On Plato’s Conception of Philosophy in the *Republic* and Certain Post-*Republic* Dialogues

Daniele Labriola

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Supervisors: Prof Sarah Broadie & Dr Alex Long
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Abstract

This dissertation is generally concerned with Plato’s conception of philosophy, as it is ascertainable in the Republic and certain ‘post-Republic’ dialogues. It argues that philosophy, according to Plato, is multi-disciplinary; that ‘philosophy’ does not mark off just one art or science; that there are various philosophers corresponding to various philosophical sciences, all of which come together under a common aim: betterment of self through intellectual activity.

A major part of this dissertation is concerned with examining Plato's science par excellence, ‘the science of dialectic’ (ἡ ἐπιστήμη διαλεκτική). The science of dialectic is distinguished in Plato by being concerned with Forms or Kinds as such; the science of dialectic, alone amongst the philosophical sciences, fully understands what it means for Form X to be a Form. I track the science of dialectic, from its showcase in Republic VI and VII, and analyze its place in relation to the other philosophical sciences in certain post-Republic dialogues. Ultimately, I show that, whilst it is not the only science constituting philosophy, Plato’s science of dialectic represents the intellectual zenith obtainable by man. Accordingly, the expert of this science is the topmost philosopher.

In this dissertation I also argue that Socrates, as variously depicted in these dialogues, always falls short of being identified as the philosopher par excellence, as that expert with positive knowledge of Forms as such. Yet I also show that, far from being in conflict, the elenctic Socrates and the philosopher par excellence form a complementary relationship: the elenctic philosopher gets pupils to think about certain things in the right way prior to sending them off to work with the philosopher par excellence.
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INTRODUCTION

What can a perusal of certain dialogues reveal about Plato’s conception of philosophy? What can this perusal tell us about the connection in Plato between the philosophical arts and sciences? What role does the elenctic Socrates play in Plato’s conception of philosophy? In particular, what is Socrates’ relation to other, non-elenctic experts? What ultimately distinguishes an individual as being more philosophical than another; what makes him the best possible philosopher? Furthermore, where exactly do those (in)famous Platonic Forms, and related epistemology and metaphysics, stand in Plato’s conception of philosophy in the dialogues in question? These are some of the primary questions addressed in this dissertation.

In general, this dissertation seeks to provide an account of Plato’s conception of philosophy, as said conception is ascertainable from the remarks about philosophy and the philosopher in especially the Republic, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Phaedrus and Philebus. Why focus on these dialogues? Firstly, I believe that it is in these dialogues that we get some of the most explicit and substantial remarks regarding the nature of philosophy (viz., what it is, and how it is meant to be distinguished from all that which can be generally classed as non-philosophical).¹ The

¹ In many of the so-called ‘early’ or ‘Socratic’ dialogues, we are told more what philosophy is not, than what philosophy is. Cf. Nightingale (1995) 17-20. Though see Wolfsdorf (2008), who argues that there is a consistent Platonic doctrine (viz., a positive account of what philosophy is) found, albeit cryptically, in many of the ‘early’ dialogues (sc. Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Meno, Protagoras, and Republic I). On the division of Plato’s dialogues into ‘early’, ‘transitional’, ‘middle’, and ‘late’ periods of composition, see Vlastos (1991) 46-7 and literature therein. I examine some uses of ‘philosophia’ and cognates in certain
middle books of the *Republic*, for example, are filled with remarks on philosophy as such. The *Theaetetus* is famous for, amongst other things, a ‘digression’ on the contrast between the pre-eminent philosopher and the common man of the forum and law court. *The Sophist* and *Statesman*, which appear to prepare us for a non-existent *Philosopher*, contain intriguing passages on the philosopher and his use of the method *par excellence*, collection and division. The *Phaedrus* tells us about the philosopher’s preference for a particular type of *logos* (account, speech, argumentation). The *Philebus* speaks about the philosophers’, in contrast to non-philosophers’, superior grasp of certain abstract sciences. I think it intuitive, then, to focus on these dialogues in the hopes of putting together an account of Plato’s conception of philosophy.

Secondly, the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus* and *Philebus* are considered by most scholars to have been composed after the *Republic*.\(^2\) (I shall go

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\(^2\) Whilst there is debate surrounding the chronology of several of Plato’s dialogues, most scholars accept that the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Laws* were written after the *Republic*. Cf. L. Brandwood (1990). However, see Keyser’s (1992) critique of Brandwood and other scholars’ stylometric analyses of Plato. Note, though, that Keyser (1992) 74 seems to accept Campbell’s (1867) conclusion that the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Laws* were composed after the *Republic*. Furthermore, many scholars take the *Cratylus* as being composed before the *Republic*. See, e.g., W.D. Ross (1955), Luce (1964), Kahn (1973), and Levin (2001). Ademollo (2011) 20-1 considers it a work of Plato’s middle period (see below): ‘Cra. does not belong to the “late” dialogues; it is designed to be read after *Phd.* and before *Tht.*; and that’s that’. Sedley (2003) 6-16 considers at least the core of the text to be a ‘middle period’ work. By ‘middle period’, Sedley (2003) 6 means a philosophical and literary period in Plato’s life during which ‘Plato became more optimistic than Socrates had been about finding the answers to the key questions regarding value and knowledge, and increasingly put into Socrates’ mouth positive doctrines about the soul, about the nature of nature, and about the metaphysical nature of the objects of inquiry, a process which culminated in the postulation of a separate realm of transcendent entities, the Forms’. The *Republic* is categorized as another middle period work. Note that any later revisions to the *Cratylus*, as argued for by Sedley (2003) 6-16, do not directly pertain to the remarks concerning the dialectician in the dialogue. The
ahead and group these dialogues under the heading ‘post-Republic’. I am interested in seeing what, if anything, these post-Republic dialogues share in common with the Republic regarding the nature of philosophy.

At least two things need to be clarified at this juncture. (1): Chronology and the ordering of the dialogues hardly play a role in my dissertation. I seek to produce an account of Plato’s conception of philosophy, as said conception is ascertainable in certain dialogues that are selected on account of their interesting remarks regarding philosophy and the philosopher. In order to accomplish this task, I need not commit myself to many chronological assumptions. In fact, the sole chronological assumption I make in this dissertation is a popular (and so relatively safe) one amongst scholars: that certain dialogues were composed after the Republic (see n. 2).

This brings us to the second point of clarification. (2): this dissertation does not attempt to put together an account of philosophy representative of the whole of Plato; it does not aim to produce a single, all-encompassing account of Plato’s conception of philosophy. All the same, I believe that it offers a serious contribution to Plato studies: it provides us with a positive answer to what philosophy, at least in certain dialogues, is for Plato. More precisely, it shows that there is general agreement across a series of dialogues on the nature of philosophy. Ultimately, in this dissertation I show that ‘philosophy’, especially in the Republic, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Phaedrus and Philebus, usually does not single out a particular science; that, in general, philosophy is not to be equated with just one discipline. Quite the

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3 Such an attempt has already been made; see, e.g., Zuckert (2009). Though I strongly hesitate to say that this is the definitive book on the matter. See, e.g., Clark’s (2011) critical assessment of Zuckert’s project.

4 I shall return to reflect on some of the findings of this dissertation in my concluding chapter.
contrary, I argue that in these dialogues philosophy is cast as something multi-disciplinary; ‘philosophia’ is a term meant to mark off, not so much a particular discipline, but an assortment thereof that are broadly unified under one general aim: betterment of self through intellectual activity.

This general aim of philosophy is worked toward in (what I term) both a ‘negative’ and a ‘positive’ fashion. The act of philosophizing can be ‘negative’, insofar as it can involve examining and, where necessary, purging one of any untenable beliefs regarding the subject matter at hand. Philosophizing, then, can involve arriving at negative knowledge, i.e., knowledge of what X (the subject matter) is not (say, F). The elenctic episodes conducted by Plato’s Socrates typify this negative aspect of philosophy. Yet the act of philosophizing can also be positive, insofar as it can involve investigating the nature of things, with the hope of arriving at some sort of positive knowledge (e.g., knowing that X is, say, G). This positive aspect of philosophy is typified in particular by those sciences highlighted in many of Plato’s dialogues, the mathematical disciplines.

Yet, as much as these mathematical disciplines are lauded in Plato, they ultimately do not reach the philosophical zenith envisioned in the dialogues focused on in this dissertation. Indeed, what a perusal of these dialogues reveals is that at the top of the philosophical hierarchy (i.e., the grouping of disciplines that represent genuine philosophical activity according to Plato) there sits alone a science of dialectic. This science, however it is presented in a particular dialogue (see below), is distinguished in general by its unique grasp of certain universals as such. I argue that this science is showcased in the Republic, and returns, albeit in different forms, in certain post-Republic dialogues as the topmost science of philosophy.
To be clear, in this dissertation I argue that only the expert of the science of dialectic is fully aware of the epistemological and metaphysical implications of the universal status of his subject matter; that all other experts have an inferior grasp of reality on account of their limited awareness of these epistemological and metaphysical implications. I show that throughout the selected dialogues the science of dialectic is consistently cast as the science par excellence; it is the science that constitutes the highest (positive) philosophical activity. Accordingly, the philosopher par excellence is cast as that expert whose body of knowledge is completed by mastery of this science. Having said that, I also argue that we should not be so quick as to fix the philosopher par excellence to any specific branch of knowledge; that the philosopher par excellence is, in accordance with the multi-disciplinary nature of philosophy itself, multi-disciplinary as well. In other words, Plato’s topmost philosopher is cast as a polymath invested in numerous intellectual matters ranging across all domains of knowledge.

Note that I speak of a science of dialectic, not a method. I am here alluding to what typically separates a science from a method: a science is a systematically organized body of knowledge on a particular subject (e.g., geometry, or statesmanship), whilst a method is a systematic procedure adopted for the sake of accomplishing or approaching a particular subject (e.g., the procedure of hypothesizing in mathematics). Richard Robinson once said that, ‘the word “dialectic” had a strong tendency in Plato to mean “the ideal method, whatever that may be.”’ I fully agree with Robinson. Yet I argue that the word ‘dialectic’ also had a strong tendency in Plato, particularly in the Republic and certain post-Republic dialogues, to mean ‘the ideal science, whatever that may be’. In this dissertation I show that the

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5 Robinson (1953) 70
distinction between a science and a method is not just one that Plato is aware of, but further endorses; that there is a science called ‘dialectic’ (sometimes referred to as ‘hē (epistēmē) dialektikē’), which is attributed a subject matter that no other science has access to. In the Sophist, Statesman, Phaedrus and Philebus, a particular method called ‘dialectic’ is used by this science. Indeed, in this dissertation a good amount of time is spent reflecting on collection and division as the dialectical method par excellence for Plato. But the method of dialectic does not itself constitute a discipline with its own special subject matter; dialectic qua science is distinct from dialectic qua method.

To be clear, I do not argue that there is only one set account of the science of dialectic in the relevant dialogues. I do not claim that the science of dialectic, described in Dialogue A as possessing unique subject matter X, is described verbatim in Dialogue B (C, D, etc.). Instead, what I argue is more open: that, just like ‘dialectic’ refers to different philosophical methods in Plato, so too does it refer to different philosophical sciences. In other words, Plato does not have has a fixed referent for the science he often calls ‘dialectic’. All the same, what these different sciences called ‘dialectic’ have in common is that each, as presented, constitutes the highest achievable knowledge for the philosopher.

A particular aim of mine is to show that Plato’s science of dialectic makes a standalone appearance in the Republic as the science of the Good as such. In doing so, I argue, contra Charles Kahn,⁶ that the remarks on ‘dialectic’ in certain ‘Group I’ or ‘pre-Republic’ dialogues (terms explained below in Ch. I), which generally refer to a particular philosophical method, or methodology, do not serve as convincing evidence for Kahn’s proleptic reading of dialectic in Plato. Alternatively, I maintain that the

⁶ Kahn (1996)
most we can say about dialectic in these pre-Republic dialogues is that it forms the loose foundation upon which Plato comes to develop the science that is promoted as the theoretical zenith of philosophy in the Republic. Simply put, in those pre-Republic dialogues, so I argue, the science of dialectic is not left lurking in the shadows, as Kahn’s reading may suggest. Rather, it simply does not exist, not at any rate as a science with a distinguished knowledge of Forms, above all the Good, as such.

What exactly do I mean by ‘Forms’? In truth, I spend hardly any time in this dissertation attempting to explain the exact nature of these special beings. Most generally, Forms are universals, intelligible objects whose natures are eternal and invariable. Further, and this too is a relatively safe point to make, I consider Forms to be at minimum more metaphysically important and correspondingly more epistemically valuable than the instantiated, sensible objects that at best approximate any given Form (sc. they are more important insofar as they are supposed to be the causes of F-ness in sensibles, and so more epistemically valuable than sensibles for the topmost philosopher to comprehend). A primary goal of mine is to show that these special beings are fully understood only by the topmost philosopher, the expert of the science of dialectic; that what distinguishes the topmost philosopher is his full understanding of Forms as such, of what it means for a Form to be a Form. In general, then, ‘Forms’ functions solely as a placeholder for those universal objects only fully understood by the topmost philosopher.

I should point out that my account of the philosopher post-Republic butts heads with, in particular, Mary Louise Gill’s. Gill similarly maintains that certain post-Republic dialogues (primarily the Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman) reveal a rough insight into the nature of Plato’s philosopher, an expert

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7 Gill (2013)
distinguished in major part by his skill in ‘dialectic’ (i.e., division). Yet Gill distinguishes herself in two ways. Firstly, she argues that there is a single professional philosopher in the selected group of dialogues who is ascribed a distinguished knowledge (epistēmē); she holds that there is only one scientist who technically merits the appellation ‘philosopher’: the scientist of Being qua Being. Secondly, Gill argues that the selected dialogues only give us pieces of a greater puzzle regarding the philosopher’s ‘object’ (Gill’s term): the Form of Being. According to Gill, the true, complete account of the philosopher is revealed only when all of the puzzle pieces regarding Being as such are put together correctly (i.e., when the problem particularly regarding the metaphysical status of Being as such is solved). Ultimately, Gill argues that the problem regarding Being is solved when we understand that Being as such both changes and is at rest (i.e., Being includes both things that change and things at rest). The philosopher ‘is interested in all beings’, according to Gill, in contrast to other specialists who carve off a part of Being for their respective domains of expertise. Accordingly, she ascribes knowledge of Being as such solely to her expert philosopher.

Contra Gill, I argue that in the selected post-Republic dialogues there are no good grounds to identify the philosopher as an expert of specifically Being as such. I show that ‘philosopher’ in these dialogues does not mark off just one specific expert;

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8 Cf. Gill (2013) 211-14, 223-27. Gill (2013) 242-4 acknowledges that the philosopher is not the only expert who uses division; she compares and contrasts the philosopher’s use of division with the true rhetorician’s use of it in the Phaedrus (a comparison I analyze as well in Ch. IV).

9 On Being as such being the philosopher’s ‘object’, see Gill (2013) Introduction.

10 This is discussed in further detail in Ch. III.

11 Another point to be discussed in more detail in Ch. III.

12 Gill (2013) 241
that both the *Republic* and post-*Republic* dialogues agree on the point that there are various *philosophoi* corresponding to various branches of *philosophia*.

Where does the elenctic Socrates fit into the picture of philosophy promoted in this dissertation? I discuss the character Socrates in almost every chapter of this dissertation. In particular, I compare and contrast the elenctic persona of Socrates with the expert of the science of dialectic. Ultimately, I show that the two are not identical; that we are dealing with different *types* of philosophers in the selected dialogues. I argue that Socrates, as variously depicted in these dialogues, always falls short of being identified as the philosopher *par excellence*, as that expert with positive knowledge of certain Forms as such.

I am not the first scholar to question Socrates’ philosophical standing in certain dialogues. Dorothea Frede, for example, has argued that, particularly in the *Philebus*, Socrates’ use of division falls noticeably short of what would be expected of a master dialectician.\(^\text{13}\) According to Frede, this ought to make us question Socrates’ standing as Plato’s topmost philosopher.\(^\text{14}\) I consider Frede’s, amongst other scholars’, views on Socrates’ philosophical standing in each of the dialogues perused in this dissertation. Whilst I side with Frede *et al.* on the point that Socrates is not projected as the topmost philosopher for Plato in certain dialogues, I take pains to show that Socrates is still regarded by Plato as very much a philosopher. In general, I seek to accommodate (the predominantly elenctic) Socrates into a philosophical hierarchy capped by a supra-mathematical science—however exactly this science is depicted in a given dialogue. I show that, far from being in conflict, the elenctic Socrates and the true philosopher *par excellence* form a complementary relationship (here is where the positive and negative fashions of philosophy meet): the elenctic philosopher gets

\(^{13}\) Frede (1993) and (2004).

\(^{14}\) See as well C.C.W. Taylor (2006), who questions Socrates’ philosophical standing in the *Sophist*. 
pupils to think about certain things in the right way prior to sending them off to work with the philosopher *par excellence*. In general, I show that Socrates is a certain type of philosopher who provides vital philosophical/psychical conditioning.

Let us briefly review how I place myself vis-à-vis certain other scholars working on some of the same topics.\textsuperscript{15} With regard to Plato’s ‘dialectic’ in general, I endorse Robinson’s view that dialectic stands for whatever method at a given point in time is the most viable one for the sake of achieving insights into the nature of universals. Yet I add that the ‘dialectic’ in the *Republic* and certain post-*Republic* dialogues may also refer to a science, not a method; that Plato thinks of ‘dialectic’ as both a way of doing philosophy, as well as a science that represents the greatest philosophical knowledge. I argue, *pace* Charles Kahn, that the science, cast as a science of above all the Good as such, makes a standalone appearance in the *Republic*; that no pre-*Republic* dialogue, which mentions ‘dialectic’, alludes to the science *par excellence* of *Republic* VI-VII. Ultimately, I wish to emphasize a distinguishing feature of the account of philosophy in the *Republic*: that it is namely in this dialogue (and no pre-*Republic* dialogue) that we are explicitly told that there exists a topmost supra-mathematical science.

On the nature of philosophy in the post-*Republic* dialogues, I show, *pace* Gill, (a) that philosophy is not equated with a particular science. Accordingly, (b) ‘philosopher’ does not mark of a single expert versed in a single science. Moreover, (c) I show that, whilst Plato has a topmost philosopher in mind in these post-*Republic* dialogues (sc. the expert of the science of dialectic), this philosopher is not an

\textsuperscript{15} Obviously other scholars, as well as other related topics, are discussed in this dissertation. All I am doing here is singling out those topics and scholars that have had the greatest influence on this dissertation. I should add that I take Sandra Peterson (2011) to task in Ch. V for questioning Socrates’ (Plato’s) endorsement of philosophy as depicted in the *Theaetetus*; I argue that there are no good grounds to deny Socrates’ (Plato’s) endorsement.
Aristotelian metaphysician; he is not distinguished by way of his knowledge of Being qua Being. Lastly, on the character Socrates, I side with Frede et al. on the point that Socrates is not projected as the philosopher par excellence in certain dialogues. All the same, I show that Socrates and the real philosopher par excellence form a complementary relationship; that Plato still considers Socrates to be very much a philosopher with a vital contribution to make to philosophy.

To conclude this introduction, I now turn to outline the main chapters of this dissertation. In Ch. I, I elucidate the central place of the science of dialectic (ἡ dialektikē) in Plato’s conception of philosophy in the Republic. In doing so, I argue against a purported connection between the middle books of the Republic and certain other Platonic dialogues regarding dialectic. I argue that there is no allusion in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno, or Cratylus to the account of dialektikē presented in the middle books of the Republic; that the unique science of dialectic makes a standalone appearance in the middle books of the Republic. I argue that all cognates of ‘dialectic’ (e.g., to dialegesthai, to dialektikon) found in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno, and Cratylus, which refer either to a general skill in philosophical conversing, or method of inquiry or debate, do not serve as a real hint or foreshadowing of the science of dialectic of the Republic. Simply put, not one of the remarks on dialectic in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno, or Cratylus adequately prepares us for the science of the Good as such showcased in the Republic.

In Ch. II, I argue that being an expert in the science of dialectic satisfies just half of what Plato, at least when writing the Republic, thinks is the complete life for the philosopher: a unique combination of the theoretical and political life; the practical application, in the form of ruling, of one’s knowledge of Forms as such. In this chapter I also compare Socrates, as variously depicted in certain other dialogues,
with the expert of *dialektikē* in the *Republic*. I argue that, whilst not an expert of the science of dialectic, and so a candidate for the best possible philosopher in the *Republic*, Socrates is nonetheless a philosopher in the more general sense of the word: an intellectual bent on pursuing genuine wisdom.

In **Ch. III**, I examine the remarks on the philosopher in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. My chief claim in this chapter is that, in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato deliberately leaves the account of his topmost philosopher open so as to allow his topmost philosopher to concern himself with asking and answering a variety of questions (e.g., ‘What is a sophist?’ ‘What is the relation between Being as such and Non-Being as such?’). In doing so, Plato prevents his topmost philosopher from being fixed to any particular branch of knowledge. In other words, I claim that Plato subtly casts the topmost philosopher as someone who transcends the epistemic boundaries that mark off the typical statesman, the typical geometer, and so on.

In **Ch. IV**, I analyze how the *Phaedrus* and *Philebus* distinguish philosophy: in the *Phaedrus* a contrast is drawn especially, though not exclusively, between philosophy and proper rhetoric (my term, explained below). Plato distinguishes the two by highlighting the different aims each seeks to satisfy via the same method: division. The philosopher is distinguished not on account of any unique method, or specific domain of knowledge, but by being someone who always seeks to grasp and in turn reflect with others on the truth of the matter, always accepting that his account may not be absolute. In the *Philebus* a hierarchy of sciences, reminiscent of the one in the *Republic*, is alluded to toward the end of the dialogue. ‘Dialectic’ is found at the top of this hierarchy. Accordingly, the *Philebus* shows us that Plato continues to regard the highest philosophical science as supra-mathematical.
In Ch. V, I consider the connection between three portraits of the philosopher found in Plato: the expert of the science of dialectic, Socrates the intellectual midwife of the *Theaetetus*, and the philosopher of Socrates’ digression in the *Theaetetus*. A particular aim of this chapter is to show how Socrates the intellectual midwife is not to be equated with the philosopher of the digression. This chapter further shows that the philosopher of Socrates’ digression is not straightforwardly identifiable with the expert of the science of dialectic. What is Plato’s reason for not presenting a uniform philosopher, a uniform conception of philosophy? The *Theaetetus* shows us, in agreement with the findings of earlier chapters of this dissertation, that *philosophia* is not one art or science; it is not just intellectual midwifery, nor is it strictly the science of dialectic. Indeed, the *Theaetetus* affirms that there exist various *philosophoi* corresponding to various branches of *philosophia*, all of which come together under one general aim: betterment of self through intellectual activity. In the last section of this chapter, I critically assess Sandra Peterson’s reading of the *Theaetetus*. Ultimately, I show that her reading is misguided; that, in particular, we have no good reason to doubt Socrates’ (Plato’s) endorsement of philosophy as it is variously depicted in the dialogue.
‘DIALECTIC’ IN THE REPUBLIC AND CERTAIN OTHER DIALOGUES

In this first chapter I elucidate the central place of the science of dialectic (ἡ διαλεκτική) in Plato’s conception of philosophy in the Republic. In doing so, I argue against a purported connection between the middle books of the Republic and certain other Platonic dialogues regarding dialectic. I argue that there is no allusion in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno, or Cratylus to the account of dialektikē presented in the middle books of the Republic; that the unique science of the Good as such makes a standalone appearance in the middle books of the Republic. I argue that all cognates of ‘dialectic’ (e.g., to dialegesthai, to dialektikon) found in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno, and Cratylus, which refer either to a general skill in philosophical conversing, or method of inquiry or debate, do not serve as a real hint or foreshadowing of the science of dialectic of the Republic. Simply put, not one of the remarks on dialectic in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno, or Cratylus adequately prepares us for the science par excellence showcased in the Republic.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

A search in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae reveals that cases of ‘ἡ διαλεκτική’ occur only in the Republic, Phaedrus and Sophist, the latter dialogues safely placed after the Republic. Yet I shall not examine the Phaedrus, Sophist, or

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16 On the chronology of the dialogues, see Introduction p. 2 n. 2. On a separate note, the TLG search, which indicates that ‘dialektikē’ does not appear before Plato, indirectly supports what Diogenes, Lives
any other commonly termed ‘later’ dialogue in any detail in this chapter. What
dialogues shall I examine in detail in this chapter? Along with the Republic, I shall
look at the Gorgias, Euthydemus, Meno, and Cratylus. Since I question a purported
foreshadowing of the account of dialectic in Republic VI-VII in these dialogues, I
assume that the four dialogues highlighted are all ‘pre-Republic’.

