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The Source of Notions Plato's Conception of Language in the Perspective of His Ontology

Abstract: In the paper, I argue for the importance of holistic approach to Corpus Platonicum and such reading of it which leads to the coherent model of Plato's ontology and epistemology connected with his conception of language. The starting point of my draft of, as I assume, much-needed investigation, is the analysis of Cratylus and theory of truth dependent on proper names. The next step is taking under consideration Plato's quotation from Hesiod, which leads to the distinction between two ways of substantiating statements given by Hesiod in his two didactic poems. The right name does not have to be given by gods, nor does it belong to the ancient order, even so old as the Golden Age. Instead, it has to belong to the natural order, which makes everything that exists to be as a whole. Hence, it could be created, it could be given by lawgivers or others who understand these valid connections, for example, by an honest sophist or a true artisan of *technē basilike* — the philosopher. Accordingly, the proper name is the fruit of hard working; it takes a lot of investigation to find one. This conclusion leads to the analysis of Plato's methodology of proper investigation that connects dialectics with the geometrical approach: the method of exposing the proper measure. Plato's epistemology consists in several (possibly seven, as it is shown in *Republic*) levels of perceiving the world, and bi-polarity of One and Many is crucial for his ontology; hence, there are a few sources of notions. But, as I argue, *phantasia* gives only false and worthless notions, *eikasia* is the source of practical ones, and *noesis* solely creates the true, proper, and essential notion. The notion created by *noesis* is connected with every other notion, with other forms, and things in the proper measures.

Keywords: Plato, ontology, epistemology, theory of language, name, notion, image

Although it is rather difficult to discuss philosophy of language as such before the 20th century linguistic turn, it would be a huge waste not to consider at all the philosophical approach to the subjects of language, signs and meaning, or communication before that time. Names, signs, and notions, as crucial tools of philosophy, are not irrelevant for the most important statements in philosophical theories and systems. I assume that to reconstruct Plato's conception of being, it is necessary to reconstruct his conception of language. The *Cratylus* — the only dialogue of Plato in which the questions about language are asked openly — is obviously the starting point of reconstruction, but I decided to use some quotations from *Gorgias*, *Respublica*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Theaetetus*, *Timaeus*, *Philebus* and *VII Letter* as the clues, as well. I argue that Plato's thesis on language is coherent with his ontology, which I will try to prove while exploring the importance of the subject of proper measure in his work.

The problem of Plato's thoughts on language is not a popular or common subject of academic research.¹ Language is obviously considered when the *Cratylus* is put under scrutiny. The topic of the importance of language in Plato's philosophy has been studied mostly by German scholars for the last century, and while the concept of *Sprachphilosophie* is an important part of Gaiser's interpretation² and several important studies on *Cratylus* have been published (mostly in German) on that subject,³ making the connection between linguistics and ontology in the reading of Plato's dialogues is still very scarce.⁴ One can notice that the interest in Plato's *Cratylus* was

¹ For example, in *Plato. Critical Assessment* there no chapter or article that mentions this subject. See *Plato. Critical Assessments*. Ed. N.D. Smith. Vol. I—IV. London—New York 1998.

² K. Gaiser: *Name und Sache in Platons „Kratylos“*. Heidelberg 1974.

³ Main studies on that subject are rather old but still important, as I assume. See, for example, I. Abramczyk: *Platons Dialog „Kratylos“ und das Problem der Sprachphilosophie*. Breslau 1928; K. Büchner: *Platons Kratylos und die modern Sprachphilosophie*. Berlin 1936; J. Derbolav: *Der Dialog „Kratylos“ im Rahmen der platonischen Sprach- und Erkenntnisphilosophie*. Saarbrücken 1953; J. Deuschle: *Die platonische Sprachphilosophie*. Marburg 1852; K. Lorentz, J. Mittelstrass: *On Rational Philosophy of Language: The Program in Plato's „Cratylus“ Reconsidered*. „Mind” 76 (1967), pp. 1—20; A. Paglioro: *Struttura e pensiero del „Cratilo“ di Platone*. In: Idem: *Nuovi Saggi di Critica Semantica*. Messina — Firenze 1956, pp. 47—76; M. Richardson: *True and False Names in the „Cratylus“*. „Phronesis” 21 (1976), no 2, pp. 135—145.

