.

In *Phaedo* 71d ff., "death" equals the act of dying and the dead; like-

²² F. M. Cornford, *Plato and Parmenides* (London 1939) 98 ff.

²³ Cf. P. Geach, "The Third Man Again", *Philosoph. Rev.* 65 (1956) 75.

²⁴ This substitution of "abstract" for "agent" may be found in many Platonic passages. Here are two examples: in *Lysis* 218E–219A, *ιατρός* and *ιατρική* are used interchangeably; "the body loves medicine" is considered the equivalent of "the sick man loves the doctor." And in *Protagoras* 349D–350C, a famous logical argument recently vindicated by G. Vlastos (*Plato's Protagoras* [New York 1956] xxi ff.), Plato uses masculine plurals and mass-words indistinguishably.

wise "life" equals the act of living and the living.²⁵ This is necessary for the argument, which is to demonstrate that 1) life changes into death and death into life. For Plato, this is evidenced by the fact, and indeed is the same as saying, that 2) the living change into the dead, and, according to the mysteries, the dead change into the living. For us, propositions 1) and 2) are not the same. 2) involves a change of attributes, with the substrate remaining the same; 1) involves a transformation of substance. Hence Hackforth's impatient comment:²⁶ "It does not seem to me that the passage 71A12-72A8 really adds anything to the logical strength of the argument."²⁷

That this broad understanding and use of mass-words is not peculiar to Plato, but that he took it over from his predecessors and contemporaries, and that hence it ought to be associated also with Socrates, becomes evident from a perusal of some passages in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. At 1.1.16 it is stated that Socrates conversed concerning τὰ ἀνθρώπεια, examining what is pious, what impious, what fine, what ugly, what just, what unjust. The concern here is not with logical divisions, but with what we might call pragmatic divisions, with human behavior groups. The fact that so many interlocutors, when asked for a "definition" by Socrates, start their answer with ὅταν or ὅσα indicates the pragmatic frame of reference. An example of such a formulation, this time in the mouth of the questioner, occurs at 1.2.44: βία δὲ . . . καὶ ἀνομία τί ἐστιν . . . ; ἀρ' οὐχ ὅταν ὁ κρείττων τὸν ἥττω μὴ πείσας ἀλλὰ βιασάμενος . . . ; Socrates may not be satisfied with a ὅταν answer; but Socrates himself questions his partners about groups as often as about abstracts, i.e., about ὁ σοφός as much as about ἡ σοφία (4.6.7), about οἱ ἀνδρεῖοι as much as about ἡ ἀνδρεία (4.6.10-11). This tallies with Plato's usage sketched above. For Socrates also, therefore, the mass-words were more comprehensive than mere abstracts would be, embracing agent and δύναμις

²⁵ The Greek terms in question are: ζωή, τὸ ζῆν, τὸ ζῶν, τὰ ζῶντα, οἱ ζῶντες; and θάνατος, τὸ τεθνάναι, τὸ τεθνηκός, (οἱ τεθνεώτες); the latter is implied in τῶν τεθνεώτων as opposite to οἱ ζῶντες.

²⁶ R. Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedo* (Cambridge 1955) 64.

²⁷ In *Phaedo* 104D12, when Plato is talking about the primary property of oddness, he contrasts ἡ περιττή (sc. ἰδέα) with τοῦ ἀρτίου. Archer-Hind says (*The Phaedo of Plato* 113): "The ms reading ἡ περιττή is surely indefensible. Plato never uses such a phrase as ἡ περιττή ἰδέα, which would indeed be something very like nonsense." Burnet and others leave the text as it has come down, without explanation. The reading is correct, for Plato takes it for granted that the class of odd is odd; and this self-predicational assumption is naturally carried over to the level where χωρισμός is about to be explicitly formulated. Thus even in this crucial text, Plato's mass-word thinking influences his choice of words.

along with the "universal." In this sense, the ideas are pre-Platonic, as Burnet, Taylor and Stenzel proposed they were, and as Notopoulos has recently suggested again.²⁸ In Plato's dialogues, nobody ever supposes that ideas, i.e., entities signified by mass-words, do not exist; otherwise, indeed, the "theory" could not be utilized as a valid and untested hypothesis. It happens to be merely a more pregnant formulation of a general assumption. The only question that could arise was, precisely what sort of ideas there were, and how far the area of mass-words extended. As for Plato's causal ideas, i.e., the ideas as ontological *αἰτίαι* as well as classificatory units, it has been suggested that Hesiodic thought — γένος determining εἶδη, as, e.g., Chaos producing Darkness and Night — continued to bear fruit.²⁹ That Socrates was interested in logical rather than ontological extension seems clear from the report of Aristotle. And yet, probably the two never became sufficiently distinct for Plato to regard their combination in his discussion of ideas as a new or problematic matter. It was Aristotle who was the revolutionary; Plato merely expressed the old vision most effectively, perhaps more extravagantly and radically than before, yet beginning to see the difficulties latent in the traditional perspective.³⁰