Now, Charles Kahn maintains that remarks on dialectic in certain dialogues
are meant to prepare us for the account of dialectic in Republic VI-VII:

‘[T]he Republic is the very first dialogue in which Plato tells us what he
means by dialectic. There are nevertheless unmistakable allusions to
this topic in three earlier dialogues, namely in the Meno, Euthydemus,
and Cratylus. Read retrospectively, from the vantage point of the
Republic, these passages are fully intelligible; read in their immediate
context at least two of these texts must seem enigmatic. For only in the
Republic do we learn that “dialectic” has been chosen as the official
designation for the highest kind of philosophical knowledge, the
knowledge that is identical with, or indispensable for, the art required of
the statesman: the politikē technē of the Gorgias and the royal art of the
Euthydemus [i.e., a knowledge of ‘Forms’ or ‘unchangeable realities’,


17 This need not be strictly construed as a chronological assumption. Kahn (1996) 48 sees certain
dialogues, regardless their actual date of composition, as being intended to be read prior to certain
others, particularly the Republic: ‘[the structuring of the dialogues in this sense] is [the] systematic
orientation towards the Republic that ties all or most of these dialogues together and offers the most
enlightening perspective on their interrelationship.’
cf. Kahn (1996) 295 et passim]. And it is only from this point of view that the relevant passages in the *Euthydemus* and *Cratylus* can be understood.\(^\text{18}\)

One of Kahn’s central claims is that ‘Group I’ dialogues\(^\text{19}\) are to be read first, in preparation for the philosophical insights of the *Republic*. In particular, Kahn argues that Plato has a specific notion of dialectic as a method leading to Forms that is only gradually revealed to the reader as the latter makes progress in his philosophical studies; ‘it is in the central books of the *Republic* that dialectic is most fully described.’\(^\text{20}\)

To qualify Kahn’s claim, I argue that ‘dialektikē’ in the middle books of the *Republic* refers only to a *science*, not a method.\(^\text{21}\) I believe that the distinction between science and method is one that Plato is not only aware of, but further enforces in the *Republic*. Plato distinguishes between a method of ‘dialectic’ (sc. philosophical investigation, or skill in philosophical conversation),\(^\text{22}\) namely with the term ‘*(to) dialegesthai*’, and a distinguished science of ‘dialectic’, namely with ‘hē

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\(^\text{18}\) Kahn (1996) 293, my bold

\(^\text{19}\) Kahn’s (1996) 47 term, which refers to a set of dialogues (Apology, Crito, Ion, Hippias Minor, Gorgias, Menexenus, Laches, Charmides, Euthyphro, Protagoras, Meno, Lysis, Euthydemus, Symposium, Phaedo, and Cratylus), respectively placed across six distinct stages, which are meant to be read in anticipation of the *Republic*. I shall adopt the term simply to refer to certain dialogues.


\(^\text{21}\) Kahn (1996) 326-7 jumps from referring to the same thing, dialektikē, as a science, art, and method. On the distinction between method and science, see *Intro*. pp. 5-7. Said distinction is recalled above.

\(^\text{22}\) Of course, ‘dialegesthai’ does not translate simply as ‘to philosophically converse’. However, given the philosophical context in which the term is used in Plato, I take the liberty in this chapter to have most instances of ‘*(to) dialegesthai*’ refer to conversation of a philosophical nature.
(epistēmē) dialektikē’. The science may be related to the method or skill; it is not to be equated with it.

More substantially, I argue that, reading the Group I dialogues ‘retrospectively’, one would have to precariously contort the more natural reading of relevant passages in the highlighted dialogues in order for said passages to agree with the account of dialektikē in Books VI-VII of the Republic. Alternatively, I maintain that the most we can say about dialectic in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno, and Cratylus is that it forms the loose foundation upon which Plato comes to develop the science that is promoted as the theoretical zenith of philosophy in the middle books of the Republic. In these highlighted dialogues, so I argue, the science of dialectic distinguished in the Republic is not left lurking in the shadows, as Kahn’s reading may suggest. Rather, it simply does not exist, not at any rate as a science with a unique body of knowledge. Again, I am not denying that in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno and Cratylus Plato at times speaks of dialectic as expertise or skill in philosophical conversation (that is, conversation or argumentation conducted for the sake of arriving at the truth of the matter). What I am denying is that such a notion of dialectic is hinting at that unique science whose experts have a synoptic view of all pertinent sciences framed by their knowledge of above all the Good as such.

To be clear, I do not examine whether there is a cohesive and consistent picture of the dialectician (dialektikos) across the Gorgias, Euthydemus, Meno, and Cratylus. What I focus on is comparing and contrasting each dialogue’s respective picture of the dialectician with the account of the expert of dialektikē of Republic VI-VII. Ultimately, I show that remarks on skill in to dialegesthai or philosophical conversing, as mentioned in at least four ‘Group I’ dialogues (Euthydemus, Gorgias,
Meno, Cratylus), do not allude to a science of Forms; that dialectic, as variously described in these dialogues, can be understood in its original context, that is to say without interpolating the account of the science of dialectic of the Republic. Indeed, I show that interpolating said account only raises more questions than it answers.

DIALEKTIKÊ IN THE REPUBLIC

Before examining the remarks on dialectic in the Euthydemus, Gorgias, Meno, Cratylus, I think it best to first lay out the account of hê (epistêmê) dialektikê in Books VI-VII of the Republic.

In Book VI, whilst rounding out his account of the divided line, which relates a conception of hierarchical levels of comprehension and their corresponding objects as found across an intelligible plane and a visible one, Socrates says that it is strictly ‘via the power of dialectic (τῇ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμι)’ that understanding is obtained of first principles (511b). Upon comprehending the first principle, the Good itself (see below), the dialectician (unnamed as such in the text) turns around and, guided by nothing sensible and ditching hypotheses, continues his studies making use of ‘only Forms themselves, moving on from Forms to Forms, and ending in Forms’ (ἀλλ' εἴδεσιν αὐτοῖς δι' αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτά, καὶ τελευτᾷ εἰς εἰδή, 511c1-2).

23 Until shown otherwise, apart from the later dialogues, I can only find the following passages that remotely speak of dialectic as an art or science. Note that ‘to dialegesthai’ is used in the Protagoras (cf. esp. 336bd) to indirectly refer to an argumentative method. Of course, the expression itself simply means an activity of conversing. Regardless, we should not immediately equate an argumentative method with a systematized art. The text in the Protagoras certainly does not equate the two.

24 Unless otherwise noted, English translations of Plato are from Cooper (1997). Greek is from the OCT texts. Abbreviations of the dialogues’ titles are adopted from Cooper (1997) 1746.

25 In the Republic, a ‘principle’ (archê) may refer to an hypothesis used by a mathematician. However, as is clear at 511bc, ‘the unhypothetical first principle of everything’ (τοῦ ἑνσωθέτου…τὴν τοῦ
Note that up to 511c dialectic is still not explicitly nominated as a science. Dialectic is referred to as a *dunamis* (power), not a *tecnê* or *epistêmê*. Yet in Glaucon’s summary of Socrates’ remarks, dialectic is taken to be just that, a proper science:

‘I understand, if not yet adequately…that you want to distinguish the intelligible part of that which is, the part studied by the science of dialectic (τῆς τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι ἐπιστήμης), as clearer than the part studied by the so-called sciences (τῶν τεχνῶν καλομένων), for which their hypotheses are first principles.’ (511c3-8)

With Socrates’ approval of Glaucon’s summary (511d), there is no question as to the identity of ‘dialectic’ here as a proper science. It is specifically *dialektikê* that fully comprehends the intelligible plane of reality (cf. 509d), which we later find out to be the realm in which certain intelligible objects exist, particularly ‘the happiest’ or ‘best’ (τὸ εὐδαμονέστατον, 526e3-4, τοῦ ἀριστοῦ, 532c5) amongst those which are (τοῦ ὅντος, 526e4, ἐν τοῖς οὕσι, 532c5), that is the Good itself.

The ensuing remarks on *dialektikê* in Book VII relate a fairly detailed account of what is cast as the unique science of principally the Good. Yet we may infer that, dealing with mere Forms (511c), above all the Good, Just and Fine (484ce, 506a, 511b6-7) refers to the Good itself. Note that the passage suggests all genuine ‘Forms’, are principles distinct from the *archai qua* hypotheses the mathematicians rely on. On the relation between these different *archai*, see Burnyeat (2000) 41-2 and n. 59.

26 See the quotation below, where *tecnê* and *epistêmê* are used interchangeably. However, see n. 27.

27 Further ahead (533d), Socrates suggests that ‘*tecnê*’ should not be equated with ‘*epistêmê*’ and *vice versa*; that a *tecnê* only approximates an *epistêmê* in its comprehension of reality. Note, nonetheless, that Socrates is not denying the important supplementary role that all *technai* serve-obviously all ‘preludes’ to dialectic must be passed prior to a proper comprehension of the science of dialectic. Furthermore, the exact distinction between *epistêmê* and *tecnê* is never pursued any further in the *Republic.*
532c, 534bc, 540ab), it is the sole epistēmē of Forms as such. In general, dialektikē ultimately seeks ‘the Good itself with understanding itself’ (αὐτὸ ὁ ἐστὶν ἀγαθὸν αὐτῇ νοὴσει, 532b1), reaching the end of the intelligible realm in contrast to all other subjects, which terminate at the end of either the sensible realm or the subordinate intelligible one (532ad, cf. 517bc). Whilst the exact method employed by dialektikē is left somewhat vague (533a), what is made clear is that only this science ‘systematically (ὁ δῶ) attempts to grasp with respect to each thing itself what the being of it is, for all the other crafts (ἀλλ’ αἱ…ἀλλαὶ πᾶσαι τέχναι) are concerned with human opinions and desires, with growing or construction, or with the care of growing or constructed things’ (533b3–6). And the subordinate sciences (see below) at best have an approximate grasp of the true nature of mathematical entities. Indeed, all other crafts and subordinate sciences at best obtain an inexact grasp of the nature of whatever they set their sights on (533bc).

During a critique of the method of hypothesis, Socrates says that all ‘preludes’ (i.e., subordinate sciences) to dialektikē rely on hypotheses, which are left unqualified due to their being unknown:

‘[w]hat mechanism could possibly turn any agreement into knowledge (τὴν τοιαύτην

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28 The remarks at 484ce and 506a, particularly those at 506a detailing the importance of the philosophical guardian knowing the Good itself in order to know what are ‘just and fine things’ (δικαία τε καὶ καλὰ, 506a4), comes before dialektikē is showcased in the Republic. However, because this guardian turns out to be none other than an expert of dialektikē, it is safe to infer that it is on account of his grasp of the Forms in question (viz., the Good, Just and Fine) that he is able to know what is particularly valuable, and so expertly run a city-state.

29 An account of this method is abandoned, really (cf. 533a).
ὁμολογίαν ποτὲ ἐπιστήμην γενέσθαι) when it begins with something unknown and puts together the conclusion and the steps in between from what is unknown?’ (533c3-5)

By contrast, *dialektikē* ultimately has no need for hypotheses. It rather seeks knowledge of and in turn starts from a first principle so as to leave no part of any investigation into the nature of a given thing unqualified. Surely this is what Socrates means when he says the science of dialectic seeks out the first principle so as to be ‘secure’ (βεβαιώσηται, 533c9). Note, though, that hypotheses are used initially to arrive at knowledge of at least one first principle, which surely must allude to the importance of mathematics in the dialectician-in-training’s ascent to the Good (cf. 511bc). Nonetheless, once the seeker of the Good has obtained a vision of it with his mind alone, thereupon (mathematical) hypotheses are abandoned. In what sense are they abandoned? The professional dialectician now starts any further inquiry with knowledge of at least one first principle. He does not start with a proposition assumed to be true (or false) and proceeding until it is shown to be true (or false). Hence, *dialektikē* is primarily responsible for bringing the soul closest to the true nature of that which is (533d, cf. 513bd).

Whilst what generally defines an expert of *dialektikē* is his capacity to give and receive an account ‘of each thing [that is]’ (ἑκάστου…τῆς οὐσίας, 534b3-4), we should stress that what distinguishes this unique scientist is his capacity to thoroughly give and receive an account of especially the Good itself. As Socrates claims,

‘[u]nless someone can distinguish in an account the form of the good from everything else, can survive all refutation, as if in a battle, striving to judge things not in
accordance with opinion but in accordance with being, and can come through all this with his account still intact, you’ll say that he doesn’t know the good itself or any other good.’ (534b8-c5)

For sure, we are told that only the expert of *dialektikē* knows how to properly give and receive an account of the true being (nature) of whatever he is investigating without the need of sense perception (531e-532a, 534b). But this expert’s thorough account of a given thing’s nature is possible only in light of his prior grasp of the Good itself; without knowledge of the Good one can hardly have a precise grasp of the being of whatever else he looks to.

Now, given the overall power and influence that the Good itself has (cf. 517c), coupled with the claim that only a proper dialectician can come to know it, the science of dialectic is *superior* to all other sciences (cf. 533c-535a). Accordingly, *dialektikē* is the last science to be mastered by the philosopher-kings-in-training (535a). Furthermore, we are told that the dialectically inclined individual must form a ‘synoptic’ (*sunopsis*) or unified vision; he must incorporate all that he has learned about the sciences into a greater body of knowledge (537bc). For that reason, he must undergo rigorous tests. Moreover, Socrates notes that only a handful of those training actually become full-fledged dialecticians, avoiding poor upbringing and so corruption in the process (537d-540a).

What is especially important to note at this juncture is that *dialektikē* is not only identified as that superior science of sciences. It is also projected as the very pinnacle of the theoretical life:
'Then, at the age of fifty, those who’ve survived the tests and been successful both in practical matters and in the sciences must be led to the goal and compelled to lift up the radiant light of their souls to what itself provides light for everything. And once they’ve seen the good itself, they must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it [sc. the Good] as their model. Each of them will spend most of his time with philosophy (πρὸς φιλοσοφία), but, when his turn comes, he must labor in politics and rule for the city’s sake.’ (540a4-b4)

For the moment, I wish to skip over the political obligations the expert of the science par excellence is saddled with in the Republic.30 The passage above identifies those intellectuals who have passed all preludes and tests prior to reaching the science of dialectic. The description of the intellectual between 540ab focuses on his time spent mastering dialektikē, seeing ‘the Good itself’ (τὸ ἄγαθον αὐτό, 540a8-9), and ultimately coming down to govern the masses only after due comprehension of the Good. Accordingly, when Socrates speaks of the intellectual spending most of his time philosophizing, he must be specifically referring to that time, after the age of 50, and so after all preliminary studies, when the professional dialectician is at home with the Good and the rest of the Forms. What I wish to stress here is the point Socrates is rather subtly making: dialektikē completes the theoretical aspect of philosophia.31 As we shall see up ahead, nowhere in the ‘Group I’ dialogues mentioned above are philosophia and dialektikē connected like this. Nowhere in those dialogues does Plato

30 I return to this topic next chapter.
31 Interestingly, the passage suggests that the theoretical life of the philosopher is explicitly distinguished (though certainly not divorced) from the practical-political life the philosopher is saddled with. At a given time the competent philosopher either theorizes about special beings, or he rules over a polis; the activities are not done concurrently. All the same, they are complementary-a point I return to next chapter.
hint at a notion of dialectic as that science which acts as the copingstone of all pertinent sciences completing the philosopher’s theoretical life.\textsuperscript{32}

SOME ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON THE USE OF CERTAIN COGNATES OF ‘DIALECTIC’ IN THE \textit{REPUBLIC}

We should note that, in the \textit{Republic}, Plato does not fix the referents of all cognates of ‘dialectic’. Take the expression ‘power of dialectic’ (\textit{hē dunamis tou dialegesthai}), as found in Books VI and VII. When comparing its use in Book VI at 511cd and again in Book VII between 537d-539d, we see an immediate discrepancy: at 511cd, the ‘power of dialectic’ refers to a science used by reason alone in order to obtain knowledge of the Good itself. In fact, ‘\textit{hē dunamis tou dialegesthai}’ is here shown to be synonymous with ‘\textit{hē epistēmē tou dialegesthai}’ (cf. 511c5), or what is later referred to as just ‘\textit{dialektikē}’. By contrast, between 537d-539d, ‘\textit{hē dunamis tou dialegesthai}’ refers to a refutative method of argumentation, synonymously referred to as just ‘\textit{to dialegesthai}’ (cf. 537e1). What is particularly noteworthy about the mention of the power of dialectic between 537d-539d is that said power presupposes no comprehension of Forms, especially the Good itself. Indeed, this passage is notable

\textsuperscript{32} Kahn (1996) 327 omits the lines that immediately follow the reference to dialectic being the copingstone of the sciences that constitute the subjects (\textit{mathēmata}) to be learned. In doing so, he leaves out the fact that \textit{dialektikē} is implicitly classed as a science, not a method:

‘Then do you think that we’ve placed dialectic at the top of the other subjects (τοῖς μαθήμασιν) like a coping stone and that no other subject can rightly be placed above it (καὶ οὐκέτ’ ἄλλο τούτοις μάθημα ἄνωτέρῳ ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιτίθεσθαι), but that our account of the subjects that a future ruler must learn has come to an end?’ (VI, 534e1-535a1)
for its discussion of the abuse of ‘dialectic’, in context a refutative or elenctic method of argumentation, by young people. I think that the most sensible explanation here for the variant use of ‘hê dunamis tou dialegesthai’ is that the meaning or referent of certain cognates of ‘dialectic’ in the Republic varies depending upon context. I emphasize ‘certain’ cognates here because I want to further suggest that the meaning or referent of ‘hê dialektikê’ and ‘hê epistêmê tou dialegesthai’ does not vary from Book VI to the end of the Republic; that the ‘science of dialectic’ always refers to that particular science of the Good and the rest of the Forms. I maintain this point given the simple fact that there is no textual evidence in the Republic that ‘hê dialektikê’ and ‘hê epistêmê tou dialegesthai’ refer to anything else apart from this unique science.

DIALECTIC IN THE EUTHYDEMUS

In the Euthydemus, we find two clear uses of ‘(to) dialegesthai’:

‘{Socrates} Well, Euthydemus, if you think this is how to do things, we must do them your way, because you are far more an expert at discoursing (ἐπίστασαι διαλέγεσθαι) than I, who have merely a layman’s knowledge of the art (τέχνην)’ (295d8-e3).

‘{Socrates} Then isn’t it also the case that the same is the same and the different different? Because I don’t imagine that the different is the same, but I thought even a child would hardly doubt that the different is different. But you must have neglected this point deliberately, Dionysodorus, since in every other respect you and your
brother strike me as bringing the art of argument (τὸ διαλέγεσθαι)\textsuperscript{33} to a fine pitch of excellence, like craftsmen who bring to completion whatever work constitutes their proper business’ (301b7-c5).

Now, Socrates is definitely not endorsing Euthydemus’ and Dionysodorus’ ‘pancratistic art’ of refuting any thesis, be it true or false (cf. 272ab, 303a-304d). Socrates’ obviously sly response at 301bc surely underlines the insincere nomination of eristic disputation as the art of conversational discourse, as the art Socrates would sincerely promote and seek expertise in. Indeed, we are not meant to take Socrates seriously when he equates eristic disputation with a genuine philosophical art (on ‘philosophy’ in the Euthydemus, see below). Notwithstanding, does Socrates have a sincere answer to what is genuine skill in to dialegesthai in the Euthydemus? At first blush (I return to this topic below), it would rather broadly be some conversational or argumentative art that seeks the truth. So, I agree with Charles Kahn on the point that at times ‘dialegesthai’ and cognates refer to a philosophical conversation, that is to a discursive engagement in pursuit of truth, and that this art is meant to be contrasted with the eristic (i.e., debate), victory-loving, non-knowledge seeking style of disputation that Socrates is up against in many dialogues.\textsuperscript{34} But beyond this rather meager account in the Euthydemus, there is no further textual evidence, save the likewise vague description of the dialectician (see below) that genuine dialectic, which applies to any philosophical investigation, foreshadows a science whose unique domain of knowledge consists in Forms in and of themselves.

\textsuperscript{33} I accept ‘the art of argument’ as a paraphrase based on what is said between 295d8-e3. However, the expression itself translates literally as no more than an activity of conversing.

\textsuperscript{34} Cf. Kahn (1996) 303 et passim
Granted, the use of ‘dialektikos’ (dialectician) in the Euthydemus requires some attention:

‘No art of actual hunting, he said [sc. Clinias], extends any further than pursuing and capturing: whenever the hunters catch what they are pursuing they are incapable of using it, but they and the fisherman hand over their prey to the cooks. And again, geometers and astronomers and calculators (who are hunters too, in a way, for not one of these make their diagrams; they simply discover those which already exist), since they themselves have no idea of how to use their prey but only how to hunt it, hand over the task of using their discoveries to the dialecticians (παραδιδόασι…τοίς διαλεκτικοῖς καταχρῆσθαι αὐτῶν τοῖς εὑρήμαιν)-at least, those of them do so who are not completely senseless.’ (Euthd., 290b7-c6)

From this passage the only thing that we can immediately say about the dialectician is that he is ascribed a distinguished, albeit unqualified, supervisory role: he uses the theoretical knowledge first obtained by certain mathematicians (how exactly is left unsaid). Anything else that one would wish to add to this account of the dialectician would be strict conjecture.

Kahn, amongst others, interprets this passage ‘as an allusion to the relationship between mathematics and dialectic described in Republic VI-VII...[It] must imply the epistemology of the Divided Line and, even more precisely, the curriculum of the guardians in Republic VII, where we meet the three branches of mathematics
mentioned in this text.\textsuperscript{35} Against Kahn \textit{et al.}, I offer certain objections that question the force of this purported cross-reference.

To start, in this portion of the \textit{Euthydemus} (288e-289d) a contrast is drawn between two kinds of art: on the one hand we have the art (e.g., hunting) with the knowledge of capturing something (e.g., duck), and on the other hand we have the art (e.g., cookery) with the knowledge to make use of that which has been captured, (e.g., \textit{canard à la rouennaise}). Crucially, the text suggests that the user in each field normally does not possess the distinct expertise of the ‘hunter’. Note Clinias’ plea for the discovery of a hitherto unidentified art that, implicitly in contrast to hunting and cookery, hunting and generalship, and most importantly for us mathematics and dialectic, both possesses and uses a unique Knowledge X that in turn makes man happy (290bd, cf. 289be).

In light of this contrast between the arts, let us spell out the relation between the mathematician and the \textit{dialektikos} drawn in the \textit{Euthydemus}. The \textit{dialektikos} does not possess the mathematician’s distinct knowledge or expertise (viz., that of hunting

\textsuperscript{35} Kahn (1996) 308. In a later work, Kahn (2000) 90 says that the \textit{Euthydemus} passage on dialectic is ‘impossible’ to understand without interpolating the account of dialectic in \textit{Republic} VII:

‘We can regard the enigmatic passage at \textit{Euthydemus} 290c, about mathematicians turning their discoveries over to the dialecticians, as a proleptic reference to the doctrine of \textit{Republic} VII, where the study of mathematics is proposed as a preparation for dialectic...the passage of \textit{Euthydemus} 290c refers proleptically to \textit{Republic} VII since it is impossible to understand the first text without reference to the second.’