⁴ The important exception to that rule is the work by Kahn. See C.H. Kahn: *Language and Ontology in the Cratylus*. In: *Exegesis and Argument. Studies in Greek Philosophy presented to Gregory Vlastos*. „Phronesis.” Supp. Vol. I. Assen 1973,

contemporary with the linguistic turn and with the era when the structuralism and its textual approach was in fashion in humanities. Some studies on *Sophist* regard the subject of talking, thinking, or communicating (*legein*) when the problem of non-being is analyzed because of a famous passage from *Sophist* [237BC], and some monographs on Plato's theory of forms touch upon this subject as well.⁵ Some works on Plato's *Theatetus* which were published in last few years explore Plato's thought on language from the perspective of his conception of knowledge.⁶ It is obvious that the dialogues of "the late period" are commonly considered as important to Plato's concept of knowledge; the valid exception is the recognition of importance of *Gorgias* to Plato's dialectics.⁷ An important example of an attempt to reconstruct holistically the epistemology of Plato is given by Nicholas P. White,⁸ although it is clear that author uses the analytical approach to Plato's dialogues. His way of reading of the *locutia* from *Republic*, although very similar in content and sometimes analogical in conclusions, is different from mine in the way of analysis. White explores the structure of argument, but he is not interested in the analysis of Plato's notions describing the different ways of exploring and perceiving the world.

While contemporary studies on epistemology and ontology of Plato may be complex and may include the subject of language and communication, modern studies on ancient theory of grammar and ancient philosophy of language start, in general, their inquiries with the analysis of Aristotle's works.⁹ That is why, Plato's theory of lan-

pp. 152—176. Charls Kahn continues his study on the theory of forms and dialectics in *Cratylus* in his later work. See C.H. Kahn: *The emergence of dialectic. Reference to dialectic in dialogues earlier than the Republic*. In: Idem: *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue. The philosophical use of a literary form*. Cambridge 1996, pp. 306—307; and C. Kahn: *Forms in Cratylus, Phaedrus, and beyond*. In: Op. cit., pp. 363—368.

⁵ For example L.P. Gerson: *A Distinction in Plato's Sophist*. In: *Plato. Critical Assessment*. Vol. IV, pp. 125—141; J. Roberts: *The Problem about Being in the Sophist*. In: *Plato. Critical Assessment*. Vol. IV, pp. 142—157; G. Casertano: *Il Sofista*. In: Idem: *Il nome della cosa. Linguaggio e realt? negli ultimi dialoghi di Platone*. Napoli 1996, pp. 86—214.

⁶ See, for example, G. Fine: *Plato on Knowledge and Forms. Selected Essays*. Oxford 2003.

⁷ See already quoted C.H. Kahn: *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue...*

⁸ N.P. White: *Plato's metaphysical epistemology*. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*. Ed. R. Kraut. Cambridge 1992, pp. 277—310.

⁹ See, for example, *Grammatical Theory and Philosophy of Language in Antiquity*. Eds. P. Swiggers & A. Wauters. Leuven — Paris — Sterling (Virginia) 2002, *ORBIS/ SUPPLEMENTA*. Monographs Published by the International Center of General Dialectology (Louvain), Vol. XIX. This rule seems to work not only in histori-

guage, reconstructed from the data of whole *Corpus Platonicum* and studied in connection not only with his conception of knowledge but also with his ontology, is almost uncharted territory. Especially in last three decades, when the academic studies have introduced new perspectives and new methods, this subject seems to have been falling out of fashion.

To communicate means to say something about something. To make communication possible, a common subject is needed, which could be fixed with collectively recognized objects. This need is natural for the communication process, but first of all, it is fundamental and crucial to a structure of a language. In cognition, a singular experience is linked with the previous ones, on the basis of similarity or by contrast to them. To make such linking possible, something common, or something permanent is necessary. Because communication, language, and perception depend on the presence of something common, it is obvious that knowledge — understood as a set of true statements on the experienced objects, which are given to recognition¹⁰ — hinges on such presence as well.

Therefore, because something could be common at a linguistic level, regular in communication realm, or uniform in perceptual perspective, something is fixed at the level of knowledge. At the level of language and communication, it is a name or a word which is common and fixed; at the level of knowledge, it is a term, a notion, a concept, and a definition. The practice of everyday communication operates on the foundation of uniform meaning; meanwhile, the assumption is made that there is something unchangeable in the reality to match that meaning. It is an inalienable hypothesis that the specific image or thought in individual reasoning mediates between these two bi-poles. The wrongly constructed or ill-fitted sentence makes communication impossible and undermines the concept of knowledge. The wrong perception or poorly executed reception weakens the notion of recognizable reality. That is why, it is important to avoid falsehood not only in statements but also in impressions. That is the reason to avoid names existing without their objects and thoughts which grasp only nothingness.

Plato in his *Sophist* took into consideration Parmenides' thought on the terms of true recognition, which are: "never let this thought

cal, but also in the theoretical examinations. See, for example, U. Eco: *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*. Bloomington (Indiana) 1986.