Those who argue that Socrates cannot have known the Ideas, cite in support of their view the relevant passages in Aristotle. Even a cursory review of these passages, however, will suggest that Aristotle's testimony does not prove their case conclusively. In *Met.* A 987B1 ff., we find the following description of Socrates' role (tr. Tredennick): "And when Socrates, disregarding the physical universe and confining his study to moral questions, sought in this sphere for the universal and was the first

²⁸ J. A. Notopoulos, "The Generic Background of Plato's Theory of Ideas," *CW* 50 (1957) 145-48.

²⁹ See H. Schwabl, "Zur Theogonie des Hesiod," *Gymnasium* 62 (1955) 526-42. Also F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca 1949) 63 ff. For the use of genealogical terminology in discussing the ideas, see *Republic* 506-8 and *Hippias Major* 297B-c.

³⁰ The common view today is that Socrates did not know the Ideas. Vlastos (*Plato's Protagoras*, introd.) argues that Socrates' chief interest is in the relation of various statements to each other, and in the clarification of terms, but that he has no ontological beliefs or convictions. What is more, Vlastos points to the convertibility of an "is" statement with a copula-less statement in Greek, and deduces that ordinary Greek did not understand the "is" statement to signify a "reality." Perhaps the terms "ontological" and "reality" are misleading here. For the average Greek, as also for Socrates, we may assume, "being" and "statements" are intimately related; a statement is about a being. The Good exists; *ἡ ἀρετή* exists; and it is only because they exist, because they are part of being, that we can make a meaningful statement about them. In this sense, the existence of ideas was as unquestioned by the historical Socrates as it was by his interlocutors in Plato's dialogues.

to concentrate upon definition, Plato followed him and assumed that the problem of definition is concerned not with any sensible thing but with entities of another kind; for the reason that there can be no general definition of sensible things which are always changing....” Here Aristotle insists on no significant distinction between Socrates and Plato, except to say that the latter took over and developed the Socratic search of τὸ καθόλου and ὀρισμοί, and that the Heraclitean view of the constant flux of sensible things — a view well known to Socrates — made Plato decide that definitions related to non-sensible entities, or rather, that definitions did not relate to sensible things. Plato, then, continued rather than changed the direction of Socrates’ search; for, as we have seen above, Socrates manipulated mass-words so as to exclude a narrow reference to sensible particulars.³¹

So far, Aristotle’s testimony does not speak against Socrates’ holding to the existence of ideas, or rather, taking their existence for granted, and attempting to investigate their scope by means of “limitings,” ὀρισμοί. The same two terms, καθόλου and ὀρίζεσθαι, occur in a later passage, *Met.* M 1078B7 ff. The whole passage, down to B30, does not imply any radical differences between the views of Plato and Socrates. But beginning B30 (cf. also M 1086B3 ff.) Aristotle states that Socrates differed from the Platonists in not subjecting his καθόλου to χωρισμός (and that he did not call these choristic entities εἶδη). Aristotle’s account is quite acceptable, with one qualification. Socrates certainly did not recognize a transcendental existence of ideas, but that is not to say that he did not accept the existence, in the fullest sense of the term, of what Aristotle calls his “universals.” To repeat: for Socrates, the entities signified by his mass-words, especially by nexus-substantives, existed, and they existed over and beyond the physical phenomena of individual experiences because the former embrace the latter in their comprehensive being. χωρισμός, as enunciated by Plato in the *Republic* and the *Phaedrus*, is foreign to Socrates. But Ideas need not be choristic, as the passages cited above from both early and later dialogues signify. Hence Socrates recognized ideas, though perhaps he did not call them

³¹ For the meaning of παρά 987B8, τὰ δ’ αἰσθητὰ παρὰ ταῦτα καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα λέγεσθαι πάντα, see Sir David Ross, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (Oxford 1924) 1. 161: “and he said the sensibles were called after these and were called what they were called by virtue of their relation to these.” This non-choristic use of παρά, applicable to the sensible particulars, is not to be confused with the choristic παρά used of the metaphysical ideas, as in M 1086B1–2. And yet even the latter significance of παρά originally meant nothing more than that a distinction had to be made between the abstract and the particular components of the referent of a mass-word.

such, and his *ἐπακτικοὶ λόγοι*, the inductive procedure with which Aristotle credits him, consisted of an ordering of forms of being into their proper relationships.