Hawtrey (1978) 15 with n. 5 and (1981) 127-9 also sees a direct allusion to the \textit{Republic} in this passage of the \textit{Euthydemus}. So too do Narcy (1984) 183 and Burnyeat (2002) 40–66. However Burnyeat (2002) 63 n. 46, in contrast to Kahn (1996) 307-9, sees the allusion in the \textit{Euthydemus} as a back-reference to the \textit{Republic}. Schofield (2006) 151-2 states that ‘this reference [sc. to the relation between mathematicians and dialecticians in the \textit{Euthydemus}] only makes sense as an allusion to the epistemology and metaphysics of Books 6 and 7 of the \textit{Republic} (to the theory, whether or nor the text of the \textit{Republic} was already composed by the time the \textit{Euthydemus} was written).’
down already existing mathematical figures). Again, the *dialektikos* is only explicitly said to have the knowledge to make use of the mathematician's discoveries. This picture of the dialectician as someone who may not have the mathematician’s knowledge does not mesh well with the picture of the expert of *dialektikē* in the *Republic*: in the latter dialogue, the expert of *dialektikē* must possesses mathematical knowledge prior to obtaining superior knowledge of the Good itself. Surely a complete mathematical knowledge includes knowledge of hunting down mathematical *diagrammata*.

I am not the first scholar to question the intimate connection between the dialecticians of the *Euthydemus* and *Republic*. Richard Robinson, followed by R.S. Sprague,\(^{36}\) have argued that the epistemology of the Divided Line and the educative scheme of the *Republic* do not suggest that the expert of *dialektikē* makes use of the mathematicians’ work as *conclusions*, in contrast to what is suggested of the dialectician in the *Euthydemus*. However, R. S. W. Hawtrey has reasonably argued that the mathematicians’ diagrams in the *Euthydemus* might not be conclusions after all:

‘Geometry is more likely to start from a figure than to end with one, and the word ἀνευρίσκοντι suggests that Plato is thinking rather of the discovery of certain figures with their particular properties than of the drawing from them of conclusions. Or, more probably, he may be referring generally to the subject matter rather than to either end of a process…’\(^ {37}\)

\(^{36}\) Cf. Robinson (1953) 74; Sprague (1964) 35 with n. 56.

\(^{37}\) Hawtrey (1978) 14
Let us, for the sake of argument, agree with Hawtrey on the role of the diagrammata in the *Euthydemus.*

What follows from this? Ultimately, Hawtrey maintains that the dialectician’s use of the mathematician’s diagrammata is understandable only in light of what is said about the dialectician’s use of mathematics in the *Republic*: the dialectician of the *Euthydemus*, like the dialectician of the *Republic*, may use the approved diagrammata of subordinate mathematicians as starting points during a given inquiry. Like Kahn, then, Hawtrey believes that the *Republic* VI-VII account of dialectic needs to be interpolated into the passage of the *Euthydemus* in order for the latter to make any sense.

In reply, I note that Hawtrey’s reading still does not fully account for the distinction drawn in the *Euthydemus* between expert possessor and expert user. As noted above, there is no confirmation in the *Euthydemus* that the dialectician as user of diagrammata knows how to first hunt down already existing diagrammata. Yet if the dialectician does not know how to do that, then the dialectician does not know everything about the diagrammata. And if he does not know everything about the diagrammata, then surely his grasp of geometry and astronomy is deficient to some extent. Again, this does not mesh well with the picture of the expert of dialektikē in the middle books of the *Republic*: the expert of dialektikē must know everything about select mathematics, and this must include knowing how to ‘hunt down’ and in turn use mathematical diagrammata (cf. n. 38). I shall offer an alternative account of the connection between the mathematician and dialectician of the *Euthydemus* below.

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38 In defence of Hawtrey (cf. (1978) 14), I believe that the diagrammata of the *Euthydemus* are more akin to the approved figures (schēmata) of the *Republic* (cf. 510c, 529d) than to the ‘worked out diagrammata’ (ἐκπαρομηνῶς διαγράμματαν, 529e2), which are criticized by Socrates (cf. 529de).

39 Cf. Hawtrey (1978) 15
In the interim, though, I would like to cast further doubt on the claim that remarks on the dialectician in the *Euthydemus* allude to the expert of *dialektikē* of the *Republic*.

In the ideal city of the *Republic*, statesmen are full-fledged philosophers; statesmen have and in turn apply knowledge of the Good as such.\(^4^0\) This connection between dialectician-philosophers and statesmen is not drawn in the *Euthydemus*, especially at 290bd. Again, dialecticians in the *Euthydemus* are the appliers of certain mathematicians’ discoveries, whilst, quite distinctly, statesmen are identified as the managers of, amongst other things, generals’ products (291cd). When we consider the apparent scientific hierarchy suggested in the text (289b f.), namely that there exists in particular a supreme science for man, one which alone will make him happy, to which all other sciences are subordinate, there arises an unresolved tension between dialectic and the political craft: where in this scientific hierarchy do the two stand? Is one science meant to be recognized as superior to the other?

Kahn might say that the reader is meant to somehow connect dialectic with statesmanship here in the *Euthydemus* in a way that agrees with the account of the philosopher-king in the *Republic*. Yet there is at least one problem with this attempted connection: statesmanship is proffered as that distinct knowledge which philosophy seeks to make man happy only after dialectic has been considered and in turn *passed over* as that very knowledge (more on this below). Surely this implies that statesmanship is somehow prior to the art of dialectic with regard to making man happy. But this placement of statesmanship over dialectic does not fit well with what is reported in the *Republic*: a statesman must have expertise in *dialektikē* (viz., knowledge of the Good) if he is to be any good at his job; knowledge of *dialektikē* in the *Republic* is prior to knowledge of statesmanship.

\(^{4^0}\) A point I draw out next chapter.
There is a smaller issue to address: there is confusion within the drama of the
dialogue concerning the authorship of the statements at *Euthydemus* 290bd (cf. 290e).
Socrates ultimately makes the vague suggestion that perhaps it was some ‘superior
being’ (τις τῶν κρειττόνων) (291a).\(^{41}\) Whoever this mysterious figure is, his account
on dialecticians, generals and statesmen fails to provide the answer sought. For in the
ensuing discussion (291b-293a) Socrates notes that the individuals present tried in
vain to account for that superior art, which would make man happy, that would itself
know how to use the knowledge that it obtained by itself via making or capturing (cf.
290d, 293a). Again, Socrates never returns to examine the art of dialectic mentioned
at 290c, to see if it satisfies the criteria cited.\(^{42}\)

Why does he not do so? It is most sensible to read the remarks on the relation
between mathematicians and dialecticians (as well as the other experts mentioned in
the text) as serving the straightforward purpose of illustrating the relation between
generals and statesmen: generals hand over their possessions to statesmen for the
latter to utilize (therefore generalship cannot be philosophy’s knowledge, which both

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\(^{41}\) C. Gill (2000) 140 suggests that the superior being is not meant to be equated with a specific person;
that the superior being could in fact be more abstractly the ‘Socratic dialectic’ or ‘protreptic dialectic’
(Gill’s terms) witnessed in the dialogue. ‘Dialectic’ in this sense is a method of argumentation
employed for the sake of encouraging both partners in a given inquiry to identify legitimate
philosophical puzzles and accordingly seek to resolve them. This dialectic is to be contrasted with, and
ultimately preferred over, the eristic argumentation employed by the sophistic brothers in the dialogue.
I note that Gill does not match Socratic or protreptic dialectic with the art employed by the *dialektikos*
at 290bc.

\(^{42}\) Ademollo (2011) 143-4 uses the *Euthydemus* description of philosophy, as the possession and use of
knowledge (*Euth.* 288d, 289b), in support of his argument that in the *Cratylus* the real authoritative
linguistic expert (i.e., both the maker and user of words) is the name-giver and dialectician wrapped up
into one; that linguistics is not a joint-venture between distinct experts. However, he does not take into
account the fact that in the *Euthydemus* dialectic is never identified as philosophy’s knowledge. Nor
does he note the explicit contrast between having knowledge of making or possessing X and having
knowledge of using X-dialectic being openly classified in the *Euthydemus* as an art of use. I shall
return to the *Cratylus* (and Ademollo) below.
possesses and employs that which it possesses), just as mathematicians hand over their discoveries to dialecticians for the dialecticians to interpret or analyze (see below), just as speech writers hand off their speeches to speakers for the speakers to recite, just like lyre makers hand off their lyres to lyre players for the latter to play, and so on and so forth (cf. 288e-290e). By the by, we should not lose sight of the fact that what is so amazing to Crito is that the lad, Clinias, is capable of understanding and in turn explaining why particularly generalship cannot be philosophy’s supreme knowledge, knowledge which is ultimately identified as statesmanship, not the art of interpreting mathematical diagrammata (see below). The main point here is that 290 ff. contrasts philosophy’s superior knowledge with all preceding lower ones, mathematics and dialectic included.

Now, so far I have not addressed the possibility that the Euthydemus postdates the Republic. M.M. McCabe, in particular, holds this view. She also believes that the Euthydemus serves in major part to criticize certain aspects of the Republic. Accordingly, McCabe would probably interpret Socrates’ failure in the Euthydemus to return to examine the art of dialectic, to see if it is the superior art, as a pulling back from the confident identification of the ruler with the dialectician in the Republic. Whilst McCabe’s view must be taken seriously, I have to point out that, just focusing on dialectic in the Euthydemus, it is very hard to see what would motivate Plato to downgrade not only the political role of the dialectician in the Euthydemus, but also, and arguably more importantly, the dialectician’s epistemic reach.

43 McCabe (2002). I have already pointed out that Burnyeat (2002) likewise considers the Euthydemus a post-Republic work.
44 See McCabe (2000)
45 Especially the connected, more substantiated thesis that certain post-Republic dialogues (esp. the Statesman and Philebus) attack central tenets of the Republic. For this see McCabe (2000) Ch. 5-8.
Here is the problem, as I see it: why would Plato, post-*Republic*, ascribe to the dialectician a downgraded grasp of select mathematics (viz., a knowledge of a use of diagrams without the separate knowledge of first tracking them down)? Why jeopardize the dialectician’s position as a super-mathematical scientist? A reasonable reply may be that Plato, after composing the *Republic*, brings his topmost scientist down to Earth; there is no need (alternatively, it is quite improbable) for the expert of *dialektikē* to master all ostensibly subordinate sciences in accordance with the educative programme established in the *Republic*. However, whilst it is not my intention to directly enter into a chronological debate, what I hope to show in subsequent chapters is that evidence gathered from those dialogues commonly considered to postdate the *Republic*, particularly the *Sophist, Statesman* and *Philebus*, is consistent with what is said in the *Republic*: that (i) there exists a supra-mathematical science, whose exclusive understanding of certain intelligibles as such is considered (be it implicitly or explicitly) the topmost science; (ii) that the expert of this science, however precisely accounted for in a given dialogue, has acquired knowledge of other sciences, particularly mathematical ones. What I want to suggest here is that the *Euthydemus* picture of an epistemically downgraded dialectician does not mesh well with any picture of the expert of the science of dialectic found in any dialogue that is typically considered to postdate the *Republic*: post-*Republic*, the expert of *dialektikē* has, or at least strives for, a complete grasp of reality. Surely in the process of knowing his unique subject matter the topmost philosopher learns how to ‘hunt down’ mathematical *diagrammata* or *schemata*. This argument can only be fully defended as we proceed.

Now, what do I think of the dialecticians in the *Euthydemus*? If their description does not immediately hint at the topmost scientists of the *Republic*, who
are these *dialektikoi*, and what exact role do they serve? I believe that ‘*dialektikoi*’ in the *Euthydemus* should be taken in a relatively modest sense: these dialecticians have the skill to debate, interpret and in turn broadcast in speech to a wider intellectual audience the mathematical findings that are difficult, or are otherwise incomprehensible, to understand immediately outside the field of mathematics (i.e., astronomy, geometry and calculation); the dialecticians, unlike the mathematicians, are capable of putting together some sort of account concerning these mathematical figures and broadcasting it to others. It is even plausible that the dialecticians ‘use’ mathematical figures by explaining how such abstract discoveries can be applied for more practical purposes by non-mathematicians (e.g., carpenters, house-builders, navigators, etc.). This skill is of genuine worth without interpolating either a Platonic metaphysics, or more precisely the educational curriculum of the *Republic* and the relation between the science of Forms and the mathematical sciences.

The reader may interject: why cannot the mathematician do what any good math teacher ought to do? Why must he rely on the dialectician to interpret his findings for a variety of audiences? In reply, I do not deny that the mathematician is capable of acting as a teacher; nothing in the text rules it out. But surely *qua* teacher

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46 Again, the other examples in this passage of the *Euthydemus* (288e-290d) suggest a practical application (usage) by Discipline B of things first grasped by Discipline A. All this goes some way to explain Socrates’ remark: ‘[mathematicians] hand over the task of using their discoveries to the dialecticians—at least those of them do so who are not completely senseless (ἀνόητοί)’ (290c5-6). Someone is ‘completely senseless’ if he holds onto those discoveries without wishing to see them put to some practical use. Incidentally, Kahn (1996) 308 reads an allusion in the *Euthydemus* to the Divided Line of *Republic* Book VI. Is ‘ἀνόητοί’, then, at 290c6 supposed to remind us of the Divided Line of the *Republic*, where *noesis*, surpassing the mathematicians’ *dianoia* (thought), sits at the top? If so, Kahn would have to explain why *noesis* in the *Euthydemus* is implicitly attributed to mathematicians, who pass on their mathematical discoveries to dialecticians, when in the *Republic* it is restricted to those who only concern themselves with Forms as such (cf. *Rep*. VI, 509d-511e). In other words, Kahn needs to account for the apparent difference between the *Euthydemus* and *Republic* on the subject of *noesis*. 
the mathematician would only be instructing others how to similarly ‘hunt down’ mathematical findings (and perhaps also lecture on his own mathematical discoveries) to aspiring mathematicians. The mathematician would not be applying his skill in any other way. In other words, as a teacher the mathematician (apart perhaps from lecturing on mathematics) would do nothing more than instruct others how to make their own mathematical discoveries. Accordingly, the mathematician would not be saddled with the task of interpreting this knowledge for use by non-mathematicians.

To briefly review, given the lack of textual evidence, I believe that Plato does not allude to (prepare us for) a notion of dialectic as a science of Forms in the *Euthydemus*; that the metaphysics and epistemology of these intelligible objects, which are prominently displayed in the middle books of the *Republic*, and which ground the unique domain of knowledge for the science of dialectic, are not hinted at in the *Euthydemus*. To be clear, neither Kahn nor Hawtrey go so far as to say that dialectic in the *Euthydemus* is the same as dialectic in the *Republic*. But I still wish to take them to task here for even suggesting that the remarks on dialectic in the former hint at the science found in the latter; that little to no sense could be made of the passages on dialectic in the *Euthydemus* unless one interpolates the account of the science of dialectic of *Republic* VI-VII.

Switching direction a bit, I should point out that, when ‘*philosophia*’ and cognates are used in the *Euthydemus*, they hardly evoke the science of dialectic of the *Republic*. In the *Euthydemus* philosophy is said to be the acquisition (*ktēsis*) of knowledge (*epistēmē*), which is beneficial to its possessors. This sort of knowledge in particular brings together knowing how to produce X and knowing how to use X (cf. 288d, 289b). Now, 288d-291d is surely an argument to the effect that *philosophia* is

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knowledge of statesmanship (the kingly art, the epistēmē of happiness). Granted, this equation is shown to generate various puzzles (cf. 292b ff.). The equation, in other words, is not trouble-free. This is partly because of the puzzles that it generates about good persons and knowledge, and partly because the influential man described by Crito (cf. 304c ff., see below) thinks philosophy, construed as the sort of eristic argumentation exemplified by the sophistic brothers in the dialogue, is a waste of time. Yet it is not clear that both the puzzles and the critical remarks made by the mysterious figure are supposed to make us reject the equation between philosophy and statesmanship.

Accordingly, I believe that there is one particularly important question that needs to be addressed: Does Plato equate philosophy-statesmanship with dialectic in the Euthydemus? If Plato does not do so, then Kahn’s proleptic thesis takes another hit. For the separation of philosophy, statesmanship and dialectic in the Euthydemus can hardly serve to prepare us for the amalgamation of the three in the Republic.49

My answer is indeed ‘no’. What Socrates says about the dialektikos at 290bc leaves us without a clear picture of the relation between the dialectician and the philosopher-statesman of the Euthydemus. What the Euthydemus does leave room for is an account of this relation that does not immediately match up to the relation as presented in the Republic: in the Euthydemus statesmanship is proffered as that distinct knowledge which philosophy seeks to make man happy only after dialectic

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48 This figure is likely a caricature of Isocrates. Cf. Hawtrey (1981) 189-90

49 Perhaps Kahn could say that certain philosophical problems arise at the end of the Euthydemus due to the separation of philosophy-statesmanship and dialectic. These problems in the Euthydemus, Kahn could say, are meant to foreshadow their own resolution in the Republic (viz., with the amalgamation of philosophy, statesmanship and dialectic). But even if this is so, it does not follow that the Republic notion of dialectic as a science of Forms is already present in the Euthydemus. I return to this point up ahead.
has been considered and in turn passed over as that very knowledge. Again, this implies that statesmanship is somehow prior to the art of dialectic with regard to making man happy. But this placement of statesmanship over dialectic does not fit well with what is reported in the Republic: a statesman must have expertise in dialektikē (viz., knowledge of the Good) if he is to be any good at his job; knowledge of dialektikē in the Republic is prior to knowledge of statesmanship.

Moreover, what emerges from 304c ff. is that the Isocrates-type (i) equates philosophy (or what he thinks philosophy means for Socrates) with dialectic, and (ii) equates dialectic with what Euthydemus and his brother do:

‘You [sc. Crito] would have heard men conversing (διαλεγομένων) who are the wisest of the present day in this kind of argument [i.e., the sophistic dialectic witnessed throughout the Euthydemus]. And I said, what did they show you? Nothing else, said he, than the sort of thing one can hear from such people at any time –chattering and making a worthless fuss about matters of no consequence…But surely, I said, philosophy (φιλοσοφία) is a charming thing. Charming, my innocent friend? he said- why it is of no value whatsoever!’ (Euthd. 304e1-305a1)

Accordingly, if Plato wants to equate philosophy proper with genuine dialectic (or some super kind of dialectic, particularly dialectic as a science of Forms à la Republic VI-VII), then he needs to show the difference between genuine dialectic and Euthydemian sophistry. And this is so whether or not he wants to maintain that philosophy proper is also statesmanship.

As it stands, the only indication in the dialogue that Plato answers this challenge is when he has Socrates indirectly (303d) and then Crito directly (304d)
state that they would rather be refuted by sophistic arguments than refute others by way of such sophistry. All this ultimately tells us is that genuine dialectic is not Euthydemian sophistry; it tells us nothing about what it truly is. Granted, the willingness to be refuted may be meant to evoke Socratic elenches, and, ideally, the willingness of the person refuted to ditch his untenable theses upon realizing the untenable nature of said theses. Could Plato in the *Euthydemus* be hinting that genuine dialectic is in fact Socratic elenches? Perhaps. But identifying genuine dialectic with Socratic elenches is problematic for the proleptic reading of the *Eurthydemus*. For Socratic elenches is neither statesmanship nor a science of Forms. Nor moreover can it be used to first grasp the nature of Forms (I discuss Socratic elenches in more detail next chapter). So identifying genuine dialectic with Socratic elenches hardly serves as good evidence for a proleptic reading of the *Euthydemus*. It certainly does not adequately prepare us for the leap from dialectic as Socratic elenches to dialectic as a distinct science of Forms.

In sum, I believe my preceding treatment of dialectic in the *Euthydemus* shows why it is unnecessary to interpolate the account of *dialektikē* drawn in the *Republic*, and in turn radically adjust the most natural reading of the text: the leap from an art that interprets mathematical diagrams (possibly amongst other things) for a wider audience to a productive art of happiness is simply a leap too far.

**DIALECTIC IN THE GORGIAS AND MENO**

Let us continue with our critique of the proleptic story, and turn to the passages on dialectic in the *Gorgias* and *Meno*:
‘{Socrates} He [sc. Polus] hardly seems to me to be answering the question.

{Gorgias} Why don’t you question him then, if you like? {Soc} No, I won’t, not as long as you yourself may want to answer. I’d much rather ask you. It’s clear to me, especially from what he has said, that Polus has devoted himself more to what is called oratory than to discussion (ῥητορικὴν μᾶλλον μεμελέτηκεν ἢ διαλέγεσθαι).…No one, however, asked you [sc. Polus] what Gorgias’ craft is like, but what craft it is, (οὐδεὶς ἐρωτᾷ ποία τις ἢ Γοργίου τέχνη, ἄλλα τίς) and what one ought to call Gorgias.’ (Grg., 448d5-e7)

‘{Socrates} Already at the start of our discussions, Polus, I praised you because I thought you were well educated in oratory. But I also thought that you had neglected the practice of discussion (τοῦ…διαλέγεσθαι).’ (Grg., 471d3-5)

‘{Socrates} and if my questioner was one of those clever and disputatious debaters, I would say to him: “I have given my answer; if it is wrong, it is your job to refute it.” Then, if they are friends as you and I are, and want to discuss with each other, they must answer {more dialectically} (διαλεκτικότερον). By {more dialectically} (τὸ διαλεκτικότερον) I mean that the answers must not only be true, but in terms admittedly known to the questioner.’ (Men., 75c8-d7)

In what follows I argue that in the passages just cited there is no clear indication (allusion, etc.) of dialectic as a science of Forms in the Meno and Gorgias; that whatever ‘special force’ (Kahn’s term, see below) the term ‘dialectic’ has in the Meno and Gorgias, it definitely does not prepare one for the science par excellence of the Republic.
To be clear, Kahn thinks that the remarks on *dialegesthai* in the *Gorgias* do not directly reference the account of dialectic in the middle books of the *Republic*:

‘The passage at *Gorgias* 448d seems to be the only example before the *Republic* where *dialegesthai* or its cognates is directly connected with the search for a definition. However, the emphasis there is probably on skill in question-and-answer rather than on the what-is-X? question.’

All the same, since Kahn’s overarching claim is that several remarks on dialectic in certain dialogues (*Gorgias* included) serve the function of gradually preparing the reader for the account of *dialektikē* in the *Republic*, surely we are left to infer that, when Plato uses a form of the word ‘dialectic’, with the purported ‘special force’ that Kahn thinks such a form has in these dialogues leading up to the *Republic*, then Plato is in fact hinting at (even if circuitously) the account of *dialektikē* in *Republic* VI-VII.

Now, in the *Gorgias* Socrates does allude to his typical ‘what is X?’ question. Socrates is eager to know what is Gorgias’ art (cf. 448c). In general, Socrates is asking ‘what is rhetoric?’ Yet it is specifically the remarks (quoted above) on skill in *to dialegesthai* that we ought to consider now. To start, then, is skill in *to dialegesthai* considered a genuine *technē* (art) in the *Gorgias*? Surely it is, if we

50 Kahn (1996) 304 n. 15
52 ‘There are six dialogues earlier than the *Republic* in which *dialegesthai* and related forms are used with a special force.’ Kahn (1996) 303
53 For an in depth treatment of the ‘what is X?’ question, as posed in the *Gorgias*, see Doyle (2010). It is important that we distinguish simply asking ‘what is X?’ and both asking and answering ‘what is X?’.
Anyone skilled in *to dialegesthai* must be capable of both. See above.
assume that answering ‘what is X?’ is equivalent to giving an account of X’s nature. Yet surely this equates dialectic with every technē (medicine, agriculture, etc.): something that has and in turn can explicate an account (logos) of the nature (phusis) of whatever it is concerned with; it is able to provide an account of the cause (aitia) of that which it is concerned with (cf. 465a). Here dialectic is exemplified by knowing the difference between saying what X is, and saying with X is like (for any X).

As a brief aside, we may ask whether Socrates is skilled in to dialegesthai? At first blush, he is, if we take skill in to dialegesthai, unlike rhetoric, to be generally concerned with asking and answering ‘what is X?’ Note that Socrates not only poses the ‘what is X?’ question, he provides an account of rhetoric’s nature as well: rhetoric is a knack (cf. 462e-466a). Nonetheless, we should not loose sight of the primary objective here. What I am particularly concerned with answering is whether, in the Gorgias, skill in to dialegesthai hints at the science par excellence of the Republic.