¹⁰ In Plato's *Theaetetus*, one can find several attempts at defining knowledge, but the quoted one is also present.

prevail that not-being is, but keep your mind from this way on investigation,”¹¹ and immediately the *dramatis personae* of this dialogue turn to the topic of names. It seems that the rightness of names is the first, most ancient condition of the truth, which had been considered long before the idea of correspondence between a statement and its subject appeared in philosophical thinking. In *Corpus Platonicum*, if one accepts the common chronology of Plato’s works,¹² the thinking on right names (in *Cratylus*) also took place before the consideration of the right structure of a sentence (in *Sophist*) or the correct connection (in *Theaetetus*) between the statement and the thing or phenomenon.

I. Proper Names

Cratylus is, I think, one of those dialogues that link the whole *Corpus Platonicum* together — we know some which are linked by elements of narration, and some linked by topics. The linking agent in the case of *Cratylus* is less eminent, but not less important: its subject, as it was said, is valid for all philosophical thinking, but the way in which the argumentation is presented is not, stylistically speaking, obvious — it could rather be an early text (even one of the Socratic group), it could be a dialogue co-temporal with big ontological, epistemological, and methodological statements of *Sophist* or *Theaetetus*.¹³ I think that a leading tune for all those considerations was set just in the beginning of the *Cratylus*: the dialogue starts

¹¹ Parmenides Fr. 7; Plato: *Sophist* 237a6—7. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. XII. Trans. H.N. Fowles. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1921; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plat.+Soph.+237a&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172>; access: 10.07.2015.

¹² The chronology of Plato’s work is thoroughly discussed, for example, in H. Thesleff: *Platonic Chronology*. In: *Plato. Critical Assessment*. Vol. I, pp. 50—73. Worth mentioning is also the paper Ch.M. Young: *Plato and Computer Dating. A Discussion of Gerard R. Ledger, »Re-counting Plato: A Computer Analysis of Plato’s Style«, and Leonard Brandwood, »The Chronology of Plato’s Dialogues«*. In: *Plato. Critical Assessment*. Vol. I, pp. 29—49.

¹³ See W.K.C. Guthrie: *Cratylus. Date*. In: Idem: *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Vol. V: *The Later Plato and the Academy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1996, pp. 1—2.

with the suit of three pairs of presumptions, each one is a set of cross-sentences, which oppose each other [*Crat.* 385a—c]. It is the first time that such a situation occurs, but certainly not the last one. Presenting the pairs or sets of cross-sentences, presumptions, and theses is common not only in *Cratylus* but also in the rest of *Corpus Platonicum* — for me it is not only the stylistic remainder of the Sophistic way of discussing, which in Plato's works emanates from the *dramatis persona* of Socrates, but an element of methodological procedure of “going up” (the way of *synopsis*) and “going down” (the way of *diairesis*).

That first suit of three pairs of cross-sentences in *Cratylus* applies to all crucial topics mentioned above. In the first pair, which deals with names, the first presumption in that pair states that giving names happens “in private,” as opposed to the presumption that considers using names in a community. The second pair concerns telling the truth. The presumptions of that pair claim that there are some true sentences, and there are some false ones in communication. The third pair relates to the truth of a sentence; and the first statement revolves around the thesis that “something is” is true, as opposed to the second statement, which considers that “something is not” is false. This first group of statements prepares the field for the next one, but most importantly, it sets the tone for the whole discussion. That second step of reasoning can be found in the location *Cratylus* 386c—e. Here I find another set of cross-statements, for which the quotation from Prothagoras is the starting point. The first one considers wisdom and stupidity, and the difference in people. It is true that some people are wise, some are stupid. This difference in people proves that Prothagoras was wrong: if everything that appears were true, the people would be equal, and nobody could be wrong or talk foolishly. This first pair in the second group opens the way to the next pair — as it was said, nothing appears in the same way all the time for anybody; hence, it seems that to make perception, thinking, and exchanging of thoughts possible, the things themselves should have something unchangeable. This thesis is much more convincing than the opposite one, which was emphasized by the last pair of cross-sentences in that group. Hence, after rejecting the whole group of hypotheses, one should come to the realization that there is something permanent in things, and this is the essence.

The problem of an essence leads to the question of the source of the names. I suggest taking into account three next locations. Firstly, the line *Cratylus* 388e1, where the word *nomothetoi*, which is translated as the ‘lawgivers,’ as the ‘givers of names,’ or the ‘rulers of

names', or even the 'words smiths',¹⁴ appears for the first time. The usage of the word *nomothetoi* prepares the field for the consideration of names as tools, which are specially prepared for specific purposes. The bringing up of the myth of Golden Age and the use of the quotation from Hesiod [*Crat.* 397e—398a] open the topic of "gold man", which is soon interpreted as "good", that is "wise man".

