

## THE KNOWLEDGE UNACKNOWLEDGED IN THE *THEAETETUS*

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### 1. Introduction

(1) KNOWLEDGE (*epistēmē*), according to Hypothesis 3 of the *Theaetetus*, is true judgement with an account.<sup>1</sup> Socrates explicates this additively through formations with *προσ-*. True judgement is the base, and something called ‘an account’ the addendum. Likewise in the *Meno*: the *aitias logismos* (reasoned working out of the cause) is a tether imposed on an *orthē doxa* to prevent it from running away (97 D 6–98 A 8).<sup>2</sup> What makes such a definition additive is not simply that it shows knowledge as entailing true judgement while being somehow more than true judgement. Strictly speaking, additivity implies a stronger condition, namely: the true judgement that *would* amount to knowledge if combined with something else is or was available on its own in the absence of this something else, and therefore in the absence of knowledge. The aim of this paper is to explore what the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* show about the attempt to define knowledge by *adding* something to true judgement. More specifically, the aim is to see whether Plato’s theory in these dialogues is that knowledge in every case, regardless of topic, partly

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My thanks to two *OSAP* referees for helpful comments and to Victor Caston for his particularly valuable advice.

<sup>1</sup> δόξαν ἀληθῆ μετὰ λόγου, 202 C 8–9; D 6–7; 201 C 8–D 1. I follow what I believe is still the mainstream in translating ἐπιστήμη in Plato as ‘knowledge’. Sometimes ‘expert knowledge’ is suitable. ‘Understanding’, while a useful corrective to any anachronistic assumption that justification is the primary desideratum, is too intellectual for a general translation, given that *Theaetetus* is allowed to define ἐπιστήμη as perception.

<sup>2</sup> προσλαβόντα λόγον 202 C 3–4; λόγον προσγεγόμενον 206 C 4; προσλαβόντα, λόγον τε προσειληφέναι 207 C 1–2; τὴν διαφορὰν προσλάβη 208 E 4; προσλάβω τὸν λόγον 209 A 2; προσλαβεῖν λόγον D 4; προσδοξάσαι D 5; προσλαβεῖν E 3; λόγου πρόσληψις 210 A 5; λόγος προσγιγνώμενος B 2. In several places outside the *Meno* and *Theaetetus* Plato speaks of knowledge as involving an account, but without any plain implication that the account is *added to* something: *Phaedo* 75 B 5–6; *Sym.* 202 A 5–9; cf. *Rep.* 7, 534 B 3–6; *Tim.* 51 E 3–4.

consists of a true judgement that could be had on its own even in the absence of knowledge. I shall argue that in the *Sophist* Plato rejects this picture, at least for some important cases of knowledge or possible knowledge. A distinction, however, is needed. We shall be concerned with Plato's response to a certain question, but what exactly is the question? It might be (Q1): 'For every *O*, is it possible for someone to have true judgement of *O* and not have knowledge of *O* herself?'; or it might be (Q2): 'For every *O*, is it possible for someone to have true judgement of *O* and there not be anyone, present or past, who has or did have knowledge of *O*?'.<sup>3</sup> What follows will be mainly on Plato in relation to Q1, but at moments Q2 becomes relevant.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The refutation of Hypothesis 2 in the *Theaetetus*

(2) Hypothesis 3, additively construed, is introduced to replace the refuted Hypothesis 2, that knowledge is simply true judgement (187 A–B; 200 D–E). For the purpose of this paper I shall assume without argument that 'true judgement' means the same in both proposals. I think that this is a reasonable assumption in itself, given Socrates' additive approach, and I can see no textual evidence to the contrary. Granted the assumption, how we understand the second hypothesis is crucial for how we understand the third one. In this section I shall discuss the refutation of Hypothesis 2. This discussion has two main purposes: to bring out the meaning of 'true judgement' in both hypotheses, and to induce a certain scepticism about additivity even before *Theaetetus* and Socrates move to Hypothe-

<sup>3</sup> The locutions 'to have judgement of *O*' and 'to judge of *O*' are meant to reproduce Plato's frequent use of *δοξάζειν* with a grammatical object such as 'Theaetetus' or 'the beautiful' rather than with a 'that' clause or equivalent: *Theaet.* 188 A 7–8; D 9; 189 A 6–10; C 2–4; 190 C 6–7; D 8–12; 202 B 8; 207 B 1; C 2 (*δοξαστικοῦ*); 209 B 2–3; 209 E 8. This parallels a familiar use of 'to know'. D. Bostock, *Plato's Theaetetus* [*Theaetetus*] (Oxford, 1988), 164 and 269–70, remarks on the strangeness even in ancient Greek of this use of *δοξάζειν*. Even when the complement is a 'that' clause or Greek equivalent, it may sometimes help the argument to hear it as a noun phrase on a par with 'Theaetetus' etc. Similarly when the complement is what we would call a predicate or property *F*, in passages where Plato speaks of judging *F* concerning (*περί*) something else (e.g. 188 D 3–4; 188 D 9). Many scholars have discussed whether knowledge for Plato is of propositions or of objects, and whether he sees knowledge of things as primarily propositional or a matter of acquaintance. This paper sidesteps these questions.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. in the mathematician example in paragraph 24.

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sis 3. The refutation of Hypothesis 2 depends on showing that mere true judgement falls short of being knowledge; but when, within the framework of this hypothesis, we try to apply the additive model to that superior cognitive condition we run into difficulty.

(3) Hypothesis 2 (201 A 4–C 3) is the Cinderella of the dialogue.<sup>5</sup> Socrates dispatches it quickly. Unlike its sisters he does not feed it up or dress it in different interpretations before administering the *coup de grâce*. (Perhaps the long digression on false judgement, 187 D–200 D, is meant to undermine Hypothesis 2, on the basis that we cannot understand true judgement without understanding judgement in general, which entails making sense of false judgement? But then there is no need for a distinct rebuttal of Hypothesis 2, since the collapse of the aviary attempt to account for arithmetical mistakes has already done the job.) At any rate, the distinct refutation of Hypothesis 2, exceptionally for this dialogue, is very brief (the proposal, says Socrates at 201 A 4, ‘surely won’t need a long look’), and seems rather unexciting. It turns on the example of a jury (201 A–C). A jury can only be led to a true verdict by orators speaking under constraint of the water-clock. Socrates makes two main points. First, the orators merely persuade the dicasts of what happened: they do not *teach*, i.e. demonstrate, the conclusion. This argument assumes that a cognitive state produced by one person in another is knowledge only if it results from teaching (cf. *Meno* 87 C 5–6; 89 D 3–5), and the duration of teaching, it is implied, is dictated only by the subject-matter and intellectual needs of the recipient. A process is not teaching if it is timed to conclude within a predetermined span (cf. 172 C 2; D 4–E 4; 173 B 3–C 6; 187 D 10–11 on the leisureliness of rational enquiry by contrast with law-court speeches). Socrates’ second main point is that someone who did not see the event does not know what really happened, and the dicasts were not present at it (201 B 9 and B 1). This second point is reached

<sup>5</sup> But by no means neglected by scholars: see M. Burnyeat, ‘Socrates and the Jury: Paradoxes in Plato’s Distinction between Knowledge and True Belief’ [‘Jury’], *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, suppl. 54 (1980), 173–91; F. Lewis, ‘Knowledge and the Eyewitness: Plato, *Theaetetus* 201a–c’, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 11 (1981), 185–97; J. Stramel, ‘A New Verdict on the “Jury Passage”’, *Theaetetus* 201a–c’, *Ancient Philosophy*, 9 (1989) 1–14; M. Burnyeat, *The Theaetetus of Plato*, introduction to the translation by M. Levett [‘Introduction’] (Indianapolis, 1990); K. Vogt, *Belief and Truth: A Skeptic Reading of Plato* (Oxford, 2012); T. Nawar, ‘Knowledge and True Belief at *Theaetetus* 201a–c’, *British Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 21 (2013), 1052–70.

in words that bring out the impotence of persuasion to compensate for the fact that the dicasts were not themselves present at the robbery or assault.

SOC. . . . do you suppose any of them [sc. the law-court speakers] to be such clever teachers that, in the short time allowed by the water-clock, they can successfully teach judges who were not there when people were being robbed or subjected to violence of some other sort, the truth of what actually happened?

THEAET. I don't think it's possible . . . (201 A 10–B 4)<sup>6</sup>

The wording may also be meant to suggest that if there *were*, in the law courts, adequate teaching of the truth of what took place, this would cancel any cognitive deficit that dicasts are under through not having been present at the crime: teaching, were it possible, would (if done adequately) transmit a first-hand authority<sup>7</sup> about the event that ranks as high in the cognitive scale as the first-hand authority of eyewitnesses.