I argue that there are a few problems to address at this juncture, problems which cast doubt on connecting skill in to dialegesthai in the Gorgias with dialektikē in the Republic. Firstly, identifying the exact X that the expert in to dialegesthai is skilled in should distinguish this art from any other art. It should accordingly shed light on its exact relation to dialektikē of Republic VI-VII. But here we broach a notable predicament: in the Gorgias, skill in to dialegesthai is not once explicitly ascribed a definitive X that it has expertise in. We could assume that ‘X’ stands for a knowledge-set; that the expert in to dialegesthai can provide an account of multiple subjects that all fall under knowledge-set X. But this just compounds the problem; when and where does skill in to dialegesthai stop? The Gorgias does not say. Moreover, there is simply no hint in the Gorgias that a given X’s phusis refers to the Form of such an X (i.e., the metaphysical Platonic entity X). And, as I believe
Richard Robinson has already adequately shown, in the so-called Socratic dialogues there is no convincing evidence to equate the *phusis* of X with a Form X. To emphasize this point here, there is patently no evidence that, say, rhetoric’s *phusis*, as clearly described in the *Gorgias*, is identifiable with any eternal, invisible and self-predicative Form of rhetoric, which would agree with the description of Forms as described in the *Republic*. Accordingly, even if skill in *to dialegesthai* is considered a genuine art in the *Gorgias*, there are no convincing grounds to connect this art of dialectic in the *Gorgias* with the science of Forms of the *Republic*. This is because the former simply does not seek the latter’s knowledge. Moreover, it would definitely be a stretch of the imagination to think the account of the former prepares us for the account of the latter; the account of dialectic in the *Gorgias* is certainly intelligible without bringing in Kahn’s proleptic thesis.

Switching direction a bit, I would like to examine the use of ‘*philosophia*’ and cognates in the *Gorgias*, in order to see if these terms refer to the account of *dialektikê* in the *Republic*. Socrates claims *Philosophia* supports the thesis that committing injustice is worse than suffering it (482ab). Callicles interprets *philosophia* as good education for adolescents, yet worthless chatter for adults (484c-486bd). In particular, Callicles criticizes the way in which the philosopher speaks ‘haltingly’ (ἀνδρὸς…τις ψελλιζοµένου, 485c1). At one point, Callicles identifies Socrates’ current refutation (ἐλέγχων) as philosophical activity (486c). Then just ahead, to philosophize is to ‘cultivate wisdom’ (τὴν σοφίαν ἀσκητέον, 487c5) with the added qualification, ascribed to Callicles and Co., that one ‘be careful not to become wiser than necessary and so inadvertently bring yourself to ruin’ (ἀλλὰ εὐλαβεῖσθαι

54 Cf. Robinson (1953) 49-60

55 Teisiander of Aphidnae, Andron the son of Androtion, and Nausicydes of Cholarges. Socrates calls these men, plus Callicles, ‘partners in wisdom’ (κοινωνούς…σοφίας, 487c2), cf. 487bc.
παρεκελεῦσθε ἀλλήλοις ὡς μὴ πέρα τοῦ δέοντος σοφώτεροι γενόμενοι λήσετε διαφθαρέντες, 487c7-d2, cf. 487bd). At the very end of the Gorgias, the soul of the philosophos is sent to the Isles of the Blessed, for the philosophos, in the process of seeking out the truth, alone amongst mortals has led the most virtuous life (526c, 527de). We need not worry at this juncture about disentangling what Socrates and Callicles respectively say about philosophy. What we should specifically focus on is the fact that neither of them hints at dialektikē of the Republic when mentioning philosophia.

Even if we identify the good orator of the Gorgias with Socrates, or more generally a genuine philosopher (cf. 500c-504e), the account of the good orator does not match with the description of the dialectician as expert of dialektikē of the Republic:

‘{Soc} So this is what the skilled and good orator will look to when he applies to people’s souls whatever speeches he makes as well as all of his actions, and any gift he makes or any confiscation he carries out. He will always give attention to how justice may come to exist in the soul of his fellow citizens and injustice be gotten rid of, how self-control may come to exist there and lack of discipline be gotten rid of, and how the rest of excellence may come into being there and badness may depart. Do you agree or not? {Callicles} I do (Συγχωρῶ).’ (Gr., 504d5-e5).

Granted, there is at least one point of similarity between the guardians of Kallipolis (i.e., the dialectician-philosophers) and the good orator: both are attributed the role of promoting virtuous behaviour amongst hoi polloi. But unlike the guardians of Kallipolis, the orator is not required to possess knowledge of the Good itself or any other Form in order to perform his task. The distinctive activity of the good orator is
to point out which appetites (*epithumiai*) should be satisfied, and which ones should remain unsatisfied, in order to morally better his audience (504cd). We should note that, unlike the guardian, the orator is not attributed an actual governing function within any *polis*. Accordingly, the account of the good orator is comprehensible without attaching to it a theory of Forms; that Callicles accepts Socrates’ description of the good orator should evidence this. What on Earth would *Callicles* know about these special beings?

Let us now turn to remark on the *Meno* passage cited above. All Socrates is saying in the *Meno* is that proper discussion requires that (i) both asker and answerer share a common vocabulary (see the ensuing terminological examples, 74d-76e), and (ii) that the responses be true (*talēthē*). Kahn in particular states that ‘*dialegesthai* [in the *Meno* passage] represents a constructive cooperative form of conversation as opposed to quarrelsome competition.’\(^{56}\) Fair enough. But to be very clear, the criteria above only refer to a proper methodology that *any* legitimate art ought to adopt. Hence the example with the definition of ‘shape’ (*schēma*), which illustrates simply how a geometer should explicate his terms employed:

‘{Socrates} Do you call something ‘the end?’ I mean such a thing as a limit or boundary, for all those are, I say, the same thing…surely you call something ‘finished’ or ‘completed’—*that is what I want to express*, *nothing elaborate* (τὸ τοιοῦτον βούλομαι λέγειν, οὔδὲν ποικῖλον). {Meno} I do, and I think I understand what you mean. {Socrates} Further, you call something a plane, and something else a solid, *as in geometry* (τὰ ἐν ταῖς γεωμετρίαις)? {M} I do. {Soc} From this you may understand what I mean by shape, *for I say this of every shape* (κατὰ γὰρ παντὸς σχῆματος τοῦτο

\(^{56}\) Kahn (1996) 305. Whilst Kahn does not actually make a proleptic claim about the *Meno* passage, below I point out that he is ultimately constrained to make one.
λέγω), that a shape is that which limits a solid; in a word, a shape is the limit of a solid.’ (Men., 75d4-76a7)

The most important thing to take away here is that to speak ‘more dialectically’ (dialektikōteron) means to employ a proper methodology, whose criteria (i) and (ii) were cited above, in discussion with regard to whatever topic in whatever relevant scientific field. To speak ‘more dialectically’, then, does not suggest working in accordance with a particular art. It most definitely does not suggest mastering a science whose body of knowledge is that of Forms as such topped by the Good itself.

To be fair to Kahn, his analysis of the same passage in the Meno does not explicitly equate speaking ‘more dialectically’ with the science of dialectic.\textsuperscript{57} However, I must repeat that, since his overarching claim is that several remarks on dialectic in certain dialogues (Meno included) serve the function of gradually preparing the reader for the account of dialektikē in the Republic,\textsuperscript{58} surely we are left to infer that, when Plato talks of ‘speaking dialectically’, he (Plato) is ultimately alluding to them metaphysics and epistemology of Forms, particularly the Good, which the expert of dialektikē in the Republic is invested. But, again, all that the passage in the Meno actually says is that, when an individual is called to give an account of whatever he is referencing, a proper methodology should be employed that hopefully brings both partners in discussion to the same state of truth regarding the thing in question. Surely this point is cogent without having to presuppose a science of the Good as such.

\textsuperscript{57} Cf. Kahn (1996) 305-6
\textsuperscript{58} Cf. Kahn (1996) 293 ff.
Incidentally, what about the use of ‘philosophia’ and cognates in the *Meno*? Do they hint at *dialektikē* of the *Republic*? The fact is no occurrence of ‘philosophia’ appears in the *Meno*.

**DIALECTIC IN THE CRATYLUS**

‘{Socrates} And what would you call *someone who knows* (ἐπιστάμενον) how to ask and answer questions? Wouldn’t you call him a *dialectician* (διαλεκτίκον)?

{Hermogenes} Yes, I would. {Soc} So it’s the work of a carpenter to make a rudder. And if the rudder is to be a fine one, a ship-captain must supervise him. {Hermo} Evidently. {Soc} But it’s the work of a rule-setter, it seems, to make a name. And if names are to be given well, a dialectician must supervise him.’ (390c10-d5)

First observation: the dialectician knows how to deftly use language for the sake of inquiring into things. He is also assigned a distinguished, albeit unqualified, supervisory role: he validates the terms that the word-giver has proffered (how exactly is left unsaid). Accordingly, we may infer that the dialectician of the *Cratylus* has a complete grasp of this linguistic expertise: the word-giver’s (i.e., maker’s) knowledge is also possessed by the *dialektikos* (i.e., the user), so as to make the user also a judge of the maker’s work.59

There is, I should point out, a point of similarity between the accounts of the dialectician as respectively drawn in the *Euthydemus* and *Cratylus*: in both dialogues the dialectician has a complementary connection (mathematics and linguistics,

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59 One may question the identification of the dialectician of the *Cratylus* as an expert in linguistics. Surely the dialectician has to qualify as an expert in linguistics in light of his capacity to confirm or deny the correctness of words, linguistics generally construed here as the study of human language.
respectively) with some distinct expert. Now, I have argued that in the *Euthydemus* there is no strong evidence to equate the dialectician therein with the expert of *dialektikē* in the *Republic*; that the account of dialectic in the former does not hint at the unique domain of knowledge that essentially distinguishes *dialektikē* from all other sciences in the latter. Turning to the *Cratylus*, I wish to similarly maintain that there is no good evidence to suggest that the account of dialectic serves as proleptic evidence for the account of *dialektikē* of the *Republic*.

By contrast, Charles Kahn reads an explicit allusion to *dialektikē* into this portion of the dialogue, i.e., 389b-391d, (partially cited above):

‘*[Cratylus 390cd is] truly proleptic, in that [it] must strike the reader as enigmatic in [its] context.*’

‘Here, for the first time…the *dialektikos* is conceived as someone who must have access to the Forms-to the Form of Name in general as well as to the Form corresponding to any particular name-in order successfully to exercise his conversational skills.’

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60 However, note that the neither dialogue attributes both sciences (sc. mathematics and linguistics) to the dialectician. Moreover, nowhere in the *Cratylus* is the dialectician’s dual expertise identified as philosophy’s knowledge (i.e., knowledge which will ultimately make man happy), cf. *Euthd.* 288d ff.

61 ‘{Soc} Don’t you evaluate Greek and foreign rule-setters in the same way? Provided they give each thing the form of name suited to it (τὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἔδος ὑποδιδό), no matter what syllables it embodies in, they are equally good rule-setters, whether they are in Greece or abroad? {Hermo} Certainly. {Soc} Now, who is likely to know whether the appropriate form of shuttle is present (τὸ προσήκον ἔδος καρκίδος) in any given bit of wood? A carpenter who makes it or a weaver who uses it? {Hermo} In all likelihood, Socrates, it is the one who uses it’ (*Crat.*, 390a4-b4).

62 Kahn (1996) 61

63 Kahn (1996) 307. Ademollo (2011) 140 ff. also sees a direct connection between dialectic in the *Cratylus* and dialectic of the middle books of the *Republic*.
So Kahn thinks that the account of dialectic in the *Cratylus* will only make sense upon interpolating the account of dialectic from *Republic* VI-VII. I beg to differ. I argue that the remarks on the *dialektikos* of the *Cratylus* are intelligible without interpolating the account of dialectic of *Republic* VI-VII.⁶⁴

Granted, the description in the *Cratylus* of the dialectician as ‘someone who knows how to ask and answer questions’ looks, *prima facie*, like an uncomplicated anticipation of the description of the expert of *dialektikē* in the *Republic*:

‘{Socrates} Then you’ll legislate that they [sc. the philosopher-kings in training] are to give most attention to the education that will enable them *to ask and answer questions most knowledgeably* (ἐρωτᾶν τε καὶ ἀποκρίνεσθαι ἐπιστημονέστατα)? {Glaucon} I’ll legislate it along with you. {Soc} Then do you think that we’ve placed dialectic (ἡ διαλεκτική) at the top of the other subjects like a coping stone…’ (*Rep.*, VII 534d8–e3)

But let us not be too quick to read the connection between the *Cratylus* and *Republic* as evidence of Kahn’s proleptic reading of Plato. The description of the *dialektikos* as someone who asks and answers questions (in a philosophical manner) is found in several dialogues. Importantly, this description of the dialectician clearly occurs in the *Meno* and *Gorgias*, dialogues that we have just examined and in turn shown do not

⁶⁴ Snider (1999) 627 also questions (albeit in passing) Kahn’s proleptic claim regarding this passage in the *Cratylus*.
convincingly serve as proleptic indicators of the account of dialectic in *Republic* VI-VII.65

Let us look again at the quotations from the *Gorgias* and *Meno*:

‘{Socrates} He [sc. Polus] hardly seems to me to be answering the question. {Gorgias} Why don’t you question him then, if you like? {Soc} No, I won’t, not as long as you yourself may want to answer. I’d much rather ask you. It’s clear to me, especially from what he has said, that Polus has devoted himself more to what is called oratory than to discussion (ῥητορικήν μᾶλλον μεμελέτηκεν ἢ διάλεγεσθαι)...No one, however, asked you [sc. Polus] what Gorgias’ craft is like, but what craft it is, (οὐδεὶς ἐρωτᾷ ποία τις ἢ Γοργίου τέχνη, ἄλλα τίς) and what one ought to call Gorgias.’ (*Grg.*, 448d5-e7)

‘{Socrates} and if my questioner was one of those clever and disputatious debaters, I would say to him: “I have given my answer; if it is wrong, it is your job to refute it.” Then, if they are friends as you and I are, and want to discuss with each other, they must answer {more dialectically} (διαλεκτικώτερον). By {more dialectically} (τὸ διαλεκτικώτερον) I mean that the answers must not only be true, but in terms admittedly known to the questioner.’ (*Men.*, 75c8-d7)

The *Meno* description of the dialectician in particular suggests that all experts across an indeterminate number of disciplines ought to speak ‘more dialectically’: to speak dialectically (i.e., to properly ask and answer questions), which is identified as a

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65 We should keep in mind the dialectician of the *Euthydemus* as well. For, whilst not explicitly called an expert in question and answer, the description of him leaves room for us to posit that he knows how to properly ask and answer questions regarding mathematical diagrammata.
methodology, not a science, is not the exclusive property of a single art or science. The point to emphasize here is that in Plato, even in those dialogues Kahn sees as anticipating the Republic, to properly ask and answer questions need not suggest having scientific knowledge of Forms as such. Nor does it require the interpolation of such knowledge in order for remarks on dialegesthai to be intelligible in their original context.

What about the remarks on dialectic in the Cratylus? Again, Charles Kahn thinks that the dialectician of the Cratylus is ‘someone who must have access to the Forms-to the Form of Name in general as well as to the Form corresponding to any particular name-in order successfully to exercise his conversational skills.’ Here I generally agree with Kahn; the expert of dialectic shares alongside other experts in different fields some sort of understanding of Forms. To be clear, Kahn conceives of Forms as referenced in the Cratylus to be (roughly) ontologically the same as the Forms described in works like the Phaedo and Republic. Now, I must note that there is certainly no unanimity amongst scholars with regard to the exact ontological status of the eidē (Forms) mentioned in the Cratylus, particularly between 389b-390b.

Kahn (1996) 307
Cf. Ademollo (2011) 127-8 on the point that in the Cratylus (and elsewhere in Plato) all genuine craftsmen and scientists look, with varying degrees of awareness of the epistemological and metaphysical implications of doing so, to an eternal paradigm (i.e., Form) in their particular field of expertise. As Ademollo observes, ‘in any art or craft there is a (more or less conscious) conceptual component, insofar as the craftsman manufactures his product by having a general idea of the kind of thing he is producing, the proportions it must embody, the purpose it will serve, etc. From Socrates’ (and Plato’s) vantage point, this conceptual experience is, as a matter of fact, grounded in the existence of the forms; hence his description– a de re description– of the craftsman ‘looking to’ the form.’ (127)

Kahn (1996) 364 ff.. By ‘ontologically the same’, I mean that Form X as referenced in the Cratylus is, be it explicitly said or not, saddled with roughly the same essential properties (e.g., self-predication, eternal being) that Form X is (or would be) described as having in the Phaedo and Republic. The account of Forms between the dialogues is not uniform, though, as Kahn (1996) 366 observes.
Richard Ketchum, for example, has plausibly argued that a coherent account of a given name-Form (what he calls ‘Proper Form’) need not rely on an ontology of ‘transcendent’ (Platonic) Forms.

That being said, my position need not question the ontological status of Forms in the *Cratylus*. Indeed, I am happy to grant Kahn, and any other scholar for that matter, that the Forms in question at this point in the *Cratylus* are ontologically similar to Forms as spoken of in the *Republic* and *Phaedo*; that Forms share most (if not all) of the same properties (viz., immutability and eternal being). And, again, I am happy to grant Kahn et al. that in the *Cratylus* there is a *dialektikos* with some sort of access to Forms. Accepting this, it is natural to point out similarities between the account of dialectic in the *Cratylus* and the account of dialectic as the science of Forms in the *Republic* (viz., that both are distinguished disciplines, and that both have access to Forms). However, does the former account serve as *proleptic* evidence for the latter one? More precisely, does the account of dialectic in the *Cratylus* come across as so enigmatic, as Kahn claims, that it requires the interpolation of the *Republic*? Hardly.

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69 Ketchum (1979) 137-8

70 A name-Form is a form that enables all appropriate names in any language to generally refer to (i.e., carry the meaning of) a designated thing in the world. E.g., the name-Form ‘shuttle’ permits the word ‘shuttle’ (and any variant in any language) to refer to any actual shuttle.

71 However, Ketchum (1979) 144 does ultimately favour a ‘Platonic Form’ reading. Yet there is definitely room for an alternative interpretation, particularly at this stage of the dialogue, as he indirectly admits: ‘when we find the antecedents of these conditionals [i.e., points ‘1-4’ at 137, paraphrased conditionals gleaned from what is said between 389b-390b] in the text, I read only the consequents. The terminology of the consequents may of course commit one to a Platonic ontology of abstract objects or Forms. I simply want to avoid this issue. I hope to be able to present the relevant aspects of the shuttle analogy without arguing for the ontology’ (1979) 136-7. See Calvert (1970), for an alternative, ‘non transcendent [i.e., Platonic] Form’ reading of the text particularly between 389a-390e. Ketchum’s (1979) 146 n. 8 critique of Calvert comes across as rather weak.

72 Cf. Ademollo (2011) §§3.4.1–3, 9.1.3; Gold (1978)
To question the force of the proleptic reading of the *Cratylus*, let us look once more at the account of dialectic in the *Cratylus*. What the dialogue (be it explicitly or implicitly) tells us is that (i) dialectic is identified as a distinct art concerned with linguistics, hence the natural appellation ‘*dialektikos*’ for its practitioner (390cd). In general, (ii) the *dialektikos* knows how to ask and answer questions (ibid.). (ii*) What ultimately distinguishes this *dialektikos* as a linguistic expert is the fact that his knowledge of asking and answering questions is intimately connected to his access to Name-Forms. (ii) and (ii*) account for the dialectician’s role as a linguistic supervisor: (iii) having access to Name-Forms, the dialectician can adequately check the correctness of words that are crafted by the word-makers for use in any human language. Given the dialectician’s complete grasp of linguistics, (iv) we may infer that one of his central aims, like that of the word-maker, is to use names as a tool for teaching, that is for showing someone what distinguishes one object from another:

‘{Socrates} What do we say when we name? {Hermogenes} I don’t know what to answer. {Soc} Don’t we instruct each other, that is to say, separate the objects as they stand (τὰ πράγματα διακρίνομεν ἣς ἔχει)? {Herm} Certainly. {Soc} So just as a shuttle is a tool for dividing warp and woof [cf. 387d-388b], a name is a tool for giving instruction, that is to say, for separating being (διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας).’ (388b7-c1)

I do not deny that facets (i)-(iv) of the dialectician of the *Cratylus* generally harmonize with the description of the supreme *dialektikos* of the *Republic*.

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73 Cf. Ademollo (2011 27) 141
Nevertheless, I argue that (i)-(iv) are intelligible within the confines of the *Cratylus.*^75^ The account of the dialectician in the *Cratylus* need not require the account of *dialektikē* of *Republic* VI-VII for elucidation. Even if the facets of the *Cratylus*’ dialectician bring to mind the supreme dialectician of *Republic* VI-VII, any similarity between the dialectician of the *Cratylus* and the expert of *dialektikē* need not entail an *anticipation* in the *Cratylus* of *dialektikē* of *Republic* VI-VII. Moreover, we should not neglect to point out the *dissimilarities* between the two pictures of dialectic. The *epistēmē* of dialectic of the *Republic* is intimately associated with other more abstract disciplines, especially mathematical ones. What is more, it constitutes the zenith of the novel philosopher-king-in-training’s body of knowledge. There is not the slightest suggestion in the *Cratylus* that dialectic has any connection, let alone a strong one, with mathematics (or politics, or ethics, for that matter). Moreover, nowhere in the *Cratylus* is dialectic hinted as being the topmost science for the philosopher, more precisely as a science of the Good as such. Accordingly, the remarks on dialectic in the *Cratylus* could just as reasonably be taken to indicate certain *desiderata,* which fall short of the account of *dialektikē* introduced in the middle books of the *Republic.*

There are two other passages in the *Cratylus* that more effectively serve as evidence against Kahn’s proleptic reading of the dialogue. Toward the end of the *Cratylus,* Socrates and Cratylus agree that it is better to learn about ‘real things’ (tà ὄντα) ‘through one another…and through themselves’ (δι’ ἀλλήλων…καὶ ἀυτὰ δι’

^75^ By the by, I cannot help but feel that Kahn’s proleptic reading of the dialogues runs the risk of failing to appropriately evaluate a given dialogue *on its own terms.* As Christopher Gill (1998) similarly observes, ‘…by placing the early dialogues in groups, and locating their philosophical significance within the argument framed by the group, Kahn negates the idea that *any given* dialogue constitutes an attempt to map the essential principles of method or reality.’
αὐτῶν, 438e7), rather than through their names (cf. 438d-439b). The dialogue does not rule out the potential for a name to act as a good likeness for the real thing. Regardless, no name, qua likeness, can bring someone closer to knowing the real thing more than the thing itself can. However, the dialogue eventually ends with the agreement that the investigation must start anew. What follows, then, is that the exact role the dialectician is supposed to fill is not made determinate. And given the fact that no one expert is nominated as being he who is equipped to know real things through one another and through themselves, I strongly hesitate to equate the dialectician, especially as described between 390cd, with the anonymous knower of things ‘through one another and through themselves’. The fact that there are no good grounds to equate the dialectician at 390cd with the anonymous knower of things in and through themselves is surely problematic for the proleptic reading of Plato. This is because, whilst the remarks at 438d ff. could be considered evidence for the proleptic reading, surely in order for the evidence to carry any substantial weight, it would need to connect nicely with the Cratylus’ remarks on the dialectician, which it does not.

The second passage follows:

‘...because he [sc. Pluto] is unwilling to associate with human beings while they have their bodies, but converses with them only when their souls are purified of all the desires and evils of the body, doesn’t he seem to you to be a philosopher? (οὐ φιλοσόφον δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι) For hasn’t he well understood that when people are free of

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76 Similar to the Republic (cf. n. 29), how exactly one should go about understanding things in themselves is notably put aside (cf. Crat., 439b).

77 Surely the remarks on the anonymous expert bring to mind the expert of dialektikē in the Republic, who alone amongst experts knows, with full awareness of the epistemological and metaphysical implications, the essences of things.
their bodies he can bind them with the desire for virtue, but whilst they feel the agitation and madness of the body not even the famous shackles of his father Cronus could keep them with him?’ (403c7-404a6)

Kahn does not address the quotation above. Nor, then, does he address the relation, if any, between this philosopher and the dialectician described earlier in the text.  

These omissions are problematic for Kahn, for it is difficult to see how we can connect this brief remark on the philosopher, which is notably reminiscent of the account drawn of him in the *Phaedo* (cf. 65a-67d), with the description of the dialectician at 390cd. Even if we take it for granted that the philosopher and the dialectician of the *Cratylus* are identical, Kahn is still faced with a problem: the philosopher-dialectician of the *Cratylus* ostensibly anticipates (or presupposes) the philosopher of the *Phaedo*. Yet the philosopher of the *Phaedo*, far from anticipating the expert of *dialektikē* of *Republic* VI-VII, appears to be notably contrasted with him. The former is, in particular, attributed neither knowledge of a science of dialectic nor knowledge of statesmanship. Nor, then, is he saddled with any political duties that call on him to apply knowledge of *dialektikē* (particularly knowledge of the Good).  