There are two kinds of "spirits", and only one is full of knowledge. "This, then, I think, is what he [Hesiod] certainly means to say of the spirits: because they were wise and knowing (δαίμονες) he called them spirits (δαίμονες) and in the old form of our language the two words are the same" — states Plato's Socrates.¹⁵ Here Plato uses several techniques at the same time to make his point: he uses a popular story and quotes an honorable author, he makes a fake genealogical connection among words, and he moves from literal to metaphorical meaning. All these measures make the new subject open to investigation: there are two types of speeches — he states. The first one is the high or the divine, and this is the one verified by god's authority; the second is the low or the earthy one, which can be verified only by man's experience [*Crat.* 398a]. That remark on two types of speech and two types of their verification should bring to mind two works of Hesiod. It is believed that he wrote his *Theogony* as a young man and, as ancient scholars taught us, he won the first prize with it; *The Works and Days*, it is said, he wrote as a mature and already famous poet. The *Theogony* starts with invocation to Heliconian Muses, and the story of meeting the Muses of Olympus, which "[...] one day [...] taught Hesiod glorious song while he was shepherding his lambs under holy Helicon¹⁶ [...]. This world first the goddesses said to me — the Muses of Olympus, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis: »Shepherds of wilderness [...] we know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things."¹⁷ Changing the address from the Olympus back to Mont Helicon is a popular subject of many argu-

¹⁴ The translation as 'lawgivers' is more established, but because of various meaning of the word *nomos*, other translations in many European edition have occurred as well.

¹⁵ *Cratylus* 398b5—7; see Plato: *Cratylus*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. XII; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172%3Atext%3DCrat.%3Asection%3D398b>; access: 10.07.2015.

¹⁶ Hes. Th. 1, 22. See Hesiod: *Theogony*. In: *The Homeric Hymns and Homeric with an English Translation*. Trans. H.G. Evelyn-White. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1914; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0130>; access: 10.07.2015.

¹⁷ Hes. Th. 1, 24—27. *Ibidem*.

ments, as well as the matter of the whole invocation,¹⁸ but it could be fruitful to compare this beginning with the first line of Hesiod's second great poem, which is *Works and Days*. In this poem we can find quite another verification of the presented story. It is not a divine song of goddesses, it is the experience of a hardworking man.¹⁹ Although this time the Muses of Pieria are praised in invocation, and the short prayer is given to Zeus, there is shown a different source of truth: "Muses of Pieria who give glory through song, come hither, tell of Zeus your father and chant his praise. Through him mortal men are famed and unfamed, sung or unsung alike, as great Zeus wills. [...] Zeus who thunders aloft as his dwellings most high. Attend thou with eye and ear, and make judgments straight with righteousness. And, Perses, I would tell of true things."²⁰

In conclusion, from my point of view, the main problem given for consideration in *Cratylus* is the problem of proper names.²¹ The question of truth does not depend on a true sentence yet (the truth is shown as dependent on the structure of a sentence in *Sophist*); in *Cratylus* the truth of speech depends on a proper name. And the proper name is the name which is in a right relation to the things and to other names. It is worth marking this out: the name is right if it gives a user the opportunity to unveil the net of essential and valid connections, a peculiar measure or inherent proportion can close the deal. The right name does not have to be given by gods nor does it belong to the ancient order, even so old as the Golden Age. Instead, it has to belong to the natural order, which makes everything that exists to be as a whole. Hence, it could be created, it could be given by lawgivers or others who understand these valid connections, for example, by an honest sophist or a true artisan of *technē basilike* — the philosopher. Accordingly, the proper name is the fruit of hard working; it takes a lot of investigation to find one.

¹⁸ See, for example, *Plato and Hesiod*. Eds. G.R. Boys-Stones, J.H. Haubold. Oxford 2010; J. Strauss Clay: *Hesiod's Cosmos*. Cambridge 2003.

¹⁹ This important change of values is noticed by Jenny Strauss Clay. She argues that the transition from truth given by gods to truth worked hard by people is crucial for understanding not only these two poems of Hesiod, but also the myth of three eras of mankind, famously told by the poet. See J. Strauss Clay: *Op. cit.*

²⁰ Hes. WD 1, 1—10. See Hesiod: *Works and Days*. In: *The Homeric Hymns...*; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.01.0132>; access: 10.07.2015.

²¹ The first and much more detailed approach to the subject of Plato's conception of language was published in materials of Athens Institute for Education and Research. See www.atiner.gr/docs/ABSTRACT-PUBLICATIONS.htm; www.atiner.gr/paper-subjects/philosophy-papers.htm; access: 10.07.2015.