(4) Some interpreters see a tension between these two main points.<sup>8</sup> By the first point, the dicasts lack knowledge because they have not received teaching, whereas by the second they lack it because they were not eyewitnesses. We should note that the text does not state in so many words that an eyewitness of the crime is thereby a knower of what happened. It says only that a non-eyewitness is thereby a non-knower (201 B 8–9). It is, however, very natural to understand this as implying that the eyewitness as such possesses what the non-eyewitness as such lacks, namely knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Now, there is certainly a tension if we assume that being taught and being an eyewitness are each sufficient and necessary for knowledge in general. This is because eyewitnesses get their knowledge through perception as distinct from teaching, and we are taught things

<sup>6</sup> The translation is based on the edition of Duke *et al.* (Oxford, 1995). I mainly follow Christopher Rowe's translation (*Plato: Theaetetus and Sophist* (Cambridge, 2015)), the most significant difference being that I have changed his 'believe' and 'belief' to 'judge' and 'judgement'.

<sup>7</sup> This by contrast with the derivative authority of a reliable recipient of reliable testimony.

<sup>8</sup> Burnyeat, 'Jury', 176–80. See also Burnyeat, 'Introduction', 124–5; S. G. Chappell, 'Plato on Knowledge in the *Theaetetus*' ['Knowledge'], in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2013) <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-theaetetus/>> § 7.6 [accessed 1 May 2016].

<sup>9</sup> Here we abstract from the question of 'teaching'.

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without thereby becoming eyewitnesses of them: many things that are in principle teachable (for Plato, perhaps all such things) are not of a nature to be witnessed through the senses. This problem, however, does not affect the main conclusion, that true judgement is different from knowledge. The conclusion is overdetermined: there are two reasons, each sufficient, why the jurymen fail to get knowledge. The reasons conflict if eyewitnessing and being adequately taught are each meant as a necessary condition for every case of knowledge, but I think we should understand them as a disjunction, the main point being that neither is instanced in the jury. In other words, the refutation of Hypothesis 2 should be unpacked as follows: the dicasts' true conclusion is obviously not based on their own exposure to the event, so they must have reached it by mediation of another person; this person-to-person operation must have been either teaching or persuasion, and (of these two) only teaching gives knowledge; the water-clock shows that the operation was not teaching; therefore it was only persuasion, and its result is not knowledge.

(5) This argument assumes some kind of radical difference between teaching and persuasion. But the text gives very little help towards seeing what the difference is. It is silent too on what kinds of things are proper topics of the teaching that yields knowledge. It would be a mistake (as will emerge from the argument of paragraphs 6 ff.) to think of persuasion as necessarily devoid of argument and reasoning. I suggest, and shall assume in what follows, that teaching here is envisaged as a process such that if successful, the one taught ends up in the same epistemic relation to the subject-matter as the teacher (and the teacher's teacher etc.): that is, the taught person ends up equally authoritative and epistemically independent. It is thus a tautology that any process that depends on acceptance of someone else's testimony is not teaching, however well argued such a process may be; also that any information whose transmission essentially depends on testimony lies outside the scope of the teachable. It seems reasonable to assume that, for Plato here, the matter of whether a particular alleged assault took place is in principle not teachable. At any rate this fits well with the thought that being an eyewitness, and being in receipt of adequate teaching, are alternative explanations of having knowledge, or explanations of alternative kinds of cases of having knowledge. I shall

therefore proceed on the assumption that here in the *Theaetetus* the reason the dicasts are said to lack knowledge of the crime is not that law-court orators simply lack the skill to teach about it adequately to these non-eyewitnesses, but that this kind of question is not in principle teachable: on a matter like this, no kind of verbal or argumentative procedure could raise non-eyewitnesses to a level of first-hand epistemic authority comparable to the authority of good eyewitnesses, i.e. ones who made their observation under good conditions.<sup>10</sup> The possibility of such an elevation would imply that any truly adequately taught dicasts, recognizing, as they surely would, that they had been adequately taught, could simply dispense with the testimony of witnesses present at the event: it would be rational for these dicasts to end up setting all such evidence completely on one side in arriving at their own true and knowledgeable conclusion. The absurdity of this seems to me to favour the view that Plato, rather than silently keeping in play the possibility that things such as particular assaults are in principle topics for whatever he here means by ‘teaching’, is instead silently excluding it.<sup>11</sup>

(6) I turn now to the question of the meaning of ‘true judgement’ in the second (hence also, by assumption, in the third) hypothesis. If we dwell on the general inferiority in Plato of persuasion as compared to teaching, we may take the jury example to be showing us a verdict reached by rhetorical manipulation, hence as resting on inadequate grounds; and since at this point the dialogue treats the jury’s verdict as a definite case of true judgement, we may easily end up with the impression that typical true judgement in the *Theaetetus* is poorly based and unreliable. I want to combat this impression because the main argument of this paper will depend on the assumption, defended below, that true judgement in Hypothesis 2 and by implication in Hypothesis 3 is typically quite a reliable thing. In the first place: it is true that ‘what the jury lacks

<sup>10</sup> This is less because an assault is an empirical particular than because it is not a regular occurrence, is transient, and lies outside most people’s observational field; see n. 25 and paragraph 28.

<sup>11</sup> However, if he sees the issue in front of the jury as in principle unteachable, the point about the water-clock in law courts is something of a joke (or is just a literary echo of the contrast at 172 D 9 ff. between philosophical leisure and the frantic pressures of the law court): it is not as if the court orators would succeed in conveying knowledge if only they were allowed to speak long enough.

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is adequate grounds'<sup>12</sup> if the standard of adequacy is demonstrative proof ('teaching'), but the most enlightened judicial process in the world necessarily falls short of that. Second, when, for example, in the *Gorgias* Plato thunders against manipulative public speakers, his quarrel is that they manipulate on questions where the decision is bound up with unconsidered assumptions about good and evil that can and should be tested, corrected, developed, etc. by rational argument ('teaching'). But if the issue is not susceptible to teaching Plato has no ground for complaining that public speakers *only* exercise persuasion.<sup>13</sup> This is the most that anyone can do, and even if speakers and audience approach the issue in a spirit of intellectual responsibility, the process is still persuasion, not teaching. In accordance with the discussion in paragraph 5, I shall suppose that Plato was not unaware of this. These considerations, in my view, make it unreasonable to assume that because the jurymen in the *Theaetetus* are said to be persuaded in a court setting by court speakers, it is implied that they are in all cases irrationally persuaded. In fact I shall maintain below the stronger thesis that it is reasonable to regard true judgement in the second and third hypotheses as typically not unreasonable—or at least as based on some kind of reason.<sup>14</sup>

(7) This is notwithstanding Socrates' ironic touch at 201 A 7–10 about the superlative wisdom of orators and advocates, whereby they persuade others of 'whatever they want'. Note that once Socrates has established that the court speakers do not *teach*, he is happy to mention the case in which the jury are 'justly persuaded' (201 B 8). He allows too that some jurymen may be 'superlative' (*ἄκρος*, C 5) in carrying out their task. Earlier he presented *doxa* as the conclusion of a debate within the soul (189 E 4–190 A 8), and mentioned that the conclusion might be reached by a gradual process or by a quick leap (190 A 2–3). This may be a reference to the difference between careful and rushed thinking, and the superlative juror may be an example of the former. Acknowledging that some jurymen do a good job is consistent with a negative attitude towards this type of activity as a whole. Plato may well think here that since persuasion is a genre whose remit does allow for unscrupulous use, no instance

<sup>12</sup> Burnyeat, 'Introduction', 125.

<sup>13</sup> The court speakers' task is to enable the jury to reach a view on what happened, not on whether it was just or unjust etc.; cf. Arist. *Rhet.* 1, 1354<sup>a</sup>26–31; <sup>b</sup>11–15.

<sup>14</sup> This is mainly in line with Burnyeat, 'Jury', 177–8.

of this genre, however decent of its kind, counts as teaching, i.e. the imparting of knowledge. Teaching is a genre such that no one engaging in it can set out to impart 'whatever he wants'.

(8) More will be said in Section 3 on the force of 'true judgement' in the present context. First, however, let us return to the additive model for knowledge and in the light of it look at Socrates' refutation of the second hypothesis. Admittedly, we are not logically bound to scrutinize the second hypothesis in terms of the additive model. For additivity first enters the picture as explicating the third hypothesis, that knowledge is true judgement with an account. Moreover, this paper's assumption that the force of 'true judgement' is the same in both the second and the third hypotheses does not entail that *additivity* is in any way relevant to the second one and its refutation. Still, it is very natural to suppose that, once the third hypothesis has been additively presented, we are meant to look back from this new perspective on the refutation of the second one, in particular on the way in which eyewitnessing, or lack of it, comes in. But when trying to do so we hit a brick wall. As noted already (paragraph 4), Plato does not actually say that eyewitnesses of the crime would have had knowledge of it, but we can hardly be blamed for getting the impression, at least for the space of the argument in question, that eyewitnesses would have been knowers. The dicasts' epistemic state is cast as inferior to a different epistemic state, identified with that of eyewitnesses; hence if the eyewitness state is not knowledge it is presumably inferior to knowledge (whatever that might conceivably be in this example) even though superior to the best dicastic state. Rather than postulate an otherwise unidentified intermediate state, it seems more economical to allow that in this type of case the eyewitness (observing under good conditions etc.) does have knowledge.<sup>15</sup> This after all is what common sense would say.<sup>16</sup> However, eyewitness knowledge resists analysis in additive terms. It is not as if those who witnessed a crime necessarily had a true judgement about it before or independently of seeing it occur, which true judgement was then elevated to knowledge by the addition of sensory input. We can all agree that eyewitness knowledge is

<sup>15</sup> Postulating the intermediate state generates an *a fortiori* argument: the dicasts lack knowledge because what they have is inferior to something inferior to knowledge.