In general, then, we could hardly anticipate the account of Plato’s top philosopher in the *Republic* simply judging by the remarks on the philosopher in the *Phaedo*.  

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78 Ademollo (2011) 193-5 draws out the *Phaedo* allusion in this passage. Yet he says nothing about how to connect this remark on the *philosophos* with the *dialektikos* mentioned earlier in the dialogue.  


80 Kahn (1996) 274-5 connects the philosopher of *Republic* VI with the philosopher of the *Phaedo* by way of their respective passion (*erōs*) for knowledge. I agree that Plato depicts the philosopher in both dialogues as having a relentless desire for knowledge, particularly knowledge of Forms. Yet surely this by itself cannot serve as convincing evidence for prolepsis.  

81 We may add to this by noting that there is no suggestion in the *Phaedo* that years of regimented mathematical study are required before grasping Forms as such.
Accordingly, if the philosopher-dialectician of the *Cratylus* anticipates the philosopher of the *Phaedo*, yet the philosopher of the *Phaedo* does not anticipate the philosopher *par excellence* of the *Republic*, then we have no good reason to see the philosopher-dialectician of the *Cratylus* as anticipating the philosopher *par excellence* of the *Republic*, and so, by implication, the science *par excellence* itself.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Given the preceding analysis of the various references to skill in *to dialegesthai* and the *dialektikos* in the *Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*, *Meno* and *Cratylus*, there is little evidence to support the claim that cognates of ‘dialectic’ found in these dialogues anticipate (hint at, foreshadow) a science of above all the Good as such, of Forms as such in general. By contrast, when we turn to the middle books of the *Republic*, we are told in no uncertain or cryptic terms that the intellectual zenith of philosophy is mastery of *dialektikê*; that the philosopher *par excellence* is an expert of a unique scientist whose domain of knowledge concerns Forms as such, above all the Good as such. As we shall subsequently see, the remarks on philosophy in the middle books of the *Republic*, with a ‘science of dialectic’ cast as philosophy’s supramathematical zenith, set the stage for the presentation of philosophy in certain post-*Republic* dialogues.
In this chapter I argue that being an expert in the science of dialectic satisfies just half of what Plato, at least when writing the Republic, thinks is the complete life for the philosopher: a unique combination of the theoretical and political life; the practical application, in the form of ruling, of one’s knowledge of Forms as such. In this chapter I also compare Socrates, as variously depicted in certain dialogues, with the expert of dialektikē in the Republic. I argue that, whilst not an expert of dialektikē, and so a candidate for the best possible philosopher in the Republic, Socrates is nonetheless a philosopher in the more general sense of the word: an intellectual bent on pursuing genuine wisdom.

DIALEKTIKĒ AND PHILOSOPHIA IN AND OUTSIDE KALLIPOLIS

‘And once they’ve seen the good itself, they must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it [sc. the Good] as their model. Each of them will spend most of his time with philosophy (πρὸς φιλοσοφία), but, when his turn comes, he must labor in politics (πρὸς πολιτικοὶ ἑπισταλαπωροῦντας) and rule for the city’s sake.’ (540ab)
(1) Can the best possible philosopher, identified in the passage above as a theoretician and ruler, exist outside the psychological climate of Kallipolis?\(^{82}\) (2) Can mastery of dialektikē, as the systematic science envisaged in Books VI-VII, be seriously pursued outside Kallipolis? I start this chapter explaining why Plato’s best possible philosopher cannot exist without the right psychological climate to facilitate the political application of his superior knowledge. Yet I argue that evidence for a negative answer to the first question does not commit us to answer negatively the second question.

On (1), the remarks at 540ab (quoted above) refer to the activity of philosophizing as generally a theoretical pursuit culminating in an understanding of distinct intelligible objects, the topmost of those being the Good itself. In general, to philosophize in Kallipolis technically means to pursue knowledge of the Good under the auspices of a distinguished educational programme. But completing this programme envisaged in the middle books is not by itself sufficient for making someone the best possible philosopher. This is because, according to Plato in the Republic, (a) the best possible philosopher is he who applies his theoretical knowledge, particularly of the Good,\(^ {83}\) to the political arena. In other words, Plato holds that the philosopher becomes better qua philosopher by way of ruling a city-state.

To substantiate (a), let us start by highlighting Plato’s insistence on political rule for the philosopher:

\(^{82}\) By ‘psychological climate’ I mean the community’s attitude toward, and corresponding acceptance of, philosophers as rulers.

\(^{83}\) Surely the philosopher’s knowledge of the virtue-Forms (sc. Justice as such, Temperance as such, etc.) is required. The focus here on the Good reflects the attention and importance given to it by Plato in the middle books.
‘{Socrates} It is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to reach the study we said before is the most important, namely, to make the ascent and see the good. But when they’ve made it and look sufficiently, we mustn’t allow them to do what they’re allowed to do today. {Adeimantus} What’s that? {Socrates} To stay there and refuse to go down to the prisoners in the cave (καταμένειν καὶ μὴ έθέλειν πάλιν καταβαίνειν παρ’ ἐκείνους τοὺς δεσμώτας) and share their labors and honors, whether they are of less worth or greater…we’ve made you [sc. experts of dialektikē] kings in our city and leaders of the swarm, as it were, both for yourselves and for the rest of the city. You’re better and more completely educated than the others and are better able to share in both types of life (ἀμφοτέρων μετέχειν).’ (VII, 519c8-520c1, cf. 519b-521a)

So the philosopher needs to share in both the theoretical and political life. Yet there immediately arises a problem, one that Socrates spends a great deal of Books V and VI addressing: the conjoined life cannot occur in a polis where philosophers have no chance of ruling; a psychological climate inhospitable to philosophers, be they real or charlatans (cf. 474b-480a, 489b-490d), prohibits real philosophers from ruling.84

But it does not stop there. This inhospitable climate ultimately prevents the philosopher from achieving (a); it stops short the philosopher’s development qua philosopher:

‘{Socrates} Under a suitable one [sc. constitution], his [i.e., the philosopher’s] own growth will be fuller, and he’ll save the community as well as himself (μᾶλλον

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84 This inhospitable climate extends beyond the hypothetical city-state. Indeed, Socrates’ first target audience, which he wishes to persuade, is all those present in current poleis who are against philosophers ruling. See below.
Adeimantus: I have nothing to add on that point. But which of our present constitutions do you think is suitable for philosophers? Soc: None of them. That’s exactly my complaint: None of our present constitutions is worthy of the *philosophic nature* (φιλοσόφου φύσεως), and, as a result, *this nature* (αὐτήν) is perverted and altered, for, just as a foreign seed, sown in alien ground, is likely to be overcome by the native species and to fade away among them, so *the philosophic nature fails to develop its full power* (οὐκ ἔσχεν τὴν αὐτοῦ δύναμιν) and declines into a character alien to its nature (εἰς ἀλλότριον ἥθος ἐκπίπτειν).’ (VI, 497a3-b6, tr. Grube, with slight adjustment on my part)

This passage straightforwardly says that the philosopher reaches his greater power (*dunamis*) when allowed to rule.

Indeed, the remark about declining into a character alien to its nature strongly suggests that it belongs to the very nature of the philosopher to rule a *polis*. This claim appears to be already alluded to in Book V:

‘Until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that us, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide (συμπέσῃ), while the many natures (αἱ πολλαὶ φύσεις) who at present pursue either one exclusively (τῶν δὲ νῦν πορευομένων χωρίς ἐφ' ἐκάτερον) are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils.’ (473c11-d5)

85 The passage, by itself, is not strong enough for the development of the philosopher *qua* philosopher thesis, hence the suggestion that it hints at said thesis, which is explicitly stated in Book VI (passage quoted above).
What exactly does it take for the philosopher to achieve his fullest potential, to be both the topmost theoretician and ruler? I argue that (b) only in an environment suitable for philosophers to govern will the full capacity of the philosopher as such (i.e., (a)) be unleashed. *Kallipolis* exhibits the conjunction of (a) and (b): it shows the best possible philosopher governing under the right psychological climate. To be clear, I am passing over the subsequent event: compelling the philosopher to rule, whether or not he personally wants to rule (cf. VI, 499b, VII, 519c ff.).\(^{86}\) Whilst an important part of the philosopher’s development, I want to focus on what Plato thinks must occur before the point of compelling the philosopher to ascend to the throne (viz., the right psychological attitude toward philosophers as rulers, which facilitates that very rise to the throne).

Let us go over the evidence to back all of this (i.e., the conjunction of (a) and (b)) up. What the previous quotations reveal is that the philosopher’s time spent ‘in philosophy’ (i.e., theoretical activity) is complemented by the political career ascribed to him; the fulfilled conjunction of the two completes the philosopher’s development qua philosopher. But the most developed life for the philosopher as such necessarily depends on the right environment to promote such a synthesis (i.e., the political application of his theoretical knowledge). Presently, if a true philosopher manages to come about in a hostile environment (viz., one that provides little in the way of facilitating his intellectual growth), it is normal that he avoids public life:

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\(^{86}\) I am also passing over the point that the guardian/philosopher-king may use drugs and approved falsehoods to control his city-state after he has ascended to the throne (cf. II, 382c ff., III, 414b ff., V, 459c ff). On the topic of the philosopher being compelled to rule in *Kallipolis*, see Buckels (2013) and literature therein.
‘When people like you come to be in other cities, they’re justified in not sharing in their city’s labours, for they’ve grown there spontaneously, against the will of the constitution. And what grows of its own accord and owes no debt for its upbringing has justice on its side when it isn’t keen to pay anyone for that upbringing (ἐκτίνειν τῶν προθμείσθαι τὰ τροφεῖα).’ (520a9-b4)

However, this retreat from public life comes at a cost both to the philosopher and to the community.

What Plato is particularly concerned with stressing in the Republic is the idea that no actual philosopher is fully developed under any present constitution, that the best possible philosopher cannot exist outside Kallipolis. I feel it necessary to return to this passage:

‘{Socrates} Under a suitable one [sc. constitution], his [i.e., the philosopher’s] own growth will be fuller (μᾶλλον αὐξήσεται), and he’ll save the community as well as himself {Adeimantus} I have nothing to add on that point. But which of our present constitutions do you think is suitable for philosophers? {Soc} None of them. That’s exactly my complaint: None of our present constitutions is worthy of the philosophic nature, and, as a result, this nature is perverted and altered, for, just as a foreign seed, sown in alien ground, is likely to be overcome by the native species and to fade away among them, so the philosophic nature fails to develop its full power and declines into a character alien to it nature.’ (VI, 497a3-b6)

‘μᾶλλον αὐξήσεται’; talk of the philosopher’s growth (i.e., development) is essential to stress here. Note the analogy with farming: a certain seed in an alien (read
inhospitable) soil is very unlikely to survive, let alone grow to its fullest potential by nature. Similarly, the philosophic nature of an individual in an inhospitable environment is unlikely to achieve its fullest potential. Indeed, it is more likely to falter; the individual is prone to corruption, to use his otherwise laudable intellectual traits for immoral ends.\(^87\)

Once more, it is important to highlight the essential role the community’s attitude toward philosophers performs here: according to Plato, the best possible philosopher is someone who develops his intellectual traits, studies all that ought to be known, and in turn applies his knowledge for the benefit of all around him. But all this is possible only if the community is first open to it. Accordingly, the community needs to be convinced that philosophers ought to rule, hence Socrates’ presentation of the nature and political potential of the real philosopher (a project that extends from Book V to Book VII).

‘{Glauc}on} So, with the promise of this assistance [sc. Glauc on’s (and later Adeimantus’) support of the ensuing presentation], try to show the unbelievers (τοῖς ἀπιστοῖσιν ἐνδείξασθαι) that things are as you say they are. {Socrates} I must try it, then, especially since you agree to be so great an ally. If we’re to escape from the people you mention. I think we need to define for them who the philosophers are that we dare to say must rule.’ (V, 474b1-6)

Socrates’ ensuing presentation is explicitly given with a view to convince those currently hostile to philosophers that philosophers ought to rule—an aim ostensibly achieved, cf. VI 501c-502a. In general, the idea is that once everyone

\(^87\) A summary of the intellectual traits that Plato has in mind is found at 494ab. A summary of the corruption of the philosophic mind is given between 494c-495c.
registers who the real philosopher is and what he is capable of, once especially the nonbelievers’ attitude toward genuine philosophers changes, it will be possible for the ideal city-state to fully come about, now overseen by its rightful rulers. The very fact that such a task is considered necessary, even for someone like Glaucon, who is presumably a friend of philosophy in general, shows how important the right psychological climate is for the philosopher’s development *qua* philosopher, and so the future preservation of the best possible city-state. The point to emphasize here is that only if the community facilitates the philosopher’s rise to study and power will the philosopher be able to progress toward becoming the topmost philosopher envisaged in the middle books of the *Republic*.

I stress ‘envisage’, because no present day community is open to this move; no present-day constitution suitably fosters the growth of the philosopher (cf. 494a). Indeed, what Socrates is saying in no uncertain terms is that the combined theoretical and political goal of the best possible philosopher has hitherto never been achieved in any actual constitution. And the reason why this conjunction has failed to obtain so far is in major part because the environment in which the philosopher presently lives prohibits him from fully developing *qua* philosopher to the point of applying his knowledge as ruler of a *polis*. To be clear, the present-day philosopher’s truncated growth is *not* due strictly to any intellectual limitation. All the same, possessing knowledge of the Good is not good enough. It takes applying said knowledge, (a), which can only occur in the right environment, (b), in order to become the best philosopher.

Switching direction a bit, why does Plato believe that the optimum philosophical life is a synthesis of what are otherwise perceived as two separate lives

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88 See Socrates’ remark at 519cd, quoted above. I return to this important point below.
(sc. the theoretical and political)? A rough answer has to suffice here. Plato must believe that he who knows what is good for the community is, as such, obligated to help bring such good about.\textsuperscript{89} Now, at least at the time of writing the Republic, Plato holds that he alone who truly knows what is politically good is the philosopher versed above all in the Good itself, the expert of \textit{dialektike}.\textsuperscript{90} Accordingly, this philosopher is, as such, obligated to help bring about what is good for the community by way of ruling it. All of this goes some way in answering the question: the political function of the philosopher, whose end is the moral excellence of the \textit{polis} (cf. VI 484cd), is the practical application of his theoretical knowledge of the Good (and Fine, Just, etc.) itself. Such knowledge being divine (cf. VI, 500cd), the political good brought about by the philosopher reflects, at least to an approximate extent, the divine good:

‘\{Socrates\} And if he should come to be compelled to put what he sees there [sc. in the divine, eternal realm] into people’s characters, whether into a single person or into a populace, instead of shaping only his own, do you think that he will be a poor craftsman of moderation, justice, and the whole of popular virtue? \{Adeimantus\} He least of all.’ (VI, 500d4-9, cf. 500d-502a)

On a separate note, this reading of the best possible philosopher’s life, I think, sheds light on Socrates’ remark in Book VI concerning that ‘very small group who

\textsuperscript{89} A point echoed in the \textit{Euthydemus} (288e f.): he who knows X only makes the most use out of such knowledge if he knows in turn how to apply it.

\textsuperscript{90} There is good reason to believe that Plato changes his mind in later dialogues, especially the \textit{Statesman}; that the topmost philosopher is not expected to give up his theorizing to become an active politician. I examine the philosopher of the \textit{Statesman} in Ch. III. I return once more to consider Plato’s apparent change of mind regarding the political duties of the philosopher in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.
consort with philosophy in a way that’s worthy of her’ (Πάνσµικρον… τῶν κατ’ ἀξίαν ὀµιλούντων φιλοσοφία) [496a11-b1, cf. 496a-497a]. Socrates includes himself in this group. Yet this group of philosophers still comes up short of being both the theoretical and political titans of Book VII. Granted, Socrates’ remarks between 496a-497a occur prior to the account drawn of the science of dialectic (dialektikē). So at best this passage foreshadows the contrast between the best possible philosophers of Kallipolis, and current deficient-to-some-extent philosophers. But the fact remains that a contrast between philosophers is drawn; that Socrates and his company are, by implication, patently not identified as the best possible philosophers envisaged in the Republic. For sure, the philosopher in any present constitution who best shields himself from the storm is to be lauded. He alone possesses a ‘noble and well brought-up character’ (γενναίον καὶ εὖ τεθραµµένον ἥθος, 496b2). Regardless, Socrates is clear in pointing out that the best philosophical life cannot be fully realized (viz., knowledge of the Forms as such cannot be applied to the political and moral ends envisaged) whilst its most prominent supporters (Socrates included) spend so much time ‘hiding behind a wall’. 91

COMPARING READINGS OF REPUBLIC V 496a-497b

It may be helpful at this juncture to compare my reading of this passage on philosophers outside Kallipolis (roughly 496a-497b) with those of other scholars. Nicholas White, 92 for example, interprets this passage as if the ‘ruling part’ of the philosopher, a part of the philosopher’s ‘natural role’, is simply unused in a current polis. I broadly agree with White that the philosopher’s theoretical knowledge is not

91 I return to discuss the relation between Socrates and the expert in dialektikē below.
92 White (1979) 169-70
put to use politically (i.e., to rule) in an inhospitable environment. Yet White leaves open the possibility that the philosopher has a ruling part already fully formed, yet left idle outside *Kallipolis*.\(^93\) Frankly, I do not quite see how such a part can be fully developed in an environment that gives the philosopher no reason to develop it. Put differently, if no present-day constitution encourages the philosopher to apply his knowledge of the Good and the rest of those special beings to political ends, to accordingly combine a theoretical and political life, then there is arguably no reason for him to prepare for political life. Accordingly, there is no good reason to think that he conditions his ruling part to its fullest.\(^94\)

C. D. C. Reeve\(^95\) reads this passage as evidence that Plato thinks that the historical Socrates’ ‘philosophic nature’ was “perverted and altered” (στρέφεσθαι τε και ἀλλοιοῦσθαι, 497b1-3) due to having been brought up in a non-*Kallipolis*. Reeve sees the Socrates of Book I as representative of that historical figure. By contrast, the Socrates of Books II-X, according to Reeve, shows ‘that same man as he would have taught and theorized had he found the right kind of nurture’.\(^96\) Similar to Reeve, Nickolas Pappas\(^97\) interprets this passage as Plato’s way of showing how the political realities of the historical Socrates’ day prevented the historical Socrates from becoming the best possible philosopher. What Reeve and Pappas fail to highlight, though, is the fact that *no present-day philosopher*, be he historical or fictional (i.e.,

\(^{93}\)White (1979) ibid. ostensibly thinks that the ruling part of the philosopher belongs to the philosopher *qua* philosopher. Yet he is not especially clear on this point. White (1979) ibid. adds that, in light of the inhospitable environment in current *poleis*, the philosopher ‘must therefore retire and exercise the other part of their role, the part consisting in the search for wisdom.’

\(^{94}\)Of course, it is logically possible that someone reach the heights of the theoretical life without any prospect of ruling. But given that said height is understanding of the Good itself, it is *highly unlikely* that people will push on to this if they have no chance of ruling on its basis.

\(^{95}\)Reeve (1988) 23-4

\(^{96}\)Cf. Reeve (1988) 24

\(^{97}\)Pappas (2003) 86
within the dramatic confines of the *Republic*, fully accords with the paradigmatic philosopher as accounted for in Books VI-VII; no present-day philosopher is complete because no present-day philosopher has grown up in the right environment that has allowed him to become both an expert of *dialektikē* (i.e., a knower of the Good, Fine, etc.) and a bona fide political leader (i.e., an applier of his knowledge in the *polis*). I will come back to this point later, when I show exactly how Socrates fails to match up to the depiction of the topmost philosopher of the *Republic*.

Roslyn Weiss identifies Socrates and Co. as useless politicians in the typically misguided political climate of your average *polis*. Weiss also acknowledges that these philosophers fall short of their full potential in a typical *polis*. Weiss has an answer to account for the contrasting portrayals between, on the one hand, Book VI’s philosopher behind the wall, and, on the other, Book VII’s philosopher-king. The latter, according to Weiss, is ‘not by nature philosophic’. Indeed, according to Weiss, the philosopher-king is a caricature crafted to appease Adeimantus and Glaucon; the philosopher-king is not the real ideal philosopher for Socrates.

I must point out, though, that Weiss’ answer rests precariously on an odd reading of VI 503b-504a:

‘On the one hand, these men [sc. the future philosopher-kings] are to be intellectually gifted…On the other hand, they are to be steadfast,

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98 Let us not confuse the typical misguided politics that Socrates speaks of when he mentions Theages’ physical problems restricting his political career (540b) with the promoted political expertise of the philosopher-king.
99 Weiss (2012)
100 Weiss (2012) 27-8
101 Weiss (2012) 1 goes so far as to call these portrayals ‘irreconcilable’.
102 Weiss (2012) 50
103 Weiss (2012) 6-8
trustworthy, and implacable in the face of fears...Generally speaking, however, as Socrates observes, people whose minds are mercurial tend not to be reliable and orderly. And people who are immovable in war are likely to be plodding in their studies. Yet this new and exotic (503b) breed of men\(^{104}\) is expected to excel at both war and studies.\(^{105}\)

_Contra_ Weiss, I must point out that Socrates clearly indicates that the philosopher-kings will have a psychic profile that takes the _best from both_ the philosophic (503c) and courageous (503cd) characters traits:

‘Yet we say that someone must have a fine and goodly share of both characters (ἀμφοτέρων δεῖν εὖ τε καὶ καλὸς μετέχειν) or he won’t receive the truest education, honors or rule’ (503d7-9, cf. 503d-504a).\(^{106}\)

This description of the philosopher-king fits perfectly with the description of the philosopher described as early as Book III and the start of IV (cf. 376bc, 410de, 414d-420b): a full-fledged philosopher is both a towering intellectual and a formidable defender of the city-state (more on this below). What the Book VII description of the philosopher ultimately does is _qualify_ this description of the full-fledged philosopher: to be the best possible philosopher, one must know the Forms of the virtues, above all the Good as such, and in turn apply this knowledge in the political realm. Accordingly, I must contest Weiss’ description of the philosopher-king as ‘not by nature

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\(^{104}\) I must object to this description of these philosophers as ‘new and exotic’. Nowhere at 503b is it even suggested that these philosophers are ‘new and exotic’. They are rare, yes, but not new and exotic.

\(^{105}\) Weiss (2012) 52

\(^{106}\) Compare the description of Theatetus by Theodorus at the beginning of the _Theaetetus_ (143e-144b).
philosophic”¹⁰⁷. Whilst the philosopher of Book VII is indeed different from Socrates and Co. as described between 496a-497a, it is not on account of the former being a non-philosophic philosopher (whatever that really means).¹⁰⁸ Instead, the philosopher-king shares in the best traits of current philosophers and then some; the philosopher-king is that very philosopher, whom Socrates hints at between 497ab, who lives up to the philosopher’s fullest potential as both intellectual and ruler.

ON ‘PHILOSOPHIA’ IN REPUBLIC II-VI & VIII-X

Before turning to directly answer (2) - ‘Can mastery of dialektikē, as the systematic science envisaged in Books VI-VII, be seriously pursued outside Kallipolis?’ - it is worth noting that (a) outside the context of Kallipolis, ‘philosophy’ and cognates in the Republic do not hint at the amalgamated theoretical-political career constituting the life of the best possible philosopher. (b) They do not even allude to the peak of the theoretical aspect of philosophy, the science of dialectic. Now, as far as I know, no scholar denies either (a) or (b). However, in light of my own work highlighting the important place that dialectic as a special science has in Plato’s conception of philosophy, it is important, I think, to show just how

⁰⁷ Weiss (2012) 50 et passim
⁰⁸ Weiss (2012) has some rather puzzling remarks on the purportedly non-philosophic philosopher of Book VII: ‘The philosophers of Book 7 are called ‘true philosophers’…but they are not said to have the true philosopher’s nature’ (67, n. 40); ‘As we have seen, Book 7’s philosophers are also warriors and so must be spirited. Their natures are thus an odd mix of intellectual aptitude, appetitiveness, and spiritedness. What they lack is love of wisdom’ (68, n. 43).