II. Proper Way of Investigation

What is the proper way of such investigation? — one can ask. In *Corpus Platonicum* there are several quotations on the relation and proper measure to be found. To start with the obvious, Plato's Socrates tells his pupils that there are two ways to inquire, which are correspondent with each other and should be followed concurrently: *synopsis* and *diareisis* [*Phaidros* 265d—266b]. *Phaidros* is a masterpiece of synoptical research and shows the importance of this method in the philosophical loom. One can find even the definition of a philosopher as a *synoptiker aner* here: the proper philosopher is someone who can use words and writings wisely, keeping in mind that the texture of worlds cannot yield the proper crop — it is rather similar to seasonal “gardens of Hyacinth.” However, the properly constructed writing brings memories of the right path from something particular, detailed, extensive and circumstantial to something general and universal. It shows the “way up.” By contrast, Plato's Guest from Elea shows how to provide the proper division, which links every whole with its parts, and every set with its elements. In other words, it demonstrates how to ride the “way down” from generality to detail correctly. It is important to “go up” and to “go down” many times: “For learning these objects it is necessary to learn at the same time both what is false and what is true of the whole of Existence, and that through the most diligent and prolonged investigation [...]; and it is by means of examination of each of these objects, comparing one with another — names and definitions, visions and sense-perceptions, — proving them by kindly proofs and employing questionings and answering that are void of envy — it is by such means, and hardly so, that there burst out the light of intelligence and reason regarding each object in the mind of him who uses every effort of which mankind is capable.”²² Plato uses both metaphorical and literal way of presenting these methodologically most important theses. Still, he adds one more, putting it openly, without any poetic or rhetoric embellishments. While reading his *Parmenides*, one can

²² Plat. L. 7, 344b1—10. See Plato: *VII Letter*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. VII. Trans. R.G. Bury. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1966; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0164%3Aletter%3D7%3Asection%3D344b>; access: 10.07.2015. Plato: *Epistles*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1903; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0163%3Aletter%3D7%3Asection%3D344b>; access: 10.07.2015.

witness the significance of hypothesis: “[...] you must consider not only what happens if a particular hypothesis is true, but also what happens if it is not true.”²³ Keeping in mind that Plato’s *Parmenides* presents a necessity of taking the third road in investigation as well, one manages to grasp the whole of Plato’s methodology.

These are the rudiments of proper investigation. How to use these indications in search of proper, valid names? In Plato’s *Cratylus* one can find the clue: directly in the beginning of the dialogue, when the main aim of discussion is set, the old proverb is quoted and used as an argument: “[...] »It is hard to comprehend [μάθειν] the magnitude of beauty« and the knowledge of names is not a small thing [...]”²⁴ It is important to notice that the verb *māthein* is used here. It means: firstly, ‘to learn’ (especially by inquiry), ‘to understand,’ ‘to know;’ secondly, ‘to perceive by senses,’ ‘to remark,’ ‘to notice’ (it could be part of a phrase which means ‘to know that you are’); thirdly, ‘to understand,’ ‘to comprehend’ (in dialogues it could be used in a phrase meaning ‘perfectly!’); and fourthly, in Attic Greek it is part of a question similar to ‘for what new reason?,’ ‘wherefore?’²⁵ But it is easy to notice that the same root MAΘ is present in noun μάθημα, which means in general: ‘teaching,’ ‘lesson,’ ‘knowledge,’ ‘perception,’ ‘recognition’ and ‘maths’ in particular. Therefore, it could be helpful to add this specific meaning to the *heuresis* of the passage quoted above. Hence, the right knowledge is connected with ways of a mathematician, and the proper name has the exact “measure.”

Plato lectures on the proper measure and right proportion many times on several occasions, while undertaking different subjects. He uses the mathematical perspective when he gives two linguistic examples of co-existence of oneness and plurality in his *Philebus*.

²³ *Parm.* 136a1—2. See Plato: *Parmenides*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. IX. Trans. H.N. Fowler. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1925; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174%3Atext%3DParm.%3Asection%3D136a>; access: 10.07.2015. Plato: *Parmenides*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1903; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0173%3Atext%3DParm.%3Asection%3D136a>; access: 10.07.2015.

²⁴ *Crat.* 384b2. See Plato: *Cratylus*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. XII. Trans. H.N. Fowler. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1921. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plat.+Crat.+384b&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172>; access: 10.07.2015. Plato: *Cratylus*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1903; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0171%3Atext%3DCrat.%3Asection%3D384b>; access: 10.07.2015.

²⁵ [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=maqe%3Dn&la=greek&can=maqe%3Dn0&prior=e\)/xei&d=Perseus: text: 1999.01.0171: text=Crat.: section=384b&i=1#Perseus: text: 1999.04.0058: entry=manqa/nw-contents](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=maqe%3Dn&la=greek&can=maqe%3Dn0&prior=e)/xei&d=Perseus: text: 1999.01.0171: text=Crat.: section=384b&i=1#Perseus: text: 1999.04.0058: entry=manqa/nw-contents); access: 10.07.2015.