<sup>16</sup> Ancient Greek common sense might have said this using *εἰδέναι* rather than a phrase about having *ἐπιστήμη*, but at 201 B 8–C 2 Plato treats them as synonymous.

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the source of a corresponding true judgement in the eyewitnesses, and thus a source, via testimony, of a jury's eventual true judgement; but this status as source certainly does not entail that eyewitness knowledge simply *is* a true judgement transmissible to non-eyewitnesses plus some other factor which the latter cannot share.

(9) Note that in the earlier discussion of false judgement the *Theaetetus* has already given what retrospectively appears as a fairly energetic nudge towards questioning the additive model.<sup>17</sup> The nudge is detectable by two steps. (a) First go back to the passage where Socrates suggested that thought and *doxa* are speech within the soul (189 E 4–190 A 6):

SOC. Do you call thinking what I call it?

THEAET. What do you call it?

SOC. Talk [*λόγος*] which the soul conducts with itself about whatever it is investigating. That's what I am claiming, at any rate, as someone ignorant about the subject. The image I have of the soul as it is in thought is exactly of it in conversation with itself, asking itself and answering questions and saying yes to this and no to that. When it fixes on something, whether having arrived at it quite slowly or in a quick leap, and it is now saying the same thing consistently, without wavering, that is what we set down as a judgement it makes. So I for my part call forming and having a judgement [*δοξάζειν*] talking, and (I call) judgement [*δόξα*] a talk that has been conducted, not with someone else, or out loud, but in silence with oneself.<sup>18</sup>

The immediate point is that to judge is to assert something.<sup>19</sup> The passage also depicts judgement as reached through an internal debating process, although this feature seems unnecessary for the immediate point (an assertion is an assertion however it originates).<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the passage does not say that judgements are reached only through internal debate. Even so, I am going to assume that Plato includes this feature because he wants to present it as quite

<sup>17</sup> See Burnyeat, 'Introduction', 119–23 and 201–3, for exercises in retrospective reading of parts of the *Theaetetus*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Soph.* 263 D 1–264 A 2; *Phileb.* 38 C 4–E 3; *Theaet.* 186 B 6–9.

<sup>19</sup> This sets up one of the *aporai* about false judgement. Socrates points out that no one, sane or insane, would ever say to himself 'The ox is a horse', and infers the general absurdity of mistaking one thing for another (190 B 2–D 2).

<sup>20</sup> On Plato on intrapersonal dialogue and its relations to interpersonal conversation see the comprehensive study by Alexander Long, *Conversation and Self-Sufficiency in Plato [Conversation]* (Oxford, 2013).

typical of *doxa*. I suggest that his underlying thought here is that a *doxa* is to some extent reasoned. That is: whoever frames a *doxa*, whether or not as the upshot of a literal mental debate, is prepared if necessary to produce a consideration in support, and to maintain its superiority to some consideration that might seem to tell against. To accept this as typical of *doxa*, we do not have to suppose that the *doxa* is highly rational or reasonable in the laudatory sense. The point is simply that in 189 E 4–190 A 6 *doxa* is presented as typically more than a random guess or an impulse propelled by sheer feeling.<sup>21</sup> I am going to assume that this same feature of *doxa* remains in place when we get to the refutation of Hypothesis 2. For the feature fits well with the example of the jury's true *doxa*. A jury's *doxa* surely has some basis in reasons, whether or not the

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Jessica Moss ('Plato's Appearance-Assent Account of Belief' ['Account'], *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 114 (2014), 213–38) on *δόξα* in the *Philebus*, *Sophist*, *Republic*, and *Theaetetus*: 'In the process of *doxa*-formation some amount of reflection . . . is always required.' Moss makes a strong argument for interpreting *πίστις* in the *Republic*, and *δόξα* in the post-Protagoras arguments of the *Theaetetus*, as involving a conscious claim of objectivity, or as 'aiming at truth' (by which I think she means something stronger than the minimal point that the direction of fit is mind-to-world: this holds even for passive and random belief impressions where the subject has no concern for or no conception of trying to get beliefs right). Although Moss does not explicitly discuss justification, her account supports the idea, central for my argument, that true *δόξα* in Hypotheses 2 and 3 is to some extent justified. For a contrary view see M. Dixsaut, 'What is it Plato Calls "Thinking"?', *Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 13 (1997), 1–27. According to Dixsaut here, the emergence of one or another *δόξα* from internal debate never has any 'real justification' (20); for caution on this kind of reading see Long, *Conversation*, ch. 6 n. 4. Dixsaut's view is based on passages from several dialogues, but is meant to cover the *Theaetetus*. It is true that Plato does not state that a typical courtroom verdict is at least to some extent justified. On this see Lewis, 'Knowledge and the Eyewitness', who further observes that the Athenian judicial system lacked an institutionalized notion of a *justified* verdict as the goal of a trial. I believe, however, that Plato's presentation of the jury example displays the assumption that a typical true verdict would have some degree of justification; see paragraphs 6–7. The idea that the typical *δόξα*, hence even the typical true *δόξα*, is essentially capricious sits badly with *Theaetetus*' assertion, not rejected by Socrates, that true *δόξα* is a source of good and admirable things (200 E 4–6). We are surely to be reminded of Socrates' own position in the *Meno*. D. Sedley, *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato's Theaetetus [Midwife]* (Oxford, 2004), may go too far in the opposite direction when he comments on 189 E 4–190 A 6: 'Thinking is interpreted as replicating within the soul the form of Socratic dialectic' (130), although it depends on how we understand the last phrase. If it simply means 'the format of question and answer', it is not clear why the Socratic case is more relevant than any other instance of non-random wondering about something. If on the other hand the phrase means to invoke the philosophical rigour of Socrates, it risks blurring the difference between teaching and persuasion. Long points out that for Plato internal debate can be on quite mundane topics (*Conversation*, 113).

best, or even the best available, reasons, and it certainly has the additional feature of being reached through internal debate by each jury member.<sup>22</sup>

(10) The second step (*b*) is to relate this picture of a typical *doxa* to the additive model, in particular by seeing whether the model fits the dicasts vs. eyewitness contrast used to refute the second hypothesis. The result is absurd: for the model to fit the eyewitnesses would mean that they must have had something just like what eventually characterizes the dicasts, plus some further factor needed for knowledge. It follows from the passage just quoted that this further factor, in the eyewitnesses, must have occurred alongside a true judgement (about the crime) *reached through a sort of internal debate!* Now of course someone present may happen not to see the incident very clearly, hence wonders, for example: ‘Is it an assault going on over there, or a rowdy game? Is the one on the left Callias or Coriscus?’, and this eyewitness may have to peer before getting a definite impression of the event (cf. *Phileb.* 38 c 5 ff.). Yet not only is this peering and wondering not a necessary aspect of eyewitnessing something, but one who needs to do this before deciding just what he or she sees is *eo ipso* an inferior eyewitness and as such a dubious example of someone who knows. Let us grant, however, that such a marginal eyewitness has something additional relating to the crime, something sensory, that is not available to the dicasts. The additive model might then make us want to say that a good eyewitness has this sensory element to a higher degree, involving better light, closer proximity, or a less interrupted view, than the marginal one. If so, the story now is that the difference between the good eyewitness and the marginal one is that the former has the sensory element to a greater degree or of sharper quality, and that both differ from the jury by having a sensory element at all. But according to the additive model, both the good and the defective eyewitness have a sensory element, excellent or degraded, *alongside* a judgement such as the jury’s, i.e. alongside a judgement reached by each of them by way of an internal debate that is trying to settle what

<sup>22</sup> It was not part of Athenian jury duty to debate *with each other*, perhaps in the hope of securing a unanimous verdict, as with modern juries. Juries at Athens ran into hundreds and each member cast a vote. ‘When the speeches were over, the jury heard no impartial summing-up and had no opportunity for discussion, but voted at once’ (D. M. MacDowell, ‘Law and Procedure, Athenian’, in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 2003), 825–7 at § 4.

is happening ‘before their eyes’. Thus even the good eyewitness is involved in such a debate—a kind of debate that only gets going because its cognitive subject is not yet sure what is going on. But to be in this state is the mark of a poor eyewitness, so that even the good eyewitness is a poor one! This is what follows if we analyse eyewitness knowledge as consisting in a judgement like the jury’s plus a sensory factor. However full or clear the sensory factor, adding it to a jury-like true judgement can never yield the eyewitness cognition that excludes uncertainty; thus it cannot yield knowledge, i.e. (in this case) the knowledge gained by a well-functioning eyewitness.