It was the setting up of these relationships, the arranging of the various forms of being or rather the possible statements about them into a meaningful structure via logical discourse, which presented Plato with his greatest challenge and his gravest difficulties, one solution of which ultimately was *χωρισμός*. Earlier, and this was most certainly true also in Socratic thought, the forms of being, the entities most fully caught in mass-words, had not been broken down into various categories of being, such as substance, quality, primary and secondary attribute, but were regarded as parcels of being, individual data neither subordinate nor superordinate to one another. The physical philosophers may have made a beginning with a hypotactic structuring of the universe, and the Eleatics had recognized that being as such belongs to a level different, logically and ontologically, from that to which all other entities and events belong. But in ordinary discourse, particularly in the spheres of ethics and politics, the old paratactic perspective of epic and myth was still, for all practical purposes, in control down to the end of the fifth century. Plato, in the wake of Socrates' *ἐπακτικοὶ λόγοι*, explored the relationships between what he recognized to be various kinds of entities, and found himself in a serious impasse. The sort of thing that happened is well illustrated by *Gorgias* 497E ff. Socrates asks: "Don't you call the good good because of the presence of good things, just as you call handsome those to whom handsomeness is present?"³² He continues to argue against an identification of the good and the pleasant, and the bad and the unpleasant, by showing that the good (i.e., the intelligent or the brave) sometimes grieve, and the bad (i.e., the stupid or the cowardly) sometimes rejoice. Thus, if the pleasant equalled the good, the bad might be thought to have good in them, and vice versa; but that is impossible; for the good are good by the presence of the good, not of the bad (498D2-3).³³

The argument is not convincing, because we distinguish between goodness, a good characteristic, and the good man, and conclude that,

³² τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς οὐχὶ ἀγαθῶν παρουσίᾳ ἀγαθοὺς καλεῖς, ὥσπερ τοὺς καλοὺς οἷς ἂν κάλλος παρῇ; — We may note here, in passing, the apparent equivalence of the neuter plural adjective, ἀγαθά, and the abstract noun, κάλλος.

³³ It may be objected, as it has been in other contexts, particularly the discussion of pleasure in the *Protagoras*, that Socrates is adopting the assumptions and perspectives of his adversaries for the sake of refuting them. Such a hypothesis must always be a last resort. But even if it is true, it merely demonstrates the intellectual climate in which Plato is operating, and which cannot but color his own thought to some extent.

though a good man must have goodness and good characteristics, there is no reason why he should not also have bad characteristics — a conclusion recognized by Plato elsewhere. Logically Plato is right when he says that a good man is good by the presence of good characteristics, but he is wrong when he denies that the good man can have bad characteristics. The reason for the denial is, of course, the fact that for Plato the good man, goodness, and good characteristics are not related to each other in precisely the same ratio as in modern discourse. Rather, τὰ ἀγαθὰ and τὸ ἀγαθόν are near-equivalent terms for the group or field or class of which ὁ ἀγαθός is a concrete member or representative or participant.

The word for this relationship between τὸ ἀγαθόν and ὁ ἀγαθός is παρουσία (497E1–2 and 498D2): the presence or availability of the characteristic to the subject.³⁴ In this context, Plato is focussing his attention on the subject, the holder; hence it is the characteristic which is seen as present to the holder, not the other way round. However, there are passages where it is not equally clear which is the subject and which the attribute. At *Phaedo* 103C10 ff., Plato uses several verbs of motion, introduction and containment to arrange his entities in an order which does not quite tally with our notions of subject and attribute. These verbs, explained by Burnet as military metaphors, but perhaps better explained as deriving from the notion of a diagram or plane on which entities are shifted around like chess figures, indicate to us that Plato was concerned to fix the relations between entities, with special attention given to the internal relations between the various components of the groupings signified by mass-words, such as heat and cold and oddness and soul. This concern may well be called one of topography; Plato is striving for a topography of reality. Aristotle is, therefore, quite wrong when he says that μέθεξις, one of Plato's topographical terms developed in response to Socrates' logic, has more or less the same meaning as the Pythagorean μίμησις (*Met.* A 987B10 ff.). As suggested above, note 31, no undue ontological or aetiological meaning should be impressed upon the sentence which immediately precedes this wrong equation. It merely reminds us that there is a distinction between the entities signified by mass-words, and the entities experienced by our senses at any one time and signified by thing-words, but that in spite of this distinction there is a relation between them which is suggested by their having the same name,