Firstly, he considers vocal chords and their proportions understood as a number;²⁶ secondly, he covers types of letters and phonemes.²⁷ But most importantly, he states that everything that exists consists of some unity and some plurality, and everything has the natural element of limitation and the element of indetermination.²⁸

This famous passage is crucial to the modern understanding of Plato's epistemology, as well as it is meaningful for the reconstruction of his concept of being. Still, it is worth remembering that Plato's Socrates gives advice on how to perceive correctly, while answering the question on true value. Hence, this advice has ethical potential, as well. There is another passage in *Corpus Platonicum*, where one can find similar thought expressed even more clearly. In *Gorgias* it is written: "[...] who desires to be happy must ensue and practice temperance, [...] he should concentrate all his own and his city's efforts on this one business of providing a man who would be blessed with the needful justice and temperance [...]. And wise men tell us, Callicles, that heathen and earth and gods and men are held together by communion and friendship, by orderliness, temperance, and justice; and that is the reason [...], why they call whole of the world by the name of order, not of disorder or dissoluteness. Now you, as it seems to me, do not give proper attention to this, for all your cleverness, but have failed to observe the great power of geometrical equality amongst both gods and men: you hold that self-advantage is what one ought to practice, because you neglect geometry."²⁹

²⁶ *Phil.* 17c—e.; See Plato: *Philebus*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. IX. Trans. H.N. Fowles. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1925; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174%3Atext%3DPhileb.%3Asection%3D17c>; access: 10.07.2015. Plato: *Philebus*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Ed. J. Barnet. Oxford 1903; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0173%3Atext%3DPhileb.%3Asection%3D17c>; access: 10.07.2015.

²⁷ *Phil.* 18b—d.; See Plato: *Philebus*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. IX. Trans. H.N. Fowles. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1925; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0173%3Atext%3DPhileb.%3Asection%3D18b>; access: 10.07.2015. Plato: *Philebus*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Ed. J. Barnet. Oxford 1903; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174%3Atext%3DPhileb.%3Asection%3D18b>; access: 10.07.2015.

²⁸ *Phil.* 16c—3e.; See Plato: *Philebus*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. IX. Trans. H.N. Fowles. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1925. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0173%3Atext%3DPhileb.%3Asection%3D16c>; access: 10.07.2015.

²⁹ *Gorg.* 507d1—508a7.; See Plato: *Gorgias*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. III. Trans. W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1967; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0178%3Atext%3DGorg.%3Asection%3D507d>; access: 10.07.2015. Plato: *Gorgias*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Ed.

In conclusion, the proper way of perceiving the world, the way which makes it possible to catch the essence in everything, is the mixture of three methodological procedures: *synopsis*, *diairesis*, and *hypothesis*. Plato's dialectic, which operates in these three ways, is correspondent to the cosmic order; hence, it is adequate to see any proportion and harmony in things and phenomena. In many dialogues in which these procedures are evidently presented or implicitly applied, the "geometric understanding" is thought. This understanding of things shows them in the connection with everything else, and it is a proper foundation for ethical acting.

III. Hierarchy of Perceiving the World

Plato's dialogues show several ways of perception. Plato tries out several definitions of knowledge as well. One of them presents knowledge as dependent on proper statements. So on the one hand, it is important to consider the possibility of communication, on the other it is indispensable to think over the correspondence and suitability of names to communicate things and phenomena.

Which one of the ways of exploration mentioned by Plato leads to the clarified notion, which one creates the pure concept? — one can ask. Or maybe, there is not one source of notions and concepts, but there are a few ones.

The question of relation between a name, a picture and an image is asked in *Sophist*: "And so, if we say he has an art, as it were, of making appearance, he will easily take advantage of our poverty of terms to make a counter attack, twisting our words to the opposite meaning; when we call him an image-maker, he will ask what we mean by »image«, exactly."³⁰ This topic is presented as crucial in *Res-*

J. Burnet. Oxford 1903; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0177%3Atext%3DGorg.%3Asection%3D507d>; access: 10.07.2015

³⁰ *Sophist*, 239c4—239d5; See Plato: *Sophist*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. XII. Trans. H.N. Fowler. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1921; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172%3Atext%3DSoph.%3Asection%3D239d>; access: 10.07.2015. Plato: *Sophist*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1903; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0171%3Atext%3DSoph.%3Asection%3D239c>; access: 10.07.2015.

publica 534a1—9, where the similarities, analogies and differences between several types of recognition and knowledge are discussed in four different orders.