How can one be a philosopher (Weiss never denies that the philosopher-king is in some sense a philosopher) without a philosophic nature? How can one be identified as a lover of wisdom (philosopher) without loving wisdom?
multifaceted Plato’s conception of philosophy truly is. What I want to show is how, just in the *Republic*, Plato thinks of philosophy as (i) concurrently a specific science, (ii) a synthesized life of theoretical and political activity, and (iii) more generally any approved study, or psychical disposition moving one to study. To be clear, what I am saying is that Plato never commits himself to using ‘*philosophia*’ to refer to just one thing, especially just one science. The science of dialectic remains central to Plato’s conception of philosophy without being cast as the only philosophy for Plato.

In Book II philosophy is construed as generally a pursuit of wisdom, where ‘wisdom’ is left unqualified:

‘And surely, I said [sc. Socrates], the love of learning is the same thing as philosophy? It is [sc. Adeimantus]. Then, may we confidently assume in the case of a human being, too, that if he is to be gentle toward his own and those he knows, he must be a lover of learning and wisdom (φύσει φιλόσοφον καὶ φιλομαθὴ αὐτὸν δεῖν εἶναι).’ (376b8-376c2)\(^{109}\)

Somewhat more precisely, philosophy is depicted as a trait necessary for the future guardian to already possess by nature:

‘Philosophy, spirit, speed, and strength (Φιλόσοφος...θυμοειδής καὶ ταχὺς καὶ ἵσχυρὸς) must all, then, be combined in the nature of anyone who is to be a fine and good guardian of our city,’ (376c4-5)

\(^{109}\) Grube’s translation with slight adjustment on my part
This notion of philosophy as more a trait or disposition than a synthesized theoretical-political life, or specifically a unique science, is repeated across Books III-VI. Socrates refers to the conditioning of ‘the philosophic part of one’s nature’ (ἡ φιλόσοφος…φύσις, 410e1, cf. 410de). He speaks of the ‘spirited and philosophic parts of the soul itself’. In Book IV, the female guardian is attributed, amongst other traits, the character of being philosophic (φιλοσόφος, cf. 456a). Jumping ahead to Book VI, Socrates again refers to the philosophic nature’ (φιλοσόφου φύσεως, 476b2) of those in actual poleis (cf. 476ab). None of these quotations make an allusion to either dialektikē, or to the relation between dialektikē and the philosopher’s ensuing political career. Even when Socrates announces in Book V that philosophers must rule the ideal polis, philosophy itself is not identified as a science (cf. 474c-474a).

Granted, the real philosopher is distinguished from your typical craftsman and common man, your general ‘lover of sights’ (cf. V, 476a-480a). This distinction is based on the philosopher’s unique pursuit of ‘the things themselves that are always the same in every respect’ (αὐτὰ ἑκαστα…καὶ ἄει κατὰ ταύτα ὀσσότως ὄντα, 479e-7-8). But the most Socrates does in Book V is suggest that the philosopher is an expert in some unnamed esoteric science. And given what is said in Book VII, that all approved studies aim at what is intelligible and eternal (cf. 527b, 529b), Plato

110 ‘It seems, then, that a god has given music and physical training to human beings not, except incidentally, for the body and the soul but for the spirited and wisdom-loving parts of the soul itself, (ἐπὶ τὸ θυμοειδὲς καὶ τὸ φιλόσοφον, οὐκ ἐπὶ ψυχῆν καὶ σῶμα, εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ πάρεργον, ἄλλα ἐπ’ ἐκείνῳ) in order that these might be in harmony with one another, each being stretched and relaxed to the appropriate degree’ (411e4-412a2).

111 ‘each of them [sc. full-fledged philosophers] will spend most of his time with philosophy, but, when his turn comes, he must labor in politics and rule for the city’s sake…Then, having educated others like himself (ἄλλους ἂεὶ παιδεύσαντας τοιοῦτος) to take his place as guardians of the city, he will depart for the Isles of the Blessed and dwell there’ (540b2-7).
arguably does not have a single science in mind at this point in Book V. What Plato is more likely to be doing in this part of the Republic is mentioning all approved intellectuals who identify as philosophers because of their common aim to understand what is intelligible and eternal. That these philosophers individually vary with regard to their proximity to what is intelligible and eternal, that some ultimately reach the best amongst the intelligible (sc. the Good as such) whilst others do not, is irrelevant here. Indeed, Plato is not so much concerned with making distinctions within the broad class of philosophers, as he is with distinguishing this broad class of philosophers from the broad class of sight-lovers (i.e., the sophist, rhetorician, typical craftsman, etc.). In general, then, Plato’s main task toward the end of the Book V is not to describe a novel science, but rather to highlight a select group of individuals with a love of what is recognized as genuine knowledge. It is only after beginning to distinguish the sciences at the end of Book VI, and then turning to describe the educative programme of Kallipolis in Book VII, that Plato ultimately establishes a hierarchy of the sciences. In the process, he comes to identify the peak of the theoretical life as the mastery of dialektikē.

To be clear, the science of dialectic is the theoretical pinnacle of philosophy. But it most definitely is not the only philosophy. For sure, at one point in Book VII ‘philosophy’ implicitly refers to dialektikē (540ab). No other science knows the Good itself. But this is a momentary identification capping the project of Book VII: to highlight a philosopher’s progression toward mastery of a distinct science, which is projected in no uncertain terms as the topmost domain of knowledge achievable by man. It is rather telling that all ensuing uses of ‘philosophia’ and cognates in Books VIII-X (548a, 561d, 581bd, 582be, 587a, 611e, 619de) do not evidently refer to the science of dialectic. Perhaps the strongest case for an allusion to the science comes
right at the start of Book VIII, when Socrates speaks of ‘those who have turned out to be the best in philosophy and warfare’ (τοὺς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ τε καὶ πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον γεγονότας ἀρίστους, 543a5-6). But the grouping of ‘philosophy’ with a knack for warfare more naturally connects with the earlier discussion of a soul with a healthy balance of the intellectual and strategic. Indeed, Book VII 543ac is essentially a summary of the end of Book III and the start of IV (414d-420b).

With the other citations from Books VIII-X (561d, 581bd, 582be, 587a, 611e, 619de), we can more confidently say that ‘philosophy’ after Book VII refers either to any approved intellectual pursuit, or (especially in IX) to a psychical disposition.\textsuperscript{112} Coupling this observation with the prior treatment of ‘philosophia’ in Books II to the end of VI enforces the idea that philosophy according to Plato is primarily a catchall for any promoted intellectual endeavour, or a psychical disposition, and only secondarily a placeholder for a specific science. Even when the second case applies, the equation is temporary; *philosophia* is not to be identified with just one science in all contexts.

For sure, Plato in the *Republic* may think that philosophy *par excellence*, the science of dialectic, gives the focal meaning of a more broadly used term. Yet he returns to using the term in a broader sense, particularly after Book VII, because he does not want people to view in particular dialectic as just a supreme, exotic, and by most of us currently unknowable super science. Plato obviously thinks there is some kind of continuity between dialectical practice (i.e., philosophical discussion in general) as conducted by himself (or dramatically by Socrates in the dialogues) and the supreme science of dialectic of *Republic* VI-VII. What the *Republic* evidences,

\textsuperscript{112} That the uses of ‘*philosophia*’ and cognates in Books VIII-X agree more naturally with those found in Books II-VI may encourage the idea that the passages on philosophy and *dialektikē* in Books VI and VII were written after the other books. I shall not delve into this suggestion any further.
then, is Plato’s attempt to balance the two notions of dialectic, and with it philosophy, taking pains not to come across as ditching the more generalized notions of dialectic and philosophy for the more particular and esoteric ones of Books VI and VII.

**DIALEKTIKÊ AND PHILOSOPHIA IN AND OUTSIDE KALLIPOLIS** (CONT.)

Let us finally turn to answer (2): can mastery of the science of dialectic be seriously pursued outside Kallipolis? A negative answer to (1) does not commit us to negatively answer (2). As I argued above, what essentially differentiates the present-day philosopher from the idealized one envisioned by Socrates is not strictly any intellectual limitation, but rather a failure on the former’s part, due particularly to an inhospitable environment, to couple his intellectual achievement with political duty.

The claim that present-day philosophers are on intellectual par with the philosophers of Kallipolis is supported by the following passage:

‘{Socrates} It is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to reach the study we said before is the most important, namely, to make the ascent and see the good. But when they’ve made it and looked sufficiently, we mustn’t allow them to do what they’re allowed to do today (δὴ νῦν ἐπιτρέπεται). {Glaucon} What’s that? {Soc} To stay there (καταμείνειν) and refuse to go down again to the prisoners in the cave and share their labours and honors, whether they are of less worth or greater.’ (519c8-d7)

We can overlook the obvious critique levied against individuals consumed with theorizing. That Socrates indirectly acknowledges that there exist at present (νῦν,
individuals who ‘make the ascent and see the good’ (ἰδεῖν τε τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἀναβῆναι ἐκείνην τὴν ἀνάβασιν, 519c10-d1), who, by implication, aspire to master the science of dialectic (cf. 511bc, 517bc), is what matters most here.

Granted, it is not made absolutely clear at 519cd whether certain present-day philosophers who ‘look at’ the Good actually fully comprehend it, though ‘ἰκανὸς ἱδωσι’ (519d2), which by implication is attributed to certain present-day philosophers as well as ideal ones, strongly suggests that they have some sort of grasp of it; that at minimum they are currently in pursuit of knowledge of Forms as such. Further, a central point made immediately preceding 519c8-d7 is that the problem with present-day philosophers is not a lack of education (we may infer of the Forms as such, see ensuing quotation), but a failure to apply said education:

‘{Socrates} And what about the uneducated who have no experience of the truth? Isn’t it unlikely-indeed, doesn’t it follow from what was said before-that they will never adequately govern a city? But neither would those who’ve been allowed to spend their time in education to the end (μὴ τοὺς ἐν παιδείᾳ ἐσώμενοις διατρίβειν διὰ τέλους). The former would fail because they don’t have a single goal at which all their actions, public and private, inevitably aim; the latter would fail because they’d refuse to act (τοὺς δὲ ὅτι ἐκόντες εἶναι οὐ πράξουσιν), thinking that they had settled while still alive in the faraway Isles of the Blessed.’ (519b7-c6, tr. Grube, rev. Reeve, with slight adjustment on my part)

Accordingly, 519cd serves to qualify the point about the shortcomings of the educated-type of both the present-day and Kallipolis at 519bc: he who truly knows the

113 Surely in this context being educated ‘διὰ τέλους’ must imply ultimately being educated about Forms as such.
Forms as such, or is at least capable of it (i.e., he who currently is pursuing such knowledge) must not rest on his epistemic laurels. In an ideal environment, this would mean compelling the philosopher who has fully comprehended the Good, and so mastered dialektikē, to apply said knowledge by way of ruling Kallipolis (519e-520a).

Note as well that, by having Socrates indirectly mention non-Kallipolis pursuers of dialektikē, Plato is further committed to the point that the highlighted studies of Book VII, which ultimately prepare one for dialektikē, are not just found in Kallipolis; if there exists an aspiring expert of dialektikē outside Kallipolis, then there must be, in some shape or form, an educative course that ends with expertise in dialektikē (i.e., knowledge of the Good and the rest of the Forms, cf. 533ab). Perhaps the educative programme detailed in Book VII is specific to Kallipolis. But the studies, which comprise said programme, and which lead one to expertise in dialektikē, are not just found in Kallipolis. That is what I wish to emphasize here.

Of course, the very existence of these pursuers (and so the science itself) outside Kallipolis may be hard to envision. I am not simply speaking about the majority, as depicted in Books V and VI, who are incapable of distinguishing between real and fake philosophers. This issue extends beyond the pages of the Republic. How many of Plato’s contemporaries would be able to distinguish these men in a crowd? It does not help that the existence of such pursuers of mastery of dialektikē outside Kallipolis is strongly implied at 519bd. One’s suspicion is only compounded by the fact that this implication is meant to carry us through to the end of the dialogue; that pursuers of dialektikē as a complete super science exist particularly outside Kallipolis is a claim that is never argued for in the Republic. Yet given the sheer scope of the
Republic, this is ostensibly an assumption that Plato expects his audience to accept.\textsuperscript{114} Indeed, the magnitude of a central claim of Book VII reinforces this conjecture: what makes Kallipolis the best possible city-state is not just that it accommodates experts of dialektikē, but that it is ultimately ruled by them.

Accordingly, I must qualify Myles Burnyeat’s observation (my italics):

‘Plato’s task in Books VII-VII is to persuade us, through Glaucon, that the most important kind of knowledge [sc. knowledge of the Good] is out of our reach, beyond our present capability, so that we would do well, should the day of Utopia come, to give political power to philosophers whose knowledge we do not share.’\textsuperscript{115}

What I hope to have shown so far is that the knowledge in question, according to Plato, can be seriously pursued outside Kallipolis; that certain people outside the ideal city-state have the intellectual capability to pursue it. For Plato, the chief problem is that, outside Kallipolis, even if someone were to master dialektikē, he would in all likelihood fail to apply said knowledge in the political realm, and so fail to fully develop qua philosopher.

All this is not to say that Plato fully comprehends, or claims to fully comprehend the Good. The remarks between 532e-534c clearly relay the difficulties and concerns with fully knowing and in turn explaining the nature of the Good. And it

\textsuperscript{114} This may go some way to explain how Socrates, who claims to have no knowledge of the Good (a point I return to later), is in any sort of position to claim that there are people outside Kallipolis who have seen the Good. Roughly put, what we see especially between 519bd is the author’s (Plato’s) voice pushing through to insist that certain people (himself included) have some sort of grasp of the Good itself. Compare 519bd to the remark made at 533a, where Socrates insists that we must assume Forms exist.

\textsuperscript{115} Burnyeat (2000) 64
is by all means possible that these difficulties and concerns reveal (be it intentional or not on his part) Plato’s personal concerns with his metaphysical system capped by his *anhupothetos archê*. As Nicholas White observes,

‘In 534b-c he [sc. Plato] seems to hint at some more substantial definition [of the Good], but it is unclear what it would be like, or out of what materials it would be construed. Plato does not pursue these matters. He knows that he is moving over very difficult ground, and that he does not have it entirely under his control.’\(^\text{116}\)

Looking forward, the *Sophist*, *Statesman* and *Philebus* respectively confirm that ‘the science of dialectic’ is treated as an actual science under non-ideal conditions.\(^\text{117}\) We shall return to this science, as variously presented in these later dialogues, in subsequent chapters. For now, what we should especially take away from the preceding sections is that, according to the *Republic*, simply being an expert of Forms as such does not mean that one is the best possible philosopher; that a complete philosophical life is a perfect combination, fostered by the right psychological climate, of a theoretical and political career. All the same, Plato believes, albeit obscurely, that knowledge of *dialektikê* is pursuable outside *Kallipolis*, that at least the theoretical half of the complete philosophical life can be seriously

\(^{116}\) White (1976) 103

\(^{117}\) Whilst the *Statesman* speaks of an ideal city-state ruled by the genuine statesman, the remarks therein on dialecticians do not place these experts within the ideal city-state. On a separate note, ‘*dialektikê*’ is not used in the *Philebus* or *Statesman*. Nonetheless, certain cognates of ‘dialectic’ are used in both dialogues (e.g., ἥ τοι διάλεξεται δύναμις, *Phlb.*, 57e6-7; διαλεκτικοτέροις, *Pol.*, 285d6). And these cognates clearly allude to that unique science (cf. *Phlb.*, 57e-58e, *Pol.*, 285d-286b). I say more on this in Ch. III and IV.
undertaken in a non-ideal environment. In the remainder of this chapter, we shall see where exactly Socrates fits in this picture of the complete philosophical life.

ACCOMMODATING BOTH THE ELENCTIC SOCRATES AND THE EXPERT OF FORMS

Alexander Nehamas claims that the metaphysical theory of Forms, on prominent display in the *Republic*, ultimately ‘underwrites the nature and practice of dialectic’.

What Nehamas means by this is that the theory of Forms comes to distinguish the philosopher from particularly the sophist: the philosopher seeks out the true intelligible nature of *x*; he parts ways with sensory apparatus and *sensibilia*, along with human opinion, to obtain genuine knowledge of real, unchanging, non-sensuous entities via reasoning. The sophist, by contrast, relies solely on sensory apparatus, *sensibilia*, human opinion and logical fallacies. Ultimately, the sophist holds preference for victory in argument over the truth of the matter.

Nehamas points out that the philosopher’s overarching aim (sc. knowledge of Forms) is unique to Plato’s so-called ‘middle period’ (especially the *Phaedo* and *Republic*): ‘the exclusion of the senses, the reliance on reason, and the very idea of the Good itself constitute critical innovations on Plato’s middle period: nothing like them can be found in his Socratic dialogues.’

Let us, for the sake of argument, accept Nehamas’ claim, namely that in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* Plato openly gives us his view of what philosophy, at least at its theoretical best, is: an esoteric study, which

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118 Nehamas (1999) 117

119 Technically, the philosopher’s pursuit of Forms contrasts him with all ‘lovers of sights and sounds’. Nehamas is just focusing on the differences between sophist and philosopher in his article. I return to address this point below.

120 Nehamas (1999) 117
employs a variety of methods used to ascertain the nature of certain intelligible objects. If we accept all this, we must admit that the philosopher Nehamas has in mind, who more precisely ought to be identified as the expert of ἰαλεκτική (i.e., he alone amongst the experts identified in the middle books of the Republic who is ascribed full knowledge of Forms), is not just contrasted with typical lovers of sights. He is also contrasted with the elenctic Socrates prominently on display in the Socratic dialogues.

‘Socratic dialogues’ is a notoriously loaded term.\textsuperscript{121} What I want to do with this term in what follows is use it to refer to a group of dialogues wherein Socrates primarily takes on the role of elenctic examiner.\textsuperscript{122} By ‘elenctic Socrates’ I mean that Socrates who is primarily recognized in the Socratic dialogues as employing (Socratic) elenchus: quizzing his interlocutor on what exactly constitutes the nature of a particular topic, \(x\), and drawing out a particular answer, \(F\), that is in turn scrutinized. This Socrates usually takes issue with every answer \((F, G, H, \text{ etc.})\) attributed to an interlocutor; no definitive answer to the overarching question (‘what is \(x\)?) is found. In turn, a state of aporia (confusion, puzzlement) is pronounced.\textsuperscript{123} Formulaically put, in a typical conversation the elenctic Socrates is noted for refuting a given interlocutor by showing that the interlocutor’s thesis, say ‘that \(x\) is \(F\)’, is at minimum untenable.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{121}See, e.g., Bonazzi et al. (2009)

\textsuperscript{122}Particularly the Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Charmides, Laches, Lysis, Euthydemus, Protagoras, and Ion.

\textsuperscript{123}What aporia is exactly in Plato is up for debate, cf. Politis (2006) and literature therein. I shall not delve into this contentious issue. In this chapter, let aporia signify an inconclusive state, generally construed, especially on the part of the interlocutor, noticed at the terminus of a given instance of Socratic elenchus.

\textsuperscript{124}‘Refuting’, with regard to Socratic elenchus in general, can mean proving that \(A\)’s \(x\), a topic or object (e.g., Piety), is false, cf. Vlastos (1983) 27-58, and (1991). Alternatively, it could mean showing that \(A\)’s \(x\) is inconsistent with his other mutually held beliefs, cf. Benson (2000 & 2011). There is no
For, beyond \( x \), Socrates has elicited from his interlocutor a set of beliefs, \( \{p, q\} \), which entails the contradictory of the interlocutor’s original thesis.\(^{125}\) What is particularly characteristic of Socratic elenchus is that it is critical: Socrates always declines at the start of a discussion to provide his own thesis to the question under debate. Socrates, in other words, always plays the part of the questioner.

Does Socrates have his own answer to the question at hand? Perhaps, but that is irrelevant given the circumstances of the discussions depicted especially in the Socratic dialogues. As Gregory Vlastos has already replied, ‘giving and defending [his thesis] would be a topic for another argument.’\(^{126}\)

But when we search for that argument, particularly concerning a theory of Forms in the Socratic dialogues, it is nowhere to be found. To be clear, when the elenctic Socrates speaks of seeking out the truth or knowledge of \( x \), he usually means that he is inquiring into the nature of \( x \). Nonetheless, there is no solid textual evidence in the Socratic dialogues to equate the nature of \( x \) with the ‘Form’ \( x \), with the \( x \)-itself set apart in the \textit{Phaedo} and \textit{Republic}. Granted, the elenctic Socrates does use the word ‘form’ (\textit{eidos}) to refer to the object of definition in certain Socratic dialogues (e.g., \textit{Euthyphro} 6de). However, apart from suggesting that an \textit{eidos} is some sort of need to argue for one meaning over the other in this chapter, that we grant that ‘\( x \) is F’ is at minimum shown to be untenable by Socrates suffices.

\(^{125}\) This rough formula is based on Vlastos’ (1991) 266. Again, whether Socrates proves \( x \) to be false, or rather shows \( x \) just to be inconsistent with the interlocutor’s other mutually held beliefs, is beside the point here. Rowe (2011) 205-6 contests a major part of the Vlastos reading of Socratic elenchus by arguing that in many cases the interlocutor is not committed to a particular thesis (cf. Vlastos (1991) 134, who uses the term ‘commitment’ to qualify how close to a given thesis an interlocutor is). I agree with Rowe that Vlastos may be going too far in saying that all of Socrates’ interlocutors are \textit{committed} (I take it here to mean ‘feel a (strong) dedication or loyalty’) to a given thesis. However, even if the present interlocutor only \textit{half-heartedly} defends a given thesis—remember that he does ultimately promote a thesis with some varying degree of dedication to it—that he does \textit{so honestly} suffices for Socrates to continue the elenchus, particularly in the role of questioner.

\(^{126}\) Vlastos (1991) 112
universal, the elenctic Socrates’ use of the term is metaphysically non-committal; it
does not carry with it the presupposition of certain ontological features ascribed to
Forms in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*.\(^{127}\) *A fortiori*, there is no good reason to saddle the
elenctic Socrates therein with a theory of Forms. Accordingly, both the expert of
dialektikē and the elenctic Socrates seek the truth. And both can generally be said to
be inquiring into the nature of \(x\). Yet only the expert of *dialektikē* identifies the nature
of \(x\) with a *Phaedo* or *Republic*-style Form \(x\).

It is safe to say that Nehamas would take no issue with there being an essential
difference between the expert of *dialektikē* and the elenctic Socrates; that the two
philosophers seek out the truth, yet only one, the expert of *dialektikē*, is attributed an
epistemology and metaphysics reflective of a theory of Forms. Indeed, Nehamas
would probably say that the difference between philosophers only supports his
article’s conclusions: Plato ultimately sees the limitations of his elenctic Socrates, a
Socrates tied to his eponymous method of inquiry (all of this, perhaps, reflective of
Plato’s once close connection to the historical Socrates).\(^{128}\) In crafting his own unique
view of philosophy, Plato eventually turns to re-mould Socrates (and whomever else
he casts in his dialogues, e.g., the Eleatic Visitor, Timaeus, the Athenian Visitor) into
the mouthpiece for his distinctly Platonic view of reality (enter the theory of Forms, in
particular). The bottom line is: Plato has changed, and now so too has his Socrates.

In passing, I note that this is not the only (reasonable) answer we can give to
account for the contrast between the expert of *dialektikē* and the elenctic Socrates. An
alternative, which does not presuppose a chronological ordering of the dialogues, or
further a ‘development’ (i.e., adjustment) of Plato’s own philosophical views (a

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127 I believe Robinson (1953) 49-60 has adequately shown this.
128 This is essentially part of Vlastos’ (1991) thesis. I believe Nehamas would generally agree with it. I
make no attempt to connect Plato’s Socrates with the historical Socrates.
development which is purportedly reflected in the varied personae of Socrates witnessed in Plato), relies simply on citing a peculiar limitation of the elenctic method and its most famous user: if within the Socratic dialogues Socrates is usually cast as questioner to someone else’s role as answerer, then it is inappropriate to ascribe to this Socrates a thesis that would surely need to be examined. For this would force Socrates to abandon his elenctic role as questioner and take on the role of answerer (cf., e.g., *Prt*. 338cd). *A fortiori*, it is inappropriate to saddle the elenctic Socrates, in his role as questioner to some one else’s role as answerer, with a theory of Forms that would surely need to be scrutinized via elenchus.\(^{129}\) My point here is just that there may be varied, equally viable answers to (at least partially) account for the contrast.