(11) Does it affect the point if we set aside the notion of literal inner debate and think of typical true *doxa* in Hypothesis 2 as simply based on some sort of ground or consideration? This too fails to deliver a plausible construal of eyewitness knowledge as built through the logical addition of something to an independently possessible true *doxa* characteristic of the jury. A witness, as such, need not have any independently acquired true *doxa* about the incident (whether reasoned or not), nor any that could have been acquired by him independently. Nor, of course, can the jury ‘add’ to their true judgement some supposed extra factor that would convert it into eyewitness knowledge, for this involves the absurdity of acquiring eyewitness knowledge after the event.<sup>23</sup> No doubt the witness acquires a true *doxa* about what he sees from seeing it, but this arises *from* the act of witnessing; it is not an independent component.<sup>24</sup> So the eyewitness knowledge that outranks the jury’s mere true judgement is clearly not what the dicasts have plus something else. The additive model of knowledge does not work here.

(12) Does this make the additive model useless in the context of Hypothesis 3? One might argue that it does not, on the ground that the cognition that stems from eyewitnessing is one thing, and knowledge that stems from an *added account* is another. Even if additivity fails in the former case, this is not a reason for suspecting its

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Bostock, *Theaetetus*, 201; M. L. Gill, *Philosophos: Plato’s Missing Dialogue [Philosophos]* (Oxford, 2012), 12. Bostock, who makes the point in terms of adding an account, says (referring to the immediately subsequent third hypothesis): ‘Why should we not say that this suggestion is already refuted?’

<sup>24</sup> ‘Arises from’ may be too weak. One lesson of the final argument against ‘Knowledge is perception’ (184 B–187 A) is that judgement is central to eyewitness cognition.

failure in the latter. As noted above (paragraph 8), the assumption that true judgement is the same in Hypotheses 2 and 3 does not force us to expect eyewitnessing in the refutation of Hypothesis 2 to display the additivity envisaged for knowledge in Hypothesis 3. If we dismissed any such expectation we might save the idea that knowledge involves an added account by refusing to apply the term 'knowledge' to whatever the cognitive condition is whereby eyewitnesses of a crime are epistemically superior to dicasts.<sup>25</sup>

(13) An opposite line of response would be to read the refutation of Hypothesis 2 (in the light of the earlier presentation of judgement as a sort of conclusion from debate) as showing that knowledge, here genuinely exemplified by eyewitnesses, is not or not in all cases to be understood on the additive model. This response, however, may seem to be blocked by the fact that we are about to move into an elaborate and serious discussion of additively presented Hypothesis 3. How could Plato enter this next stage with such apparent smoothness and confidence if he has already indicated, albeit in a somewhat inexplicit way, that the additive model is in deep trouble? This, however, hardly seems a strong objection if one takes account of the fact that pre-philosophically there seem to be many obvious cases where human beings start from relatively unsystematic true judgements about some area of life, e.g. health or agriculture, and then advance to expertise (knowledge) about it—presumably by adding something, e.g. causal understanding, to their initial true judgements.<sup>26</sup> In other words, an additive picture falls squarely within the remit of an investigation into the nature of knowledge: such a picture can hardly be avoided. There is also the likelihood that Plato had in any case discovered or become aware of two initially attractive additive construals of 'true judgement with an account'—the one that adds an analysis of the object into simples, and the one that adds reference to its distinctive feature. In their own right these powerful ideas demand intense philosophical attention, and the ramifications from unpacking them are huge. Granted that the refutation of the second hypothesis generates a doubt about the universal viability of the additively presented third

<sup>25</sup> Any such refusal should not be motivated solely by the fact that the criminal incident is sense-perceptible. So is the sun, by which Socrates illustrates what at first seems to be a possible kind of account (208 c 7–D 9).

<sup>26</sup> Numerous examples of such kinds of expertise are given at *Theaet.* 170 A–B and 177 C–179 A.

one: still, this doubt seems minor by comparison with the magnetism of the problems about to be broached.<sup>27</sup>

(14) Even so, since Plato is capable of doing several things at once, one should start to consider whether one of his lessons about the third hypothesis (which is simply that knowledge is true judgement *with* an account) might be that a wedge can be driven between it and its additive interpretation. Especially if one passes quickly over the additivity-unfriendly refutation of Hypothesis 2, and focuses hard on the additive structure of the proposals offered under Hypothesis 3, it is easy to read the discussion of the latter as if its only possible interpretation is additive. And such a reader would naturally now be straining to get a better view of the new item put forward for discussion, namely the account which when added to true judgement supposedly gives rise to knowledge. By the end of the dialogue such a reader will naturally think that Hypothesis 3 breaks down because Socrates and Theaetetus fail to lay their hands on the right addible item, whether because it eludes them or because there is no such thing as the right addible item. Either way, the problem seems to be all about what an account would have to be if adding it to some independently possessible true judgement would upgrade the latter to knowledge. Thus one easily overlooks the possibility of a problem, or at least of there being a problem in some kinds of case, about the very notion of such a thing as an independently possessible true judgement of *O*—a true judgement that can be had *before* there exists an adequate account of *O*, or, in other words, before there is knowledge of *O*.<sup>28</sup> But why should one even suspect a problem here? Because true judgement in Hypothesis 2—and therefore in Hypothesis 3—is true judgement that to some extent is judicious or not unreasonable: it carries some degree of justification. The knowledge which true judgement by itself lacks is not justification of the claim, for example, that this is a cat; rather, it is scientific understanding of what a cat (or what this cat) is. There are many things such that we can recognize them and reliably identify them

<sup>27</sup> I am aware that any whittling down of argumentative continuity between the refutation of Hypothesis 2 and the initiation of Hypothesis 3 may weaken any right to the assumption that 'true judgement' means the same in both hypotheses. Nonetheless, I retain the assumption in this paper.

<sup>28</sup> This possibility has been noted by K. Sayre, *Plato's Analytic Method* (Chicago, 1969), 179 n. 41, and J. McDowell, *Plato, Theaetetus, Translated with Notes [Theaetetus]* (Oxford, 1973), 257.

without understanding what they are or being able to explain them. But it cannot be simply taken for granted that, for every type of object *O*, true judgements (in the present sense) are available even to those who lack understanding of *O*. This will be discussed further in Section 4.

### 3. More on true judgement in Hypotheses 2 and 3

(15) As stated earlier, we are assuming that the adding envisaged in the third hypothesis is an adding to true *doxa* as typified in what immediately precedes, i.e. in the second hypothesis. So what exactly is this true *doxa*? The considerations of paragraph 9 strongly suggest that it is narrower than the ‘true belief’ of modern epistemology, since true beliefs in that sense need not be rationally grounded at all.<sup>29</sup> This is one reason why it is a mistake to bill the third hypothesis as a precursor of the twentieth-century (now Gettier-tortured) account of knowledge as true belief plus justification.<sup>30</sup> This formula envisages true belief as generically something that might or might not be accompanied by justification, whereas typical true *doxa* as displayed first in the passage about the soul’s talk with itself and then in the jury example already comes with some degree of justification.<sup>31</sup> In modern epistemology beliefs may turn out true by

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Burnyeat, ‘Introduction’, 119–20; W. Schwab, ‘Explanation in the Epistemology of the *Meno*’, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 48 (2015), 1–36 at 24–5 and 28 n. 44.

<sup>30</sup> Commentators have focused more on the mistake of interpreting the ‘adding’ envisaged in the *Theaetetus* as a move to justification rather than to understanding. The misconstrual in terms of justification reinforces the one about the meaning of true *δόξα*, since if the added factor is justification, the basis to which it is added was to that extent not justified *per se*. The tendency of interpreters to replace ‘true judgement’ in Plato’s formula with contemporary ‘true belief’ might never have got going if the addendum had not been equated with justification. But the replacement took on a life of its own as well. See A. Nehamas, ‘*Epistēmē* and *Logos* in Plato’s Later Thought’, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 66 (1984), 93–203, repr. in Nehamas, *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates* (Princeton, 1999), 224–48: this paper assumes that the base item is what I am calling contemporary true belief, and deduces that the addendum cannot be justification since adding justification to mere true belief generates countless pieces of ‘knowledge’ (e.g. that this wagon belongs to Laius) that Plato would never have sanctioned as *ἐπιστήμη*. The conclusion is true, but the premiss about the base item is false. See Schwab for pertinent recent discussion and references.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Moss: ‘This is . . . a very narrow and demanding conception of *doxa*—even more so, we now see, than modern conceptions that tie belief to reason, evidence, and truth, for these conceptions do not require that beliefs result from active reflec-

sheer luck, whereas the idea of a *doxa* true-by-sheer-luck is absent from the *Theaetetus* (even though the text does not logically exclude this possibility<sup>32</sup>). To take this point further, see how Theaetetus is allowed to promote the second hypothesis: ‘True judgement (he says) is surely free from mistakes, and everything that comes about by its agency [τὰ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ γιγνόμενα]<sup>33</sup> turns out fine and good’ (200 E 4–6). This is not about winning the lottery with the one ‘true’ ticket. Theaetetus is indicating a ground for identifying knowledge with true judgement: what knowledge generates is fine and good, and the same property belongs to true judgement. That is to say, it belongs in general to true judgement, not merely to this or that particular true judgement.<sup>34</sup> The thought surely is that both knowledge and true judgement give guidance, a prominent theme in the *Meno* (96 E–97 C; 98 B 7–11; 99 A 1–5). A genuine guide is an authority to be trusted; thus the true-judger in some area of life is one who merits trust. If, on the other hand, you express to me a belief

tion or affirmation. Perhaps then we should conclude that Plato’s theory of *doxa* is not in the end a theory of what we call belief’ (‘Account’, 236; cf. 215).