Plato investigates human reception, experience and recognition while using seven different words and notions to express his thoughts. Deciphering Plato's usage of these terms, and decoding their context, I will try to establish their meanings. *Doxa* is a knowledge that is based on experience and is open to verification by reasoning. This is the social type of cognition, which is shared in communication and can be taught. It could be the foundation of personal or group understanding of the reality. *Episteme* is also based on experience; it is proved true by practice and has theoretical background, so it could be both learned and taught. *Pistis* is an individual belief that is verified by its common occurrence. This belief is shared in communication by the application of symbols and conformed by mythical narrations. Plato takes into consideration not only the type of knowledge, but also the way in which the knowledge is mustered. He distinguishes *dianoia* and *noesis* — the first one means the empirical experience, which grasps the proportions in measurements of the noticed objects and recognizes the essence of their shapes, so it helps in understanding of the common rules as well. The second one is purely cerebral — it is the appreciation of essence, which does not need any help from the empirical experience. Plato also uses two terms to indicate the way of mastering the images needed in communication. *Eikasia* is an imagination, which operates within the frames of common sense and reasoning and uses the effects of empirical experience. *Phantasia* is a source of images which mixes impressions and sensations together and crosses the limits of common sense and reasoning.

Then, as quoted: “[...] is not dialectics the only process of inquiry that advances in this manner, doing away with hypotheses, up to the first principle itself in order to find confirmation there? And it is literally true that when the eye of the soul is sunk in the barbaric slough of the Orphic myth, dialectic gently draws it forth and leads it up, employing as helpers and co-operators in this conversion the studies and science which we enumerated, which we called sciences often from habit, though they really need some other designation, connoting more clearness than opinion and more obscurity than science. ‘Understanding,’ [...] was the term we employed. But I presume we shall not dispute about the name when things of such moment lie before us for consideration. [...] Are you satisfied, then, [...] as before, to call the division science [*epistēmē*], the second understanding

[*dianoia*], the third belief [*pistis*], and the fourth conjecture or picture-thought [*eikasia*] — and the last two collectively opinion [*doxa*], and the first two intellection [*noēsis*], opinion [*doxa*] dealing with generation [*genos*] and intellection [*noēsis*] with essence [*ousia*], and this relation being expressed in the proportion: as essence [*ousia*] is to generation [*genos*], so is intellection [*noēsis*] to opinion [*doxa*]; and as intellection [*noēsis*] is to opinion [*doxa*], so is science [*epistēmē*] to belief [*pistis*], and understanding [*dianoia*] to image-thinking [*eikasia*] or surmise? But the relation between their objective correlates and the division into two parts of each of these, the opinable, namely, and the intelligible, let us dismiss, Glaucon, lest it involve us in discussion many times as long as the preceding.”³¹

Plato compares all seven³² terms with one another. It is possible to notice a few relations in which he puts them together. Firstly, *doxa* is similar to *eikasia* and *pistis*, while *noesis* is analogical to *dianoia* and *episteme*; the first three are unverified, the second three are verified by experience. Secondly, his Socrates notices that there are three sets of opposites: *noesis* — *doxa*, *episteme* — *pistis*, *dianoia* — *eikasia*. In each pair, one pole is more essential; it is similar to *ousia*. The other deals with generation; it is similar to *genos*. Thirdly, there are three types of paradigm: the social one (*pistis*, *episteme*, *phantasia*), the paradigm of thinking (*noesis*, *episteme*, *doxa*, *pistis*), and the paradigm of perception (*dianoia*, *eikasia*). Fourthly, there are three sources of images: *phantasia*, *eikasia* and *noesis*, but only *noesis* is the source of proper images and proper names. Hence, it is reasonable to discuss the hierarchy in the ways of perception of the world: the best one is the *noesis*, the second best — the *episteme*. A notion can be a by-product of *phantasia*, or created by *eikasia*. But only *noesis* gives a proper image and the right notion which captures the essence of the thing.

³¹ *Resp.* 533c—534a. See Plato: *Republic*. In: *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. V—VI. Trans. P. Shorey. Cambridge (Massachusetts) — London 1969; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0168%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D533c>; access: 10.07.2015. Plato: *Republic*. In: *Platonis Opera*. Ed. J. Burnet. Oxford 1903; <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0167%3Abook%3D7%3Asection%3D533c>; access: 10.07.2015.

³² There are only first six terms in the quoted part, but the word *phantasia* occurs in *Respublica* as well (in location 382e10). In total, Plato uses this word seven times. Beside the already mentioned appearance in *Respublica*, four times in *Sophist* (260c9, 260e4, 263d6, 264a6), and twice in *Theaetetus* (152c1, 161e8).