However we (begin to) account for the contrast between these two philosophers, I believe the following questions need to be answered: what is the exact philosophical status of the elenctic expert in light of the account of the expert of *dialektikē* in the *Republic*? What role, if any, does elenchus, and so its expert user, have in the aspiring philosopher-king’s personal development in the *Republic*?\(^{130}\) In what follows, I provide my own answers to these questions. I shall answer the second question first.

As I have shown, what Plato does in the *Republic*, especially in Book VII, is identify philosophy not only as a way of life, but, more specifically, as a science. Whilst the reference is not exclusive, ‘philosophy’ may now refer to the superior *epistēmē* of *dialektikē* that all subordinate *technai* at best approximate (cf. VII, 533bc). Its expert, one of a select few, is a synoptic polymath whose conception of the world

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\(^{129}\) Of course, a thorough version of this answer would have to address Socrates’ self-examination in the *Hippias Major*.

\(^{130}\) By posing these questions I wish to qualify, in particular, Nehamas’ (1999) treatment of elenchus and its most famous user, Socrates, particularly in the *Republic*.
is framed by his comprehension of Forms topped by the Good itself. Elenchus plays an essential role in this philosopher’s life. But note that elenchus is used only when it comes to either questioning or defending an account regarding something (it is safe to say some Form \( x \), particularly the Good itself) that the expert of *dialektikē* has already obtained.\(^{131}\)

‘Unless someone can distinguish in an account the form of the good from everything else, can survive *all refutation* [διὰ πάντων ἔλέγχων], as if in a battle, striving to judge things not in accordance with opinion but in accordance with being, and can come through all this with his account still intact you’ll say that he doesn’t know the good itself or any other good. And if he gets hold of some image of it, you’ll say that it’s through opinion, not knowledge, for he is dreaming and asleep throughout his present life, and before he wakes up here, he will arrive in Hades and go to sleep forever.’

*(Rep., VII, 534b8-d1)*

Part of being an expert of *dialektikē* entails overturning every counter-argument, surviving elenchus after elenchus. If you cannot do that, then you are not (at least as of yet) a full-fledged expert of *dialektikē*.\(^{132}\)

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\(^{131}\) To be clear, by ‘elenchus’ I mean the elenchus as formulaically presented above. Vlastos (1991) 111 n. 19 claims, without qualification, that the elenctic method referenced at 534bd (quoted below) is not proper Socratic elenchus (i.e., elenchus as routinely employed in the Socratic dialogues). Perhaps he is right. But the account of elenchus here in Book VII is simply too vague to outright confirm or deny his claim. *Pace* Vlastos, I claim that identifying the elenchus referred to in Book VII with the typical elenchus witnessed in the Socratic dialogues is not problematic. The person taking on the adversative position need not have knowledge of Form \( x \) in order to examine the coherency of the philosopher’s purported knowledge of Form \( x \).

\(^{132}\) Whilst this condition for knowledge ascription may seem demanding, it is surely not ludicrous; Plato holds that a necessary condition for truly knowing (Form) \( x \) is being able to present a watertight account of it.
Nehamas argues that elenchus, by itself, ultimately ‘is not sufficient to distinguish clearly between Socratic and sophistic inquiry’.\textsuperscript{133} He pairs elenchus with a different ‘study of the unchanging nature of the world’\textsuperscript{134}—the latter being that which, according to Nehamas, supplements elenchus in Plato’s ‘middle-period’ conception of philosophy. Shifting Nehamas’ words around a bit, I stress that it is elenchus that supplements whatever method it is that the expert of \textit{dialektikē} first uses to obtain knowledge of the Good itself and all the rest of the Forms. To be clear, elenchus serves a purpose in the process of \textit{verifying} this philosopher’s comprehension of any Form $x$. If repeated examination does not cast doubt on his thesis concerning Form $x$, then, and only then, could the expert of \textit{dialektikē} say that he unconditionally knows Form $x$. The problem with elenchus is that it cannot assist this philosopher in first grasping Form $x$. Simply put, elenchus only tests the coherency of an account; it does not initially help form it. This last claim needs to be clarified. Ultimately elenchus is a form of argumentation that at best indirectly validates an already formulated account regarding some $x$; surviving an elenctic episode signals the coherency of an account regarding $x$. Otherwise, elenchus yields \textit{negative} results: either Socrates proves that, say, $x$ is not F, or he shows that an interlocutor has no good reason to keep his original thesis, that $x$ is F, in light of the fact that it conflicts with his other mutually held beliefs (i.e., Socrates brings one to acknowledge the untenable nature of the thesis in question).\textsuperscript{135} Again, the problem

\textsuperscript{133} Nehmas (1999) 119
\textsuperscript{134} Nehmas (1999) ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} The options accommodate both the Vlastos and Benson readings of elenchus (cf. n. 124). At minimum, both scholars would agree on the negative consequence of elenchus.
here is that what the expert of dialektikē needs in order to first grasp the Good itself is a method that yields positive results (viz., that Form x is F). \footnote{136 I return to this problem next chapter.}

Once more, elenchus, so long as it is properly directed toward the truth of the matter (cf. VII, 539cd), is the test used to confirm a philosopher’s knowledge of Forms. \footnote{137 I agree in major part with Marion (2013) that, contra Gregory Vlastos, in the Republic Plato maintains a central place in his conception of philosophy for Socratic elenchus; that elenchus is not ditched as a viable philosophical tool after Book I (I return to Socrates of Rep. I below). However, Marion (2013) 284 is wrong in saying that at 534bc Plato equates understanding the Good itself with the ability to engage in ‘dialectical games’ (i.e., proper elenchus). Said ability may be necessary to confirm said knowledge, but it cannot help to initially grasp it.}

Importantly, it is not essential for the elenctic questioner to possess knowledge of Form x in order to refute or confirm the aspiring philosopher’s account of Form x; the questioner could simply be a good elenctic artist, eliciting a belief-set and highlighting that such a set entails a conclusion that may or may not agree with the interlocutor’s original thesis on Form x. In the case of refuting the aspiring expert of dialektikē, the good elenctic expert\footnote{138 In contrast to those who are skilled in ‘dialectic’ (in context clearly elenchus), but abuse it, and then their interlocutors, for the love of victory (cf. VII 537d-539c).} elicits a set of beliefs that entail a counter-thesis. He accordingly befuddles the aspiring dialectician to the point of legitimately questioning the latter’s grasp of Form x.

All this roughly explains how someone like the elenctic Socrates, who purportedly does not know what Form x is, can still scrutinize the account of an interlocutor who claims to know Form x. This brings us back to the first question posed above: what is exactly the philosophical status of the elenctic expert in Plato’s Republic? We have seen that the elenctic Socrates cannot be equated with the expert of dialektikē, with Plato’s topmost theoretician in the Republic. But this does not mean that the elenctic Socrates is barred from the appellation ‘philosopher’. Far from
it. As the preceding analysis of ‘philosophia’ and cognates in the Republic has revealed, Plato is apt to speak of philosophy more as an intellectual trait or positive psychic disposition than as a specific science. In other words, ‘philosophia’ is more an honorific than a designator of a distinguished theoretician with a unique body of knowledge. What it means to be a philosopher, then, in most contexts, is simply to be a keen intellectual in pursuit of genuine wisdom. That philosophers individually vary with regard to their proximity to what is considered genuine wisdom, that some ultimately reach the best amongst the intelligible (sc. the Good itself) whilst others do not, does nothing to jeopardize their identification as philosophers.\(^{139}\)

Of course the epistemic variance alluded to cannot be overlooked. Plato dedicates an entire book of the Republic (sc. VII) to highlighting the knowledge gaps in the sciences, especially the mathematical ones. Nevertheless, diverse scientists are considered philosophers just in so far as their respective investigations gradually move them to abandon their reliance on what is perceivable and temporal for what, according to Plato, they come to discover is intelligible and eternal. And surely the elenctic Socrates fits this description of the philosopher generally construed, even if he does not presuppose, let alone consciously seek out, a realm of distinguished intelligible objects. This is because his demand for a universal definition, an account regarding an \(x\) that holds in all scenarios, puts him on the right track toward the Good, it moves him, and ideally his interlocutor, away from the instance to the model, from

\(^{139}\) Cf. 496c3-5, esp. ‘τούτων δὴ τῶν ὀλίγων’ at c5, which suggests that Socrates includes himself amongst those worthy of associating with philosophy.
the perceivable and changeable to the intelligible and eternal, as all legitimate philosophical inquiry should (cf. Rep., VII 537cd).140

This reading is obviously attempting to accommodate the elenctic Socrates within a philosophical system topped by a theory of distinguished intelligible objects (i.e., Forms). But it is fairly clear that part of Plato’s goal, particularly in Book VII of the Republic, is to incorporate a variety of sciences and arts, which individually do not presuppose a theory of special beings topped by the Good itself, into a philosophical system capped by a unique science. The idea is that, in among the many philosophers, there will be a select few that will graduate to the top of philosophy, to the science of dialectic. The elenctic Socrates is not one of these select few. But as the remarks on ‘dialectic’ (i.e., elenchus, cf. Ch. I pp. 24-5) in Republic VII attest, the elenctic Socrates and his art remain immensely important for Plato: they serve as the final test for that philosopher intent on knowing the best and happiest amongst those which are.

DISTINGUISHING THE PHAEDO AND REPUBLIC SOCRATES FROM THE EXPERT OF DIALEKTİKĔ

Whilst the exemplar of the philosophical way of life in the Phaedo is undoubtedly the Socrates depicted therein, I argue that we cannot equate the Socrates of the Phaedo with the topmost theoretician of the Republic, the expert of dialektikē. To be clear, the ‘topmost theoretician’ is not to be confused with the best possible philosopher of the Republic, viz., he who applies his knowledge of dialektikē by way

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140 That the elenctic Socrates typically acts as questioner does not change anything, because whilst interrogating someone else’s thesis he is concomitantly either seeking out or verifying—perhaps he already has a belief on the matter—the right answer for himself.
of ruling a *polis*. That being said, by showing that Socrates of the *Phaedo* and the topmost theoretician, the expert of *dialektikē*, are not identical, I shall indirectly be showing that Socrates of the *Phaedo* cannot be equated with the best possible philosopher of the *Republic*.

Now, Socrates of the *Phaedo* openly believes in Forms, in those special beings that are on prominent display in the *Republic*. Accordingly, this brings him closer than the elenctic Socrates featured in the Socratic dialogues to fitting the description of the topmost theoretician of the *Republic*. However, there is a notable epistemic difference between the Socrates of the *Phaedo* and the expert of *dialektikē*. Unlike the latter, Socrates of the *Phaedo* never claims to know the Good itself. Indeed, this Socrates’ connection to Forms is via a rough belief in them:

‘I simply, naively and perhaps foolishly cling to this (τοῦτο... ἀπλῶς καὶ ἀτέχνως καὶ ἕσως εὐθῆθως ἔχω παρ' ἐμαντῆ), that nothing else makes it beautiful other than he presence of, or the sharing in, or however you may describe its relation to that Beautiful we mentioned, for I will not insist on the precise nature of the relationship (οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τοῦτο διαμερίζομαι), but that all beautiful things are beautiful by the Beautiful.’ (*Phd.*, 100d3-8)\(^{141}\)

This sketchy defence of such a grandiose theory is surely unbecoming of the *Republic*-style expert of *dialektikē*.

Related to this epistemic difference is an issue concerning methodology. The prominent method displayed in the *Phaedo*, that of hypothesis, is arguably ruled out

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\(^{141}\) By implication, this applies to his belief in all Forms. This is supported by the subsequent remarks on Bigness and Smallness (100e-101a).
in the Republic as being the primary method employed for grasping Forms. Yet in
the Phaedo Socrates relies on just this method of hypothesis to defend his belief in
them (cf. 100a ff.). Given the critique of hypothesizing in the Republic, Socrates of
the Phaedo must fall short of the expert of dialektikē in his grasp of Forms; whilst
hypothesizing ostensibly suffices to yield knowledge of Forms in the Phaedo, in the
Republic it is at best a necessary method for any preliminary investigation into
specifically the Good itself—all other Forms subsequently being understood
specifically in light of one’s knowledge of the unhypothetical Good itself.

Accordingly, perhaps in retrospect it is rather telling that in the Phaedo Socrates calls
the method of hypothesis, which he relies on, confusing:

142 Socrates openly says that what distinguishes the expert of dialektikē from particularly the
mathematicians is his eventual abandonment of hypotheses (VII 533cd, cf. VI 511bc). Granted, it is
reasonable to posit the use of hypotheses when first setting out to grasp the Good. But the actual insight
into this special being, and the ensuing move ‘from forms to forms, and ending in forms’, must surely

143 I do not want to come across as unreflectively assuming that the ‘hypothetical method’ of Phaedo
100a and 101de is a term of an unambiguous contrast, where the other term is the ‘anhupothetos archē’
(sc. the Good) of the Republic. I do, however, defer to others who view a single methodology being
discussed in both the Phaedo and the Republic, where (taken explicitly or implicitly) the Good itself is
something that is arrived at by means of postulates yet is not itself a postulate: cf. Byrd (1997), as well
as Robinson (1953) 172-6, and White (1976) 95-9.

Having said that, one could hold that in the Phaedo the hypothetical procedure is methodological; it is
Socrates’ best chance at arriving at some sort of understanding of Forms. This openly implies that
Socrates has nothing better (i.e., more rigorous and precise) to use in its place. However (this person
adds), the anhupothetos archē of the Republic has to do with what is ontologically fundamental. The
idea being that you cannot derive anything more fundamental than the Good itself. This contrast
between methodology and (metaphysical) object of knowledge does not rule out hypothesizing the
latter; the fundamental first principle could logically be a hypothesis in the methodological sense. Take
a parallel from modern physics: someone hypothesizes that X is the fundamental force from which all
matter and the four well-known forces are derived. What he postulates is a postulate (i.e., a hypothesis).
Yet it is a postulate concerning what is fundamental; what is postulated is postulated as not resting on
‘I do not any longer persuade myself that I know why a unit or anything else comes to be or perishes or exists by the old method of investigation, and I do not accept it, but I have a confused method of my own (κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον τῆς μεθόδου, ἀλλὰ τιν' ἀλλὸν τρόπον οὕτως εἰκῆ φύρω).’ (Phd. 97b4-7, cf. 100a f.)

It is even difficult to classify Socrates of the *Phaedo* as an aspiring expert of *dialektikē*. This is because there is no strong indication in the *Phaedo* that an insight into Forms relies on any sort of prior, systematized intellectual conditioning, particularly an educative course that is heavily influenced by certain mathematical studies. The best indication that mathematics plays a role in grasping Forms in the *Phaedo* is the presumed familiarity with geometry behind the method of hypothesis. But I struggle to see the immediate connection between this subtle familiarity with mathematics in the *Phaedo* (and *Meno*) and the prominent role mathematics plays in the philosopher’s ascent to the Good in the *Republic*.

Returning to the *Republic*, I argue that we cannot equate the Socrates of either Book I or Books II-X of the *Republic* with the expert of *dialektikē*. By showing that neither persona of Socrates in the *Republic* can be equated with the topmost theoretician, the expert of *dialektikē*, I shall indirectly be showing that neither persona of Socrates in the *Republic* can be equated with the best possible philosopher of the *Republic*.

Why the separation of Socrates in the *Republic* into two personae? Socrates of Book I is chiefly recognized as the elenctic figure found elsewhere in Plato, particularly in the Socratic dialogues (e.g., *Euthyphro*, *Ion*, *Charmides*). Socrates of Book I maintains his adversative, interrogative stance; he does not claim to endorse a

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144 Openly cited in the *Meno* (86e). Geometry is also referred to in connection with recollection at *Phaedo* 73b.
theory of Forms, or set down any other positive thesis regarding, in particular, any of
the virtues, an ideal state, or the philosophers who should rule the ideal state. There
are a few other obvious points we could cite, which safely differentiate Socrates of
Book I from particularly Socrates of Books II-X. In general, Socrates of Book I is
the elenctic figure found elsewhere in Plato. Accordingly, the differences
aforementioned, which separate the elenctic figure and the expert of dialektikē of
Republic VII, can be cited again in order to separate the Socrates of Republic I from
the expert of dialektikē. Hence, Socrates of Book I, qua elenctic figure, falls short of
being the topmost theoretician. A fortiori, he falls short of being the best possible
philosopher.

Why does Plato present two personae of Socrates in the Republic? Why the
contrast between the elenctic (Book I) and doctrinal (Books II-X) Socratic figure?
Recalling my earlier observations on the limitations of elenchus (pp. 86-8), Plato must
believe that, in order to set down his own positive (albeit still examinable) views
regarding the plethora of philosophical topics broached in the ensuing books of the
Republic, a non-elenctic figure must necessarily take the reigns of the discussion. This
is not to say that Plato in the Republic ultimately ditches the elenctic figure as a
genuine philosophical figure (I return to this point below). The main idea here is that
a different philosophical persona is needed for the task at hand (viz., the presentation
of positive theses). This does not mean, though, that the non-elenctic figure (Socrates)
is to be equated with the ideal philosopher that awaits us in Book VII.

The account of Forms, and so the intelligible plane of reality only the expert of
dialektikē is privy to, is told by Socrates post-Book I through the use of analogy.
What is more, this use of analogy, as witnessed with the respective accounts of the

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Sun, Divided Line and Cave, relies on visible props or diagrams: the analogies depend on what is patently in the visible plane to approximately allude to that which is truly found in the intelligible plane. Accordingly, this Socrates is at best approximating an account of Forms, something that obviously would be considered insufficient for a genuine expert of *dialektikē*. And, whilst the reader may interject and claim that the approximation account is done especially for Glaucon’s and Adeimantus’ benefit due to their intellectual limitations, I respond by pointing out that it is particularly Socrates who is quick to cite *his own* limitations.

For one, Socrates openly admits ignorance of the Good itself:

‘You know very well now that I am going to say this [i.e., that the Good is that which all other things, including other forms, derive their use and benefit from], and, besides, *that we have no adequate knowledge of it* (ἀὑτήν οὖχ ἰκανὸς ἰσμεν)’ (VI, 505a4-6).

In fact, he cannot even muster an account of the Good along the same lines as he did the civic virtues in Book IV:

‘By god, Socrates, Glaucon said, don’t desert us with the end almost in sight. We’ll be satisfied if you discuss the good as you discussed justice, moderation, and the rest. That, my friend, [said Socrates], would satisfy me too, but I’m afraid that I won’t be up to it and that I’ll disgrace myself and look ridiculous by trying’ (VI, 506d2-8).

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146 Given the evidence of Book VII (519bd), that knowledge of the Good can be seriously pursued outside *Kallipolis*, ‘we’ here may specifically refer to Socrates, Adeimantus and Glaucon.
He instead provides an account of the ‘child’ (Sun), the purported offspring of the Good. However, note that he all but explicitly admits to never being able to provide an account of the Good:

‘{Glaucan} The story about the father [sc. the Good] remains a debt you’ll pay another time. {Soc} I wish that I could pay the debt in full, [viz., give an account of the Good] instead of just the interest [sc. an account of the Sun]. {But at present [I can repay] only the interest} (ἀλλὰ μὴ ὅσπερ νῦν τοὺς τόκους μόνον) [VI, 506e6-507a2]

The Divided Line is a continuation of the account on the Good via the Sun (cf. 509bd). Accordingly, it too at best approximates in account the actual relation between the two planes of reality and the objects, including the Good, found scattered between them. Further, the Cave analogy relies on visible correlates, as do the geometers, to that which the ideal philosopher ‘sees’ (via reason) in the non-sensuous plane of the intelligible.

Incidentally, it is worth highlighting Socrates’ reference to the rather ‘unSocratic’ (i.e., non-elenctic) theorizing that the depicted philosopher (who will ultimately be identified with the expert of *dialektikē*), now outside the Cave, engages in: contemplation of Forms, as the phrase ‘always pressing upwards, eager to spend their time above’ implies (ἄνω ἀεὶ ἐπείγονται αὐτῶν αἱ ψυχαὶ διατρίβειν, 517c9, cf. 517cd). To be clear, this is especially unSocratic in so far as it abandons the elenctic Socrates’ *raison d’être*: to openly cross-examine both himself and others, not

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147 For sure, elenchus is suggested as playing a direct role in the dialectician’s ascent to the Good (cf. 514cd). But, again, elenchus can only serve to verify or refute an intellectual effort undertaken beforehand by a different method. As the passage in Book VII (514cd) indicates, the individual is subjected to elenchus *after* initially seeing what is in fact reality.
contemplate Forms (see below). Granted, the expert of *dialektikē* does ultimately interact with his fellow humans. But he does so only as their unwilling political leader.

Beyond the use of analogy and Socrates’ intellectual limitations as implied via such use, perhaps the most telling (and explicit) proof of Socrates post-Book I missing the mark of the topmost theoretician of the *Republic* is witnessed when he comes up short in explaining the exact methodology of *dialektikē*. How, in other words, *dialektikē* comprehends Forms:

‘{Glaucon} [W]hat is the sort of power dialectic has, what forms is it divided into, and what paths does it follow? For these lead at last, it seems, towards that place which is a rest from the road, so to speak, and an end of journeying for the one who reaches it. {Socrates} You won’t be able to follow me any longer, Glaucon, even though there is no lack of eagerness on my part to lead you, for you would no longer be seeing an image of what we’re describing, but the truth itself. At any rate, that’s how it seems to be’ (VII, 532d8-533a4).

That is all Socrates has been doing up to this point: showing his interlocutors images of the truth itself, approximating the fully educated philosopher and his body of knowledge. Again, the limitations emphasized in this quotation are not only those of Glaucon, but of Socrates too. Socrates can only provide a likeness of what exists in the intelligible realm; it is Socrates who has to get Glaucon to believe with him that there is in fact an intelligible plane of reality without being shown it (cf. 533a).  

Richard Robinson observes a so-called ‘inconsistency’ in the *Republic*:

‘According to what [Plato] says about them [sc. images], he ought never to use them;
yet his works are full of them.” My reading above answers this apparent inconsistency, at least in the Republic: what Plato is showing us is an approximation of the truth (in imagery, analogy) via the mouthpiece of someone reporting on the individual most capable of fully understanding it, the expert of dialectikē. Intuitively, we should not expect much more.

Given the effort so far to show why exactly both personae of Socrates in the Republic are not to be equated with the expert of dialectikē of Book VII, one may naturally turn to ask what stops us from questioning either Socrates’ identification in the Republic as a philosopher full stop. This question would actually carry some force if philosophy, in whatever environment, were to be understood only as the science of dialectic. Yet one of the central aims of this chapter has been to show that Plato never makes such a radical claim. Indeed, both personae of Socrates are just as philosophic as, say, the geometer (or any other mathematical scientist). Recall this Socrates’ self-identification as a philosopher (VI, 496ad). A brief glance at the context in which this connection is made (496a-497b) clearly reveals that ‘philosopher’ does not refer to an expert of dialectikē. Instead, it more generally refers to any non-corrupted intellectual. To be sure, to properly pursue wisdom necessitates a natural endowment that certain individuals are immediately barred from possessing. A proper upbringing is

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149 Robinson (1953) 220-1. He cites further examples from the Republic in support of his point.