<sup>32</sup> Thus we might imagine a situation in which a particular *δόξα*, even though the upshot of internal debate, turns out to be true by sheer luck, e.g. if the evidence for it was illusory or a tissue of lies. Such a true *δόξα* could be said in itself to generate what is fine and good (acquittal of the innocent, sentencing of the guilty) notwithstanding the flaws in the process by which it was reached. But there is no reason to think that Plato has such cases in mind. The notion of a belief that is true by sheer luck plays no part, either, in the lengthy discussion of the first hypothesis that knowledge is perception, where ‘perception’ gets widened to include opinion in general. The seemings thus widely captured are non-rational or subrational (at least until we get to 184 B–186 E, the discussion of the proper sensibilia vs. the common attributes). But the truth of these seemings as defended by Protagoras is completely different from truth by luck. No doubt a seeming could occur randomly, but it is *true* not by luck but by metaphysical necessity. The sheer existence of a Protagorean seeming guarantees its truth, or truth-for-the-subject, whereas something true by luck could have been false only too easily.

<sup>33</sup> Rowe has ‘under its guidance’.

<sup>34</sup> Burnyeat, ‘Jury’, notes the falsity of the latter statement. A ruthless tyrant’s true and reason-based factual judgements can do horrible things to the citizens. Burnyeat explains the anomaly by supposing that Plato unthinkingly echoes his position in the *Meno*, 96 E–97 C; 98 B–C. (Sedley, *Midwife*, ch. 5 n. 46, sees here deliberate intertextuality with the *Meno*.) But in the *Meno*, as Burnyeat argues, the position is plausible because the context restricts it to virtuous agents. However, a similar contextual restriction may be at work in the *Theaetetus* too. Knowledge there is equated with wisdom (*σοφία* 145 D 9–E 7), an indisputably good thing. Examples are craft knowledge and mathematical knowledge (146 C–147 C), and the possibility of their misuse for evil or foolish purposes is irrelevant to the discussion. That knowledge can be misused lies outside the question of what knowledge *is*. Given that the *Theaetetus* ignores misuse of *knowledge*, it is reasonable to assume that the same goes for misuse of true *δόξα* when Theaetetus proposes this as the definiens of knowledge.

that happens to be true by sheer luck, I make a mistake if I *trust* it or you since you might just as easily have held and expressed the opposite belief without change in the facts. If the person who tells me that this is the road to Larissa has just happened to guess right, then if I innocently accept the statement as guidance I may perhaps be excused for taking that road if I want to get to Larissa, but I am not epistemically justified in doing so. If I take it I reach my destination through luck, not guidance, as much as if I had taken it by my own sheer guess which happened to be a lucky one. Thus the words of Theaetetus at 200 E 4–6 are further evidence that beliefs true by sheer luck lie outside the scope of the second hypothesis.<sup>35</sup> We should in any case bear in mind that whereas contemporary discussions of truth, hence of truth by luck, turn on the purely semantic conception of truth (“*p*” is true if and only if *p*’), it is risky to assume that Plato’s *doxa alēthēs* necessarily imports the bare semantic conception, even in this part of the *Theaetetus*. Here, as often in Plato, *alēthēs* and cognates may indicate epistemic approval.<sup>36</sup>

(16) It is another mark of the gulf between the conception of true judgement in the second hypothesis and the contemporary notion of true belief that an intelligent person such as Theaetetus could seriously consider that knowledge is true judgement. Yes, this itself is a false judgement,<sup>37</sup> but it was not an absurd mistake or an insultingly silly one. It deserves and receives a serious refutation.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, no one who understands ‘true belief’ in the sense prevalent in contemporary epistemology could seriously propose that knowledge is nothing but true belief. In short, if in Hypothesis 2 we

<sup>35</sup> When Plato has Theaetetus say that *everything* that stems from true *δόξα* is admirable and good, is he portraying sheer youthful exaggeration? We may think so, given that the highest praise must surely be reserved for knowledge. But knowledge might be more admirable (a) for reasons over and above giving better guidance, or (b) for giving better guidance over a wider range than true *δόξα*.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g. *Meno* 86 B 1–2; *Rep.* 6, 490 B 5–6; 508 D 4–6; 7, 517 C 2–4; *Tim.* 29 C 3–4; *Phileb.* 65 D 2–3.

<sup>37</sup> As noted by G. Fine, ‘False Belief in the *Theaetetus*’, *Phronesis*, 24 (1979), 70–80, and Burnyeat, ‘Introduction’, 65–6 and 119.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Vogt, *Belief and Truth*, 79–80. We may wonder why, if this is true of the *Theaetetus*, Plato has Meno accept that *ἐπιστήμη* is different from *ὀρθὴ δόξα* without this being shown to him by an expressly designed argument. The answer is not that Meno is more intelligent than Theaetetus, but because he is in a different dialectical situation. When in the *Meno* *ἐπιστήμη* is seen to fail as the definiens of virtue, Socrates brings in *ὀρθὴ δόξα* as a replacement candidate. Thus Meno is given no opportunity to consider whether *ἐπιστήμη* could actually be the same as *ὀρθὴ δόξα*.

misread ‘true judgement’ as contemporary ‘true belief’, we should marvel that Plato bothers at all with such a proposal. If all the same we accept the proposal as seriously meant even if hopelessly naïve, we shall tend to assume that up to the end of the third hypothesis Plato treats the additive model as in principle correct for *every* case of knowledge, since every case of knowledge involves a corresponding belief that is semantically true. The message, then, we shall therefore tend to assume, is that although the additional factor eludes Theaetetus and Socrates, continuing to look for it seems the only course to follow for anyone who wants to know what knowledge is. The picture is that knowledge in every case is reached *from* true belief, and that the true belief on its own is, by comparison, easy to come by. (Of course, if one is a solitary self worried about single-handedly upgrading her or his own true beliefs, one realizes one may need knowledge of the topic in order to determine which of one’s mere beliefs are even true. But as long as we are allowed to focus on other cognitive subjects, it seems that we can in principle identify their non-knowledgeable true beliefs on whatever topic, and then ask what it takes for these to become knowledgeable.) If in the context of Hypothesis 3 we seem to need no argument for accepting additivity in this unrestricted way, this is almost certainly because we assume that true judgement for Plato here is the same as mere true belief for us. The assumption makes invisible the possibility of cases where true judgement of *O* in the sense relevant to Hypotheses 2 and 3 is unavailable except to those who already have knowledge of the thing.

(17) I have suggested (paragraph 14) that Plato intends us to see that a wedge can be driven between Hypothesis 3, that knowledge is true judgement with an account, and the additive interpretation of this. If that is correct, then although Socrates finally rejects the additive model, he does not *ipso facto* reject Hypothesis 3 wholesale. He says:

And it is surely quite simple-minded, when we’re trying to find out what knowledge is, to claim that it is correct judgement accompanied by knowledge [δόξαν ἄρθήν μετ’ ἐπιστήμης], whether of difference or of anything else.—Neither can perception, then, Theaetetus, be knowledge, nor (can) true judgement, nor (can) the addition of an account along with true judgement [μετ’ ἀληθοῦς δόξης λόγος προσγιγνώμενος]. (210 A 7–B 2)

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Theaetetus' third proposal was that knowledge is true judgement *with* an account (201 c 8–d 1), whereas what Socrates now dismisses is the teasing out of this in terms of an *added* account. But even this somewhat narrower pessimism is too quick, as scholars have noted.<sup>39</sup> Plato has exposed problems for certain accounts of added account, but this is a long way from showing that the general approach has no chance at all of success. The *Theaetetus* could have ended on a strongly aporetic note without being so categorically negative about the added account in general. We may find this unqualified negativity surprising not merely because it is logically undersupported in the dialogue but also because (as mentioned in paragraph 13) human history surely shows many kinds of expertise having developed from a more primitive cognitive grasp: such facts are surely asking for a theory of knowledge as arising from mere true judgement through the addition of something.<sup>40</sup> Interpreters, however, have suggested a general explanation: any definition of knowledge as true judgement plus *X* falls to the objection that if the subject's relation to *X* is weaker than that of knowing *X*, the definition is too weak, and if it is not weaker than knowing, the definition is circular.<sup>41</sup> Socrates certainly spells out this objection against one particular account of the added account, namely as giving 'the difference that marks off a thing from all other things' (208 c 7–210 a 9). And one can see how the same pattern can be brought against the *Theaetetus* analysis into simples. But, arguably, a more sophisticated formulation would disarm it.<sup>42</sup> And in any case

<sup>39</sup> e.g. McDowell, *Theaetetus*, 257; Bostock, *Theaetetus*, 236.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Arist. *Metaph. A*, 980<sup>b</sup>25–981<sup>a</sup>12, on the move from ἐμπειρία to τέχνη. Plato, however, has a tendency to attribute what he thinks of as foundational expert inventions to divine or heroic one-off originators: e.g. *Prot.* 321 c 7–322 a 1; *Phileb.* 16 c 5–8; 18 b 6 ff.; *Phdr.* 274 c 5–d 2; *Laws* 3, 677 d 1–e 3 (but cf. 678 b 5–10). See also n. 45.