IV. Right Measure

To receive, in dianoetic way, means to use the abstract, hence also the unchangeable form of the ever-changing matter, which is experienced by senses. *Dianoia* is the meeting of material and sensual experience and pure abstraction half-way through. Maybe that is why dianoetical recognition establishes the problem of the desire to name, it introduce numeric relations in names and presumably other relations as well; it is very hard not to think about anything without thinking in the way of the world of things, the world, which is rightly received in dianoetical way. *Dianoia* grasps the numerical and geometric structure of the reality, it shows the net of relations, which keeps everything that is together.

But at the same time, it is the dianoic recognition which is to blame for the untamed need for coining names. We humans cannot think without naming; to think we have to use words; hence, we name everything, even the pure hypothetical concept of nothingness. It shows that the notions and concepts should not be created on the dianoetical level. Is the epistemological one more adjustable to the mission? *Episteme* is similar to *dianoia*; it is also the mixture of specific and essential, concrete and discrete, empirical and abstract. However, in *episteme* the social valor is eminent — it is not the individual way of perceiving the world; it is the culture-dependent way of reception of the reality that uses the names and patterns which are created in co-dependence in communication. Therefore, in *episteme* the results of recognition hang not only on the directness of experience, the correctness of reasoning, but also on the adequacy of notions and appropriateness of thinking patterns. It is necessary to emphasize that the last part — the *episteme* — is not pure perception; it is also the recognition of names and patterns which have already been made, prepared by previous experience. So it is crucial to consider the source of those names and patterns. If they are the product of cultural habit or social agreement, they probably just work so. They can also be simply wrong and mislead the user.

In the already quoted part of *Sophist*, where the necessity for consideration of nothingness and somethingness are cleared up, the term '*arithmema*' is used in the context created by the usage of the word '*dianoia*.' Firstly, it is noticed that whatever is thought is thought in a specific pattern of previous experience, so it has its hypothetical number [*Sophist* 238a6—9]. Hence, secondly, human

dianoetical experience, or maybe even the structure of language as such, makes us use the number even when we are trying to grasp clear concept of nothing [*Sophist* 238b2—7]. *Arithmema*, the number is rooted deeply in the structure of being, that is why the prescription given by Socrates in the beginning of *Philebus* commands always to look after the number and measure.

The only way of perception without any previously taken patterns is noesis. That is why, it is possible to grasp the purely hypothetical concept of nothing without falling into the trap of naming it and giving it the pretence of thingness or thingship — it is pure thinking. Thinking, in which all images are abandoned and all notions are left out. As I see it, the proper source of notions lies in the space of noetical thinking. How it is possible? — one can ask.

V. Bi-polarity of One-Plenty and Its Repercussion.

I assume that the four locations from the four different dialogues are similar in their matter and function. I mean the already quoted opening passage from *Philebus*, the paragraph from *Letter VII* analysed before, the mentioned above part of *Sophist*, and the majority of *Parmenides*. In all these places the exercise is executed, and the aim of it is to analyze the frames in which words and notions capture the main subject of philosophical thinking — the being.

In *Sophist*, the presented conclusion shows that there are several names of that subject and in every one of the names, the essence of the subject is muted and reshaped: the subject is, and this is its essence, so it is quite right to use the name “being.” It is everything that is and it is all that is — the common object used in proper predication is the right name. Dianoetical and epistemological recognition show that subject as “movement”; hence, this is its next name. The possibility of negation is as crucial to thinking as naming; therefore, the “rest” is also the name used in predication. All that is, is partly similar and partly different, but it is identical in its being, so two other names for this main subject are needed: “identity” and “difference.” In each name the subject of philosophical thinking takes another aspect. The noetical recognition is needed to grasp in the name the essence of this main subject as close as possible — it is the

“One.” Everything that is, is as one, and this is the first proper object predicted on this subject. It is even more primal that the predication on being.

In *Parmenides*, when two ways of investigation are planned, one starting with the statement that “One is,” the other with the thesis that “One is not,” the connections between names which are the first and common objects of predication are thought over and over again. Both ways taken together, according to the advice given in the dialogue, show the dialectical nature of perception and the limitation of language. The main subject of thought, the first epistemological topic and the first level of ontology, which can be rightly named the One, can be predicated as non-being, and all of that is possible because human perception captures only similarity of essence, not the essence as such.

That is why constant vigilance is needed. That is why all possible ways of recognition should be put to good use and tried together.

Therefore, the source of notions lies in the noetical experience, to which all verified ways of experience lead. All these types of cognition, even the false ones, are important because they produce images, names, definitions and other pieces of knowledge. All that put together in different order, in “way up” and “way down,” checked multiple times, produce the noetical experience. In *noesis*, the essence is visible; this sparkle of truth is the source of proper notion. However, before it is possible to notice this sparkle, one has to take the long road paved with many other names, images and concepts.

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