³⁴ For other terms signifying this relationship, cf. Sir David Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (Oxford 1951) 228, list I. — Cf. also Lycophron's term συνουσία, Aristotle, *Met.* H 1045B9–11.

and which merits being investigated. That Plato on other occasions, in choristic contexts, approached more closely the Pythagorean notion of *μίμησις* is quite correct.³⁵ But instead of the evolution from immanence to transcendence which most commentators ascribe to Plato's thinking about the Ideas, I should rather speak of a change from paratactic or unstructured topography to essays in structure, metaphysical and phenomenological.

It is instructive to remember that, according to Aristotle, Antisthenes did not recognize predication, but regarded every judgment as a comparison or identification (*Met.* H 1043B26–28). According to him, as according to the sophists of the *Euthydemus*, the proposition “man is good” compares or identifies two parallel entities. This suggests a view of the world in which no stable hierarchy of levels of being has yet been set up. And this is a view which can be traced in much of Plato's writing. True, one of our best Platonists has said that in the *Euthyphro* the expressions *εἶδος* and *ἰδέα* “are taken by the other speakers as describing no more than the common characteristics of particular things to which the same predicate is applied, these common qualities being considered *not as transcendentally existing but as immanent in the particulars*.”³⁶ Other writers feel the same way. Yet, the very notion of “immanence” depends on an understanding of the notion of “transcendence.” If we ask ourselves whether the generation of Socrates is more likely to have thought in terms of immanent properties or in terms of existing entities, there is little doubt that the latter is more likely to have been the immediate perspective. For Euthyphro, *τὸ ὅσιον* is an entity, not a quality. That is why he tries to explain it by comparing or identifying it with other entities or events. What he does not realize is that this entity is more comprehensive than other entities which he refers to; this is left for Socrates to show.

Plato employs such terms as *παρουσία* to bring some sort of order into the world of paratactic units, and particularly to break down the old mass-entities into logically superordinate and subordinate data. The undertaking is not easy, and the new ordering produces many puzzles. In the *Lysis* (217c3 ff.) Plato conceives of a *παρουσία* which does not render the *ἔχον* in the likeness of the *παρόν*. Example: white cosmetic on

³⁵ For this, see H. Koller, *Die Mimesis in der Antike* (Bern 1954) passim.

³⁶ G. M. A. Grube, *Plato's Thought* (London 1935) 9, Grube's italics. For a criticism of the evolutionist application of the terms “immanence” and “transcendence”, see now H. Cherniss, “The Relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's Later Dialogues”, *AJP* 78 (1957) 250–51.

the hair does not make the hair white in the way old age does. This is an anticipation of what in the *Parmenides* appears as the puzzle of the sail (131B). The difficulties of the distinction between *οὐσία* and *πάθος* in *Hippias Major* 301B7 ff. (cf. *Euthyphro* 11A) are of the same order. The passage of the *Gorgias* cited above (497E1–3; cf. also 498D2 ff.) shows Plato still sufficiently under the influence of mass-word thinking and paratactic ontology to make what we would call serious errors in logic. And the basic question raised by Dionysodorus (*Euthyd.* 301A8–9): “But how, when x is present to y, does y become x?”³⁷ a question both logical and ontological in its import, was never given a systematic or exhaustive answer by Plato.³⁸

³⁷ ἀλλὰ τίνα τρόπον . . . ἑτέρου ἑτέρῳ παραγενομένου τὸ ἕτερον ἕτερον ἂν εἴη;

³⁸ In the *Philebus*, acknowledged to be one of Plato's later dialogues, the choristic perspective, with its attendant division of reality into being and appearance, into subject and quality, into *οὐσία* and *πάθος*, remains almost completely inoperative, and the old paratactic universe makes its reappearance, with the question, so “Sophistic” in its formulation: is knowledge or pleasure the good? Even the *Protagoras*, which starts with similar questions, had resolved them into logically more manageable constituents. The *Philebus*, on the other hand, never seems to free itself of the simple statement of identity; it is the substance as well as the formula of the dialogue. — I am most grateful to Professor J. Whatmough and Dr. E. Lenneberg, who were kind enough to supply me with bibliographical information; and to an anonymous referee who suggested improvements in the manuscript.