<sup>41</sup> Bostock, *Theaetetus*, 236–41; Sedley, *Midwife*, 176–8.

<sup>42</sup> Take the operation of explaining what *Y* is by grasping its cause or principle, *X*. We began by having mere true δόξα concerning *Y*. We now add an account, hence knowledge, of what *Y* is in terms of *X*—an account in which *X* figures not merely as *X* but as ultimate cause or principle of *Y*. (a) The grasp of *X* as cause etc. of *Y* is not mere basic true judgement of *Y*: what I am calling mere basic true judgement grasps the fact that *Y* is, but not the cause or principle that makes *Y* what it is; nor does basic true judgement grasp a cause or principle (e.g. of *Y*) as such. (When the jury judges truly that Coriscus was responsible for the victim's injuries, this is, of course, a sort of causal conclusion, but they do not thereby deepen their understanding of the injuries as such; rather, they judge correctly how these *came about*.) (b) The grasp of *X* as ultimate cause or principle of *Y* cannot be a matter of getting an account of *X* in terms of ulterior causes of *X*, for *X* is essentially ultimate and is not grasped correctly unless it is grasped as such. So: given that the knowledge-yielding added

the present paper's argument suggests a different reason why Plato has Socrates give up on every version of the additive model for knowledge:<sup>43</sup> Plato is looking for a single uniform definition, and he already surmises that in some cases acquiring knowledge cannot consist in adding an account to an independently possessible true judgement.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4. The knowledge unacknowledged in the *Theaetetus*

(18) This leads us to massive questions. Can one attain knowledge of *O* where there is no pre-existing stock of *empeiria* of *O* from which to build? And if so, how?<sup>45</sup> The theme is displayed and its solution played out in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, although here I shall focus on the *Sophist*. That dialogue starts with Socrates asking the visitor from Elea: 'Do the three names, "sophist", "statesman", "philosopher", name one thing, two things, or three?' (217 A 1–11). The mathematician Theodorus has just introduced the visitor as 'a very philosophical man' (216 A 4). Socrates in response wondered playfully whether this new presence might be that of a god, since

account of a thing introduces the cause of that thing, there cannot be knowledge of *X* (cf. 202 B 6; D 10–E 1; 203 C 1 ff.). But rather than leave the matter at that ('*X* is unknowable', which by itself suggests that *X* is not even grasped), it is better to emphasize *X*'s positive role as *that the grasp of which is the source of knowledge of something else*, namely *Y*. For clarity, the grasp of *X* should have reserved to it a different label (neither 'knowledge' nor 'non-knowledge'), e.g. *nous*, as in Aristotle. Admittedly this leaves us with difficult questions about what it is for something to be essentially ultimate and (in this knowledge-seeking context) grasped correctly only as such, and about how one recognizes suitable candidates for the role; but one cannot assume in advance that there are no satisfactory answers.

<sup>43</sup> This model does not resurface in later dialogues. In the *Timaeus* plenty of first-order explanations are given which are cases of drawing attention to a phenomenon and 'adding reasoning as to the cause', but it is hard to know what to make of this since the cosmology is said to be, not knowledge, but an *εἰκὼς μῦθος* (29 D 1–3; cf. B 1–C 3).

<sup>44</sup> Neil Cooper, in 'Plato's *Theaetetus* Reappraised', *Apeiron*, 33 (2000), 25–52, comes via a very different route to a similar conclusion: namely that the last part of the *Theaetetus* shows that the additive model fails, not for everything Plato may be willing to call 'knowledge', but for the *most perfect* knowledge (τὴν τελειωτάτην ἐπιστήμην, 206 C 2–6). *Polit.* 285 D 10–286 A 8 may recognize two degrees of knowledge although the word ἐπιστήμη does not occur in the immediate context.

<sup>45</sup> Greek folk-consciousness dramatized this problematic by supposing that principles of culture such as fire, so fundamental that the sheer basic idea of our putting them to intelligent use could hardly be imagined to have come into being incrementally, were given to humanity by a figure such as Prometheus.

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true philosophers in their indiscernibility are like the gods who, in Homer's words, go about the cities of men disguised as all kinds of strangers to keep an eye on human arrogance and law-abidingness. Sometimes, said Socrates, philosophers appear as statesmen, sometimes as sophists, and sometimes to some people they give the impression of being completely demented (216 C 7–D 2). This roll of drums introduces the 'three names' question, thereby bringing right to the fore the lack (at least in Athens or around Socrates; cf. 216 D 3–217 A 2) of a pre-existing source of true reliable judgement on who counts as a sophist or a statesman or a philosopher. The question is clearly one that philosophical reasoning alone can answer.

(19) Thus the *Sophist* begins by putting on the table something never explicitly said in the *Theaetetus*, namely that some topics are such that the model of first targeting them with a true judgement, then adding an account, must fail. This is because they are topics on which true, i.e. true and fairly trustworthy, judgements are unavailable until knowledge of them in the form of an account, a *logos*, is achieved first. No initial fund of empiric true judgement or guidance exists which can then be upgraded to knowledge. So here, if one makes a start at all, one must do so by aiming straightaway for knowledge, through an approach that is reason-seeking, principled, and methodical from the first.<sup>46</sup> And many of these topics are such that views on them make major differences to human life (cf. *Polit.* 285 D 10–286 A 8, especially 286 A 6–7: 'the things that are without body, which are finest and greatest, are shown clearly only by an account [*λόγῳ*] and nothing else'<sup>47</sup>). Knowledge, actual or hoped for, of *O* where a preliminary true judgement of *O* is not forthcoming, is the knowledge unacknowledged in the *Theaetetus*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> This 'knowledge first' procedure may remind one of Timothy Williamson's account of knowledge (*Knowledge and its Limits*, (Oxford, 2000)), but the resemblance is more verbal than substantial, I think. Williamson's contention is that knowledge is not to be analysed as justified true belief, and that it is unrealistic to go on seeking to dispel the Gettier objection (*Knowledge and its Limits*, 4). His and Plato's concerns seem largely orthogonal to each other.

<sup>47</sup> Translation follows, with one difference, that of Christopher Rowe (*Plato: Statesman* (Warminster, 1995)).

<sup>48</sup> Myth-making, too, is a kind of Platonic response (perhaps not meant as a knowledge-producing one) to the problem of how to jump-start human reason in areas where common sense provides no preliminary traction.

(20) The point here is not that, in such a case, a reasoned advance towards knowledge of *O* must be altogether unfounded in true and reliable pre-existent *doxai*. That would be truly divine knowledge, whereas the activity Plato seeks to promote is philosophizing by human beings. The point is that in certain cases knowledge of *O* has no starting point in pre-existent true and reasonably secure judgements directly about *O* itself. Obviously, if one can hope to advance to knowledge of *O* from a starting point in reasonably secure true judgements about objects other than *O*, this can only be because, in the nature of things, *O* and these other, initially more familiar, objects ‘hang together’ somehow (cf. *Meno* 81 c 9–d 1). To discuss the metaphysics of this hanging together would take us too far from present concerns. For now it is enough to note that in order to advance to knowledge of *O* from a starting point in a set of truly judged objects other than *O* itself, we need some kind of method—one that we can reasonably trust to track in some measure those relations of ‘hanging together’.

(21) The *Sophist* and the *Statesman* demonstrate ways in which a methodical procedure yields results that could not have been launched from bare true judgement alone. Consider the way of the lengthy divisions. However dull and pedantic, they show how to identify, by conceptual articulation, areas of life (Plato might say, of the real) that previously went unnoted although they were all along ‘there’. Plato coins numerous neologisms to capture them. Let us bring to bear the *Theaetetus* picture<sup>49</sup> of *doxa* as *internally verbalized assertion*, and of thinking—the use of concepts—as the soul’s *talk* with itself. The picture suggests that entities that had been nameless for a given audience until they get to be defined via the taxonomical cells in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* could not, previously, have been foci of that audience’s pre-theoretical true judgements—for the simple reason that these entities would have lain outside the audience’s pre-theoretical conceptual vocabulary. Thus the picture suggests that even a very sensible person may be unequipped for making judgements about all sorts of things, including some nearby and in no way esoteric things, until the taxonomic method turns its spotlight on them.<sup>50</sup> The application

<sup>49</sup> Retained at *Soph.* 263 d 1–264 a 2.

<sup>50</sup> These would be relatively easy to grasp realities which most people could not get a conceptual handle on because (in the culture in question) there were as yet

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of taxonomy also shows that even those items in the network for which there were familiar names had not until now been properly identified—had not been objects of true judgement—since proper identification (e.g. precluding conflation of one such item with a nearby other) depends on methodically locating each in relation to the others. Such objects come into the focus of true judgement only through deliberate and self-conscious use of a method for building up accounts of them. Their nature (or our relationship to their nature) is such that they are not susceptible to an account-free initial capture by us.

(22) It is perhaps worth emphasizing that the contrast here is not with a *concept*-free initial capture, or with objects supposedly graspable in that way. This paper has discussed true judgement in the *Theaetetus*, not raw sense perception. The second hypothesis was not advanced until the dialogue had established that conceptually unstructured, judgement-free, sense perception (if there is such a thing) cannot possibly be the same thing as knowledge.<sup>51</sup> The contrast that concerns us is between *theory*-independent and *theory*-dependent true judgement. Both these sorts of judgement have conceptual content, or they would not be judgements at all, true or false. Both, in Platonic terms, express thought and arise from the soul's talking to itself. The word *logos* means both 'speech' in general and 'account' in a heavier, theoretical sense, but Socrates sets aside the first meaning at 206 C 7–E 2: otherwise anyone able to express a true judgement in spoken words automatically has knowledge of what it is about. (He could have added that there would also

no terms for them: e.g. the *enclosure-hunting* art of *Sophist* 220 c 7–8 and the *self-directive* one of *Statesman* 260 e 3–7. In such cases it only becomes apparent *that* the items are, or exist, through its becoming apparent, via the taxonomic method, *what* they are. (Cf. Aristotle's observation, in applying his triadic taxonomy of ethical dispositions, that because a disposition is nameless people overlook its existence: *NE* 4, 1125<sup>b</sup>17–18; 1127<sup>a</sup>11–12.) In the case of *sophist*, *philosopher*, and *statesman*, we do possess names but most people in Plato's view have no sound grasp of their extensions, hence not of their meaning. One might wonder how any names could have life at all in a community that does not know what they mean. The answer is that for some terms, especially ones with honorific or pejorative weight where agreed rules of application are lacking, contested patterns of use grow up around them.

<sup>51</sup> By the argument from common properties, 184 B–186 E. Perhaps, however, raw sense perception or something analogous returns in connection with cognition of simples that can each only be named by a name it shares with nothing else (201 D 8–202 B 3). See Chappell, 'Knowledge', esp. §§ 8.1 and 9.

automatically be knowledge even if articulation of the judgement stays silent within the soul.) The problem to which the taxonomical method (for instance) answers is that of attaining an account in the heavier sense. In certain cases, an account of *O* in the heavier sense is our only source for true, i.e. true and fairly reliable, judgements—judgements that give good guidance—as to which things count as *O* and which do not: for example, which persons and practices are, or are not, sophisticated, statesmanlike, philosophical.

(23) Thus at the pre-methodical or pre-theoretical stage one lacks not only knowledge but even true and fairly reliable judgement *of*, for example, the sophist. One starts without resources for a fairly secure reference picking out the object of interest, whether this means picking out a universal or an exemplary instance. One moves ahead by methodically mobilizing true judgement *of other* things, namely items and their differences that spring to light as one constructs a taxonomy so comprehensive that it *must* include the sophist somewhere; and by successive differentiation, horizontal and vertical, one homes in, from *other* things, on where the sophist is, which is the same as what he is. Thus one builds up an account of the sophist. And since he is differentiated in part by falsehood-mongering, we must also find an account of falsehood, which in its affinity to what-is-not seems to defy location on any map of what-is, and can only be captured by wrestling with difficulties that pervade the entirety of discourse. Yet here too we approach the sophist by focusing on things other than the sophist: the sophist is not falsehood, or being, or difference, or sameness, etc.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> This picture fits with Fine's conclusion ('Knowledge and *Logos* in the *Theaetetus*', *Philosophical Review*, 88 (1979), 366–97, repr. in Fine, *Plato on Knowledge and Forms* (Oxford, 2003), 225–51) that giving a knowledge-yielding account of *O* consists in interrelating *O* systematically to other items in a shared field. Fine argues that this general approach explains knowledge without vicious circularity; also that it is prefigured in the *Theaetetus*. See Bostock, *Theaetetus*, 243–50, for an excellent discussion of Fine's account. On whether Plato in the *Sophist* actually does define the sophist by means of division see L. Brown, 'Definition and Division in Plato's *Sophist*', in D. Charles (ed.), *Definition in Greek Philosophy* (Oxford, 2010), 151–70, on the severe 'obstacles to finding a successful outcome in the search for the sophist via [this] method' (157). Brown concludes that this was never the dialogue's project, for the fundamental reason that 'there is no such genuine kind as sophistry' (153). My sketch of method in paragraphs 20–1 and 23 is not meant in opposition to her arguments; the sophist was chosen merely as an example. Fine's discussion too is uncommitted to any specific application to the sophist.

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(24) Must the account-building necessary for such judgements be something that everyone should try to share? I think Plato's answer would be 'Yes'. Since we in our mortal confusion have no sure pre-philosophical handle on what the three words signify, we are in no position to consult an existing philosophical authority—we lack a way of telling where such authority lies or whether any such supposed expert's 'products' count as philosophy in fact. But why is this not like the following case? Young Theaetetus has gained enough mathematical knowledge to judge truly on his own that Theodorus is a good mathematician, and he can recommend Theodorus to parents looking for a teacher. These parents hardly know the first thing about what it means for Theodorus to be a mathematician, but they too can now judge truly that he is one. Could it be like this with such matters as the sophist and the statesman? Could it be that once the true philosopher has come along and defined those concepts, and worked through all the difficulties lurking in the heart of these definitions, the rest of us can sit back and depend on the authority of the philosopher and his students to generate in us laymen's true, i.e. true and reliable, judgements of who is a sophist, who a statesman, and so on? It seems not, because outside the ideal city the pseudo-philosopher and the pseudo-statesman will always be looking for ways to *seem* to live up to any truly philosophical definitions so far achieved; so in the absence of a true philosopher standing at the elbow of each of us whenever we need to make a discrimination we are at the mercy of impostors unless we guard ourselves by philosophizing for ourselves.<sup>53</sup> Even if we do this hand in hand with the Eleatic visitor or some other mentor, fictitious or real, we are still philosophizing ourselves.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Polit.* 291 A 2–C 7; 303 B 8–D 2. Why there are less likely to be mathematical impostors is a question for another occasion.

<sup>54</sup> Mary Louise Gill has made the interesting point that whereas reliance on ordinary testimony normally presupposes the literal inaccessibility of the first-hand knowledge of witnesses, a philosophical conversation, even if, as often in Plato, presented via the framing report of a dramatic character (who may or may not have a role in the framed dialogue), enables us to engage as directly as the framed interlocutors themselves. Certain reported—actually, fictitiously reported—things are such as to nullify their own status as reported and fictitious. Gill applies this to the ostensibly unframed *Sophist–Statesman*, suggesting that this sequence is to be seen as occurring within the frame conversation that opens the *Theaetetus* (Gill, *Philosophos*, 104; for scepticism on extending the *Theaetetus* frame see R. Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge, 2002), 316–17).

(25) But how do we even know that the visitor *is* a philosopher?<sup>55</sup> At the start we have only the word of Theodorus, and we may wonder how much this is worth since it comes from a mathematician.<sup>56</sup> Philosophy, for the visitor, is very much a matter of dialectic (*Soph.* 253 B 10–E 8), and dialectic, whatever it exactly consists in, is an arena that Theodorus has been portrayed as extremely nervous about entering except to sit by as spectator of other people’s arguments.<sup>57</sup> I believe that the Eleatic visitor can do no more than give concrete demonstrations of philosophy in the course of the enquiry that now begins. If by the end of these we still wonder how we can be sure that this is ‘really philosophy’, Plato is surely entitled to respond—through the visitor or some other mouthpiece—with a challenge he would be happy to have someone meet: ‘Please show us a more convincingly self-authenticating way’, or perhaps—as in

<sup>55</sup> I am inclined to think, with Gill and others, that Plato either never intended to devote a single dialogue to defining the philosopher or willingly came to abandon any such initial intention (see Gill, *Philosophos*, Introduction, n. 3, for references to earlier debate). In either case this may have been because he was satisfied to demonstrate philosophy through the specific projects of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* (each of which may be seen as containing more than one project) and perhaps because he also thought or came to think that only such specific demonstrations are possible. It is worth considering whether Plato might in this have been moved by a certain pluralism or lack of ultimate interest in system as such, and by what one might even call an *ad hoc* tendency. By this I mean a lack of interest in definitively and exhaustively explaining the nature of the philosopher, his preference being to attack specific philosophical questions one by one as they take hold of him, thus demonstrating—in the sense of exhibiting—philosophy over and over without being committed to a single template of the philosopher. He may have thought that the most important thing is to make progress on specific questions, such as how to distinguish philosophers and statesmen from sophists; and he may also have thought that it is not philosophy’s business to tie itself down to a single comprehensive definition of itself, whether in terms of a single type of method or of a single field. Perhaps a god could define philosophy without unnaturally constricting philosophical activity or else making the definition too indeterminate to illuminate any specific problems; but the philosopher, though godlike, is not a god (cf. *Soph.* 216 B 8–C 1). The view I have sketched is quite different from Gill’s: her book argues that Plato has bequeathed the elements of a single positive systematic answer to ‘What is the philosopher?’, and that putting them together is a task he has left for us to accomplish, thereby getting us to philosophize ourselves: ‘Plato did not write the *Philosopher* because he would have spoiled the exercise had he written it’ (Gill, *Philosophos*, 5).

<sup>56</sup> At *Theaet.* 143 D 3–4 Socrates speaks of γεωμετρίαν ἢ τινα ἄλλην φιλοσοφίαν, wording that leaves it open whether geometry counts as a kind of φιλοσοφία.

<sup>57</sup> *Theaet.* 146 B 3; 162 B–C; 168 D–E; 169 C 2–7; 177 C 2–4. On mathematicians as not necessarily good dialecticians see *Rep.* 7, 531 D–E. As for Theodorus, it is only fair to note that he, a friend of Protagoras, more than once showed intelligent appreciation of moves by Socrates against the latter: see especially *Theaet.* 162 A 4–7 and 179 B 6–9.

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Aristotle's advice on how to wind up a speech (his own last words in the *Rhetoric*)—'I have spoken; you have heard; you have it; make your decision' (1420<sup>a</sup>1–9).

(26) In other words, we do not have, and we should not look for, a separate proof that the target of enquiry can be known or understood by means of this account-building method; instead we demonstrate the method's utility by engaging in it. The solidity of any independent proof that the method is fruitful would hardly be more obvious than the solidity of specific results achieved by means of it. On this matter of supposedly guaranteeing the method, several things can be said. (a) When a rational method makes negative progress by showing that some hypothesis or previously favoured assumption *A* sits badly with presuppositions held on both sides, no one is felt to be entitled to ask for a further proof that *A* deserves to be rejected. This is apparent in each refutation in the *Theaetetus* and many times over in earlier Platonic dialogues. Why should matters be different in principle when it comes to attaining knowledge of what something, *O*, positively *is*? (b) If critics refuse to take up the burden of showing a specific fault in the reasoning that resulted in the account of some object *O*, one may complain that they were never really serious in trying to capture *O* but only wanted to undermine the efforts of serious investigators. (c) If the method itself stands in need of a justificatory guarantee, the same demand can be made for the supposed guarantee, and so on. Again one could ask whether anyone who revels in this regress really wants better understanding of the object *O* originally under investigation if, instead of stopping to enjoy or use whatever understanding of *it* has been gained at any stage, they always go on seeking justification. (d) Knowledge of *O* can be partial and admit of improvement. Knowledge in the sense of account-based understanding, whether of an *a priori* topic or an empirical one, in itself entails no claim to be final or beyond correction. It is not as if, with the type of subject-matter that can only be approached through method, there is no room for any sort of *adding* or progress. On the contrary, adding comes in, in the following way: we can improve our knowledge by adding *to* our method and our account—by making these theoretical instruments more coherent, perspicuous, refined, comprehensive, or whatever. What we cannot do with such subject-matters is build up knowledge of them by

starting from some kind of fairly reliable grasp of them that does not yet itself involve any vestige of an account or theory, on the assumption that if there is an account to be added it can be added entire to an account-free initial capture of them.

(27) Even partial and corrigible account-based understanding as delivered by method is a great human gain in matters such as sophistry, statecraft, and philosophy, since it is supremely important not to be seriously mistaken about true and false examples of these and to have a good sense of how to arm oneself against becoming seriously mistaken. One should add such topics as being, not-being, and falsity, where a reflective mind finds itself even more at sea about what to think and say until it attains dialectical knowledge of their relations to each other and other forms. At stake is the intelligibility of any discourse and the objectivity of any truth. To these and the previously mentioned essentially contested notions<sup>58</sup> one should also add virtue, justice, piety, beauty, and happiness, topics of dialogues where Socrates was principal. Here, the presupposition and *raison d'être* for the procedure of Socrates is that ordinary opinion, reliable enough on many matters, gives no sure guidance on what count as instances of the concept in question. When it comes to these notions, the human being must either bootstrap itself up to something approximating the divine level (*Theaet.* 176 A 8–C 2) or fall in with the subjectivist relativism of Protagoras, who in this area escaped argumentative defeat by Socrates (see 172 A–B for the latter's concession to Protagoras on beauty, piety, justice, and their opposites; cf. 177 C–D). Perhaps we can only conjecture what the conclusions would be if these particular notions were approached from a strictly divine perspective.<sup>59</sup> In general, however, it is surely

<sup>58</sup> W. B. Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 56 (1956), 167–98.

<sup>59</sup> We can detect elements of a refutation for some of these Socratic cases in the *Theaetetus* digression, voiced by Socrates, on the worldling and the philosopher (172 D–177 C). On the divine level there is only absolute truth and reality, the same for everyone. Hence on this level it is either absolutely true or absolutely false that there are such things as piety and justice with fixed, objective natures. (For a warning about the Levett translation of *δσια* etc. at 172 A 2 and 176 B 2 see Sedley, *Midwife*, ch. 3 n. 17.) But if there is such a level as the divine, then at least piety has its own objective nature, piety being a matter of our relation to God. So the objectivity of piety is rescued, and justice for Plato is a closely related concept. (Piety is said to be a 'part' of justice at *Euthphr.* 12 C 10–E 2, and how could a part of something have an objective nature and the whole of it not?) Happiness too is rescued from relativism, since if there is God, that paradigm of *εὐδαιμονία*, our happiness consists in being

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safe to infer that for Plato a perfectly divine cognitive level would be one where reason alone is operative. Here there could be no deliverances of sense experience or practical *empeiria*, hence no true judgements except those that flow from rational understanding.

## 5. Conclusion

(28) I have argued that in some cases true judgement in the sense relevant to Hypotheses 2 and 3 of the *Theaetetus* depends on the prior acquisition of knowledge in the form of a methodically constructed account. The argument depends on the premiss, which I defended in Sections 2 and 3, that true judgement in the relevant sense requires not merely semantic truth but a measure of reliability. Thus true judgement is already something of an epistemic achievement. This should be enough to alert us to the possibility of cases where true judgement, at least in the first instance, is so hard to come by that the only way to achieve it goes through the highest cognitive achievement of all, namely knowledge. In that type of case there can be no question of getting knowledge by adding something to an independently possessible true judgement in the sense that concerns us. However, 'hard to come by' has two senses, one exemplified by eyewitnesses of a particular passing event, the other by methods such as those in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. In typical cases eyewitnesses of this or that particular passing event are quite rare. That is to say: it is in the nature of things that most of us simply happen not to be present at the relevant place and time. If one does happen to be present the observation may be extremely easy to make: the resulting true judgement is hard to come by in

as godlike as possible: 176 A 9-B 2; cf. 175 C 4-8; 175 E 7-176 A 1; 176 E 3-4. This reasoning presupposes the reality of the divine, but Plato here assumed what almost everyone would have granted; Protagoras was exceptional in his famous declaration of agnosticism (80 B 4 DK; cf. *Theaet.* 162 D 5-E 2). Plato's originality was in conceptualizing divinity in terms of possession of undivided absolute truth while at the same time insisting that we too are capable of living, i.e. thinking, like God. One may wonder why the elements of this argument are buried in the digression rather than brought out by Socrates in his explicit refutation of Protagoras. The reason may be that a theological refutation would cut no ice against the very concrete *persona* of agnostic Protagoras, whereas the non-dialectical digression allows such doubts to be cast against Protagoreanism as an abstract position. For more angles on the digression see Burnyeat, 'Introduction', 33-9, which expounds its central theme as the relation of justice to prudence, and Sedley, *Midwife*, ch. 3, §§ 3-7, for a full and penetrating study.

that access to the observation is highly unlikely for the vast majority of people. In the other sense the true judgement is also probably rare, but is hard to come by in that methodically building up the account that affords this judgement is intellectually demanding and requires uncommon faith in the reality and power of intellect.

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