150 The philosophical traits of a soul that Socrates especially refers to in the Republic are ‘courage’ (ἀνδρεία), ‘high-mindedness’ (μεγαλοπρέπεια), ‘ease in learning’ (εὐμάθεια), and ‘good memory’ (μνήμη). Accordingly, to be ‘philosophical’ means to possess a certain set of traits that ultimately encourages the pursuit of genuine wisdom (cf., e.g., Rep. VI 487a, 490cd). Note that at 487a Socrates also considers the naturally philosophic to be ‘graceful’ (εὔχαρις), and virtuous, calling such an individual ‘both a friend and relative of truth, justice, courage, and moderation’ (φίλος τε καὶ συγγενής ἀληθείας, δικαιοσύνης, ἀνδρείας, σωφροσύνης). Further note that εὐμυθή and μνήμων, along with ἐγχίνος, ‘being of quick wit or mind’, are mentioned in the Laws (747b). These traits, in particular, are moulded via mathematical study—a study, as we know from the Republic, which is part of the aspiring philosopher-king’s curriculum.
required as well, as the remarks between 496a-497b make clear. Socrates, be he the elenctic figure or the more doctrinal one, satisfies both criteria: apart from his natural endowment, Socrates implies that his upbringing in Athens, particularly disengaged from the conventional affairs of the city, has allowed him to become part of that small group of individuals who rightfully consort with philosophy. Plato, then, wants to make clear that Socrates is a philosopher in the general sense of the word; that, whilst not the topmost theoretician, and so candidate for best possible philosopher in an ideal city-state, Socrates ought to be recognized as a bona fide philosopher in an actual city-state, an endowed mind seeking the truth amidst charlatans.

Why does Plato make the conscious effort to prevent his character Socrates, be he the elenctic figure or the more doctrinal one, from being one of those knowers (and in turn appliers) of the Good in the Republic? Again, regarding the Socrates of Book I, it must have something to do with what Plato seriously sets down as that Socrates’ raison d’être (a raison d’être probably influenced by the historical Socrates): to philosophize, and in the process better others, by way of quizzing men on what they claim to know. Of course, from Book II onwards Socrates is not simply elenctic; there is no question that in the middle books he subscribes to the heavy-duty metaphysics of Platonic Forms. But we must not forget that this same man cannot explain in detail what the Good is, and how it is related to the other Forms, except via analogy and metaphor. Nor can he produce anyone else who can do this. Hence he has nothing specific here to apply elenchus to: he can only speak in general about the Forms and ideal philosopher-kings. But that may very well be his straightforward purpose: Socrates of Books II-X in the Republic serves as a sort of herald, as someone who is meant to entice the reader of the Republic to the more positive sort of

\[151\] This raison d’être is prominently featured in the Theaetetus. See Ch. V
philosophizing that awaits, to the sort of philosophizing that Plato, certainly by the time of writing the *Republic*, thinks can bring one to understand reality, and in turn apply, if the ideal conditions are met, that understanding in the political realm.
In this chapter I examine the remarks on the philosopher in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. My chief claim is that, in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato deliberately leaves the account of the topmost philosopher open so as to allow his topmost philosopher to concern himself with asking and answering a variety of questions (e.g., ‘What is a sophist?’ ‘What is the relation between Being as such and Non-Being as such?’). In doing so, Plato prevents his topmost philosopher from being fixed to any particular sub-branch of gnostic knowledge (explained below). In other words, I claim that Plato subtly casts the topmost philosopher as someone who transcends the epistemic boundaries that mark off the typical statesman, the typical geometer, and so on. Ultimately, I argue that the philosopher of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* is subtly projected as a multi-disciplinary expert, a polymath; that, in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, ‘philosopher’, in contrast to ‘sophist’ and ‘statesman’, does not mark off an expert found under a specific sub-branch of knowledge.

**SOME BRIEF REMARKS ON FORMS IN CERTAIN POST-REPUBLIC DIALOGUES**

Before turning to examine in detail the philosopher of the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, I would like to comment on the nature of Forms or Kinds (genē, eidē), as they are presented in these post-*Republic* dialogues. Melissa Lane, for example,

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152 I shall use the terms interchangeably.
rejects equating the Forms of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* with the ‘*Phaedo*- or *Republic*-style explanatory Forms’.\(^\text{153}\) We may group Lane with, for example, M.M. McCabe, Kenneth Sayre, Malcolm Schofield, and Mary Louise Gill.\(^\text{154}\) These scholars generally agree with the thesis that in later dialogues Plato reexamines and, where necessary, reformulates essential parts of his middle-period (viz., *Phaedo, Republic*) theory of language, knowledge, and above all Forms.

Now, I do not wish to take sides on this issue. Nor do I believe I have to. This is because arguing for or against a uniform picture of Forms from the *Republic* to the *Philebus* is ultimately unnecessary for achieving my general task of tracking the account of philosophy and its topmost theoretical branch, the science of dialectic, in Plato. Whatever changes to Plato’s conception of the nature of these universals (‘Kinds’, ‘Forms’) may or may not occur between the *Republic* and the *Philebus* (the latter safely being one of Plato’s latest dialogues), two things, which I am principally concerned with in this dissertation, remain constant.

Firstly, Forms in general are cast as eternal, invariable and incomprehensible via the senses:

> ‘And beauty itself and good itself and all the things that we thereby set down as many, reversing ourselves, we set down according to a single form of each (κατ’ ἰδέαν μίαν ἐκάστου ὡς μιᾶς οὖσης), believing that there is but one, and call it ‘the being’ (‘ὁ ἔστιν’) of each...And we say that the many beautiful things and the rest are visible but not intelligible, while the forms are intelligible but not visible (τὰς δ’ αὖ ἰδέας νοεῖσθαι μὲν, ὁρᾶσθαι δ’ οὖ)’ (*Rep.*, VI 507b5-10)

\(^{153}\) Lane (1998) 15 *et passim*

\(^{154}\) Cf. McCabe (1994); Sayre (1983); Schofield (2004); Gill (2013)
‘[F]or those things that are greatest and most valuable, there is no image at all which has been worked in plain view for the use of mankind (τοῖς δ’ αὐτοῖς μεγίστοις οὗτοι καὶ τιμωτάτοις οὐκ ἔστιν εἰδωλον οὐδὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰργασμένον ἐναργῶς), the showing of which will enable the person who wants to satisfy the mind of an inquirer to satisfy it adequately, just by fitting it to one of the senses. That is why one must practice at being able to give and receive an account of each thing; for the things that are without body, which are finest and greatest, are shown clearly only by verbal means (τὰ γὰρ ἁσώματα, κάλλιστα δόντα καὶ μέγιστα λόγῳ μόνον...σαφῶς δείκνυται) and by nothing else, and everything that is now being said is for the sake of these things.’ (Pol., 285e4-286a7)

Secondly, knowledge of Forms as such (i.e., what it means for Form/Kind X to be Form/Kind X), or more precisely of a certain set thereof, is strictly ascribed to the topmost science of philosophy, dialectic:

‘Then also understand that, by the other subsection of the intelligible, I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic. It does not consider these hypotheses as first principles but truly as hypotheses—but as stepping stones to take off from, enabling it to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything. Having grasped this principle, it reverses itself and, keeping hold of what follows from it, comes down to a conclusion without use of anything visible at all, but only forms themselves, moving on from forms to forms, and ending in forms (ἄλλῳ εἶδος αὐτοῖς δὲ αὐτόν εἰς αὐτά, καὶ τελευτᾷ εἰς εἶδη).’ (Rep. VI, 511b3-c2)
'{Socrates} Do we maintain that these kinds of sciences [sc. the mathematical sciences discussed] are the most precise? {Protarchus} Certainly. {Soc} But the power of dialectic (ἡ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις) would repudiate us if we put any power ahead of her. {Pro} What power do we mean by that again? {Soc} Clearly everybody would know what power I am referring to now! For I take it that anyone with any share in reason at all would consider the discipline concerned with being and what is really and forever in every way eternally self-same by far the truest of all kinds of knowledge.’ (Phlb., 57e3-58a5)\(^{155}\)

I postpone highlighting the differences between the various accounts of the science of dialectic in Plato until the concluding chapter of this dissertation. For the moment, suffice it to say that what all the selected dialogues in this dissertation have in common is that only the science of dialectic, however precisely it is described in a given dialogue, fully understands certain Forms or Kinds qua Forms or Kinds.

What about those Forms or Kinds singled out in the Sophist and Statesmen? In the Sophist certain Forms are labeled as ‘greatest’ or ‘most important’ (μέγιστα, Sph., 254d4).\(^{156}\)

‘Let’s not talk about every form. That way we won’t be thrown off by dealing with too many of them. Instead let’s choose some of those said to be most important (τῶν

\(^{155}\)Tr. Frede with slight adjustment on my part. ‘Dunamis’ and ‘epistēmē’ are used interchangeably in this passage to refer to the same science. I return to this important passage in Ch. IV.

\(^{156}\)All five of the greatest kinds highlighted in the Sophist are said to exist, literally ‘have a share in that which is’ (μετέχοι τοῦ ὄντος, 256e2), regardless of their individual capacity to blend (or not) with one another (cf. Sph. 254d ff.).
μεγίστων λεγομένων ἄττα). First we’ll ask what each is like, and next we’ll ask about their ability to associate with each other.’ (Sph., 254c2-5)\(^{157}\)

Similarly in the Statesman, certain Forms are distinguished as being, amongst other things, ‘greatest’ (τοῖς…μεγίστοις, 285e5, μέγιστα, 286a6). This explicit identification of certain beings as ‘greatest’ or ‘most important’ in these dialogues evidences a rough distinction amongst ‘those which are’ (ta onta) in the later dialogues.

To be sure, a lot hinges on the precise meaning of ‘greatest’ with reference to Forms in the Sophist and Statesman; answering what exactly makes a particular Form great, and further what in general distinguishes this being from all others, is a dissertation in itself. That said, whilst I believe that Plato may have in mind some sort of hierarchy of beings, it is unnecessary for my dissertation to account for it in any detail. Nor do I feel obligated to argue that the same Forms are consistently identified as ‘greatest’ from dialogue to dialogue. What I specifically argue in this dissertation is that there exists in certain dialogues a science with exclusive access to universals or a particular set thereof (whatever exactly the nature of these universals is); that in a given dialogue no other science, apart from one that is typically cast as supra-mathematical, fully understands Forms or Kinds qua Forms or Kinds.

All the same, a brief analysis of the following quotation from the Sophist may shed some light on what makes a Form great.

‘We’ve agreed on this: some kinds will associate with each other and some won’t, some will to a small extent and others will associated a great deal, nothing prevents

\(^{157}\)White’s translation, with slight adjustment on my part.
still others from being all pervading—from being associated with every one of them (τὰ δὲ καὶ διὰ πάντων οὐδὲν κωλύειν τοῖς πάσι κεκοινωνηκένα) [Sph., 254b7-c1, cf. Sph., 254bc]

Being as such, for example, is found blended with everything that is. Hence, its greatness may be related to the extent to which it pervades (note ‘κεκοινωνηκένα’ above) all existent things. To a lesser extent, Statecraft as such, at least the true one discussed in the Statesman, hypothetically could be present in all deserving communities. So it too is great in this sense. I note that comparison of these two examples hints at some sort of degree of difference amongst the greatest Kinds. So be it. Neither the Sophist nor the Statesman explicitly prohibit thinking of particular distinctions amongst the greatest Kinds, especially a distinction of degree of pervasiveness.

Now, it is possible that Plato has another sense of ‘megiston’ in mind. The Statesman distinguishes what can be made sufficiently clear by simply pointing to it, or presenting a picture (depiction, duplication or copy, etc., etc.) of it, from what can only be comprehend by means of a logos (definition, account). At the very least, then, what is so great (read ‘impressive’) about the latter, non-depicted being is that its very nature can only be comprehended by reason. Perhaps the number of the

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158 Gómez-Lobo (1977) similarly speaks of the distinguishing ‘pervasive’ nature of certain Kinds, particularly the greatest ones mentioned in the text. He separates Kinds into two general classes: pervasive and non-pervasive. This separation is vital for his reading of the Sophist passage on the science of dialectic (253e1-e2). For an argument in support of the Kind Statecraft being a megiston genos, see Miller (2004) 69-71; Lane (1998) 71-2.

159 Though crafting logos of such beings is important for the sake of bettering one as a dialectician, cf. Pol., 286ab. I return to this point below.

greatest Kinds may seem uncomfortably large to the reader, as the inclusion of statecraft in the Statesman suggests (cf. n. 158). But, I reply, there is no mention at Statesman 285e-286a of a specific limit to the number of Kinds that qualify as being ‘greatest’. I should also point out that to arbitrarily impose a limit to the number of kinds which qualify as ‘greatest’ in the Sophist goes against what is said particularly therein: the list of greatest Kinds discussed is not exhaustive, the actual limit is not specified (cf. Sph., 254c2-5).161

To briefly review, so far I have identified two distinct ways in which a Kind can be megiston: a Kind is great either on account of its pervasiveness in reality, or because of its impressiveness, as something so breathtaking upon comprehending it via reason alone. Of course, the two are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, Plato may have both in mind. Incidentally, one may ask how weaving, as treated in the Statesman, stands in relation to the distinctions just drawn? Surely it (i.e., its Kind) is not megiston, yet it does receive an elaborate logos in the dialogue. Roughly put, putting together an account of what is depictable, as is the case with weaving, is essential prior to turning to craft an account of what is essentially undepictable. Surely the latter is more difficult to craft than the former. Yet in order to competently understand the latter Kind as such, and in turn craft a logos concerning it, one needs to initially fine-tune his rational faculty by way of crafting a variety of logoi on a variety of less impressive onta. Hence the seemingly superfluous time and effort dedicated to presenting an account of weaving. As Melissa Lane puts it:

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161: {EV} Let’s not talk about every form. That way we won’t be thrown off by dealing with too many of them. Instead let’s choose some of the most important ones (τῶν μεγίστων λεγομένων ἄττα). First we’ll ask what they’re like, and next we’ll ask about their ability to associate with each other.'
‘[T]he depictable and undepictable things are distinguished with reference to inquiry; the importance of practising giving *logoi* of all things, so as to be able to give them of the undepictables, is derived as a conclusion; and the fact that it is easier to practise with lesser things is appended…For the Greeks as for us, weaving is manifestly depictable. But the interests of the inquiry [sc. the dialogue in the *Statesman*]-interests of practising giving *logoi* for the sake of the greater things which weaving was introduced to exemplify-dictate that the giving of a *logos* instead of a picture of weaving was justified.’  

On a separate note, given that division is ostensibly applied to every subject matter (a topic I discuss in more detail next chapter), one may ask whether every discipline studies a Form or set thereof, albeit without that discipline thinking of the epistemological and metaphysical implications of doing so (e.g., the *Cratylus*’ shuttle maker). I have no problem accepting the view that Plato believes all genuine craftsmen and scientists look, with varying degrees of awareness of the epistemological and metaphysical implications of doing so, to an eternal paradigm (i.e., Form) in their particular field of expertise.  

I believe that the *Cratylus* evidences this view quite clearly. So too does Francesco Ademollo:

‘in any art or craft there is a (more or less conscious) conceptual component, insofar as the craftsman manufactures his product by having a general idea of the kind of thing he is producing, the proportions it must embody, the purpose it will serve, etc. From Socrates’ (and Plato’s) vantage point, this conceptual experience is, as a matter of fact, grounded in the existence of the forms;

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162 Lane (1998) 74
163 Cf. Ch. I p. 51 with n. 67. I shall return to this point again in the next two chapters.
hence his description— a de re description— of the craftsman ‘looking to’ the form.\textsuperscript{164}

All the same, I repeat that no other science apart from the science of dialectic is ascribed knowledge (and so full awareness) of Forms as such. Nor, \textit{a fortiori}, is any other science, apart from the science of dialectic, attributed knowledge (and so full awareness) of the relation amongst Forms as such. All this will be elaborated on in what follows.

THE PHILOSOPHER OF THE \textit{SOPHIST} AND \textit{STATESMAN}

There are two interwoven aims to this section. The first is to combine the account of the philosopher as found in the \textit{Sophist} (249d-253c) and \textit{Statesman} (285d-286b) and accordingly present a more thorough picture of the philosopher spoken of therein. The second is to show that ‘philosopher’ (\textit{philosophos}) in these two dialogues refers particularly to the philosopher who has mastered the science of dialectic of the \textit{Sophist} and \textit{Statesman}.

Whilst discussing what Kinds are capable of blending, and what expert is accordingly adept at both knowing and showing this sort of interaction (\textit{Sph.}, 249d-253ac), the Eleatic Visitor (hereafter EV) and Theaetetus appear to the stumble upon the philosopher. I quote the passage at length.

\{EV\} So if someone’s going to show us correctly which kinds harmonize with which and which kinds exclude each other, doesn’t he have to have \textit{some kind of expertise}...
(μετ’ ἐπιστήμης τινός) as he proceeds through the discussion? And in addition doesn’t he have to know whether there are any kinds that run through all of them and link them together to make them capable of blending, and also, when there are divisions, whether certain kinds running through wholes are always the cause of division?

{Theaetetus} Of course that requires expertise (ἐπιστήμης) -probably just about the most important kind. {EV} What, then, shall we now call this expertise, Theaetetus? Or for heaven’s sake, without noticing have we stumbled on the expertise that free people have (τὴν τῶν ἑλευθέρων...ἐπιστήμην)? Maybe we’ve found the philosopher (τὸν φιλόσοφον) even though we were looking for the sophist? {Theaetetus} What do you mean? {EV} Aren’t we going to say that it takes expertise in dialectic (τῆς διαλεκτικῆς...ἐπιστήμης) to divide things by kinds and not to think that the same form is a different one or that a different form is the same? {Tht} Yes {EV} So if a person can do that, he’ll be capable of adequately discriminating a single form spread out all through a lot of other things, each which stands separate from the others. In addition he can discriminate forms that are different from each other but are included within a single form that’s outside them, or a single form that’s connected as a unit throughout many wholes, or many forms that are completely separate from others. That’s what it is to know how to discriminate by kinds (τοῦτο δ’ ἔστιν...διακρίνειν κατὰ γένος ἑπίστασθαι.) how things can associate and how they can’t. {Tht} Absolutely. {EV} Certainly you will not, I take it, grant this activity of dialectic (τὸ...διαλεκτικὸν) to anyone except to one who philosophises purely and justly (πλὴν τῷ καθαρῶς τε καὶ δικαίως φιλοσοφοῦντι.). {Tht} You certainly couldn’t assign it to anyone else. {EV} We’ll find that the philosopher will always be in a location like this if we look for him. He’s hard to see clearly too, but not in the same way as the sophist. {Tht} Why not? {EV} The sophist runs off into the darkness of that which is not, which he’s had
practice dealing with, and he’s hard to see because the place is so dark. Isn’t that right? {Tht} It seems to be. {EV} But the philosopher, at any rate, always stays near the form of that which is via reasoning (ὁ δὲ γε φιλόσοφος, τῇ τοῦ ὄντος ἅ̱ι διὰ λογισμῶν προσκείμενος ιδέα). He isn’t at all easy to see because that area is so bright and the eyes of most people’s souls can’t bear to look at what’s divine. {Tht} That seems just as right as what you just said before. {EV} We’ll think about the philosopher more clearly soon if we want to. But as far as the sophist is concerned we obviously shouldn’t give up until we’ve gotten a good enough look at him. {Tht} Fine. (Sph., 253b8-254b7)\(^{165}\)

Through the course of this passage we are told that the philosopher is someone who has the free man’s knowledge (ἐπιστήμης, 253b9, c4; ταύτην [epistēmēn], 253c6, τῆν…ἐπιστήμην, 253c7-8,) of dialectic (τῆς διαλεκτικῆς…ἐπιστήμης, 253d2-3): he knows (i) what Kinds are capable of blending and which ones are not.\(^{166}\) He also knows (ii) just how to divide things by Kinds and put them back together, how to map this association. As Theaetetus states, such knowledge (epistēmē) is ‘probably just about the most important kind [of knowledge]’ (253c4-5, cf. 253bc).

Now (ii), otherwise referred to as the ‘activity of dialectic’ (to dialektikon), is clearly the employment of division. Yet, reflecting on the philosopher’s expertise as a whole, an important point can be inferred given (i) and (ii): the philosopher (iii) knows a given Kind as such. (i) and (ii) require (iii): to know both the relation

\(^{165}\) Tr. White, with some adjustments on my part.

\(^{166}\) The mention of a free man’s expertise here recalls Socrates calling the philosopher a free man in the Theaetetus—see especially 172d. Note as well Socrates’ description of the philosopher as one who ‘…tracks down by every path the nature of each whole of those which are’ (…πᾶσαν πάντη φύσιν ἔρευνομενή τῶν ὄντων ἐκάστου ὀλου, 173e6-174a1, cf. Sph., 253d5-e2, 254a8-9). In Ch. V I address in further detail the similarities between the philosopher in the Theaetetus and the expert of dialektikē.
between Kind A and Kind B, and in turn how to map said relation, you must first know the respective natures of Kind A and Kind B. What is more, (iv) this detailed metaphysical grasp of Kinds can only be possible in light of the philosopher’s knowledge of those ‘greatest’ Kinds highlighted in the dialogue. Indeed, mapping the relation between Kinds in general presupposes knowledge of the greatest Kinds, because all Kinds associate in some sense with the greatest Kinds highlighted in the Sophist (256de, 257a, 259ab). The general point is that any thorough account of the relation between Kinds in general is made possible only in light of the expert of dialectic’s unique knowledge of the nature of the greatest Kinds.

Recall the line, ‘aren’t we going to say that it takes expertise in dialectic to divide things by kinds and not to think that the same form is a different one or that a different form is the same?’ It is essential to consider the level at which the philosopher with expertise in dialektikē considers Kinds. A comparison with a builder may help: a builder, who divides his material into bricks, stones, titles, etc., is not going to philosophically reflect on ‘a brick is a stone’.167 But someone who is ‘meta-thinking’ (i.e., philosophically reflecting) in this way about classifications of Kinds, (and accordingly their individual natures), about especially objects like Sameness as such, Difference as such, Being as such, can easily fall into certain paradoxes about whether, say, the Same is Different, or that Non-Being in some sense is. For that reason, the mark of a true expert of dialektikē is to have the requisite knowledge of the relevant Kinds as such so as to not be fazed by these paradoxes. In other words, the expert of dialektikē must know what it means for Sameness to be Sameness, Difference to be Difference, and so on and so forth. With this knowledge, he is able to understand the relation between these Kinds, and accordingly avoid or dismiss certain

167 Compare with the remark on ‘the beautifully is ugly’ in the Theaetetus (189c ff.).
paradoxes. To be clear, the capacity to perform this activity (viz., employing division or to dialektikon) to its fullest, to be able to understand the relation between any given set of Kinds, is made possible by the philosopher’s prior understanding of the respective natures of a select group of ‘greatest’ Kinds.

Moving on, in the Statesman, the EV, whilst describing the role and import of measurement, particularly as employed by any legitimate art or science (283b-285c), turns to describe, and further stress the importance of to dialektikon (285d5-286b2):

{EV} What then about our inquiry now about the statesman? Has it been set before us more for the sake of that very thing, or for the sake of our becoming better dialecticians in relation to all subjects (ἐνεκα...τοῦ περὶ πάντα διαλεκτικοτέροις γίνεσθαι)? {Young Socrates} That’s clear too-for the sake of our becoming better dialecticians generally. {EV} I certainly don’t suppose that anyone with any sense would want to hunt down the definition of weaving for the sake of weaving itself. But I think the majority of people fail to recognize that for some of the things there are (τοῖς...τῶν ὄντων), there are certain perceptible likenesses which are there to be easily understood, and which it is not at all hard to point out when one wants to make an easy demonstration, involving no trouble and without recourse to verbal means, to someone who asks for an account of one of these things. Conversely, for those things that are greatest and most valuable, there is no image at all which has been worked in plain view for the use of mankind (τοῖς δ` αὐτῷ μεγίστοις ὦσι καὶ τιμωτάτοις ὦκ ἐστιν

168 Some of these paradoxes are addressed in the very discussion of the Sophist, most notably that Non-Being is.

169 I generally agree with Notomi (1999) 246 that the inquiry by the EV and Theaetetus in the Sophist into the association amongst certain kinds is meant to demonstrate a proper philosophical (i.e., dialectical) handling of the issue, in contrast to what would be classed as the improper (i.e., eristic, non-truth seeking) handling of such an issue by a sophist.
εἰδολον οὐδὲν πρός τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰργασμένον ἐναργῆς), the showing of which will enable the person who wants to satisfy the mind of an inquirer to satisfy it adequately, just by fitting it to one of the senses. That is why one must practice at being able to give and receive an account (λόγον ...δοῦναι καὶ δὲξασθα) of each thing; for the things that are without body, which are finest and greatest, are shown clearly only by verbal means (τὰ γὰρ ἄσωματα, κάλλιστα ὄντα καὶ μέγιστα λόγῳ μόνον...σαφῶς δείκνυται) and by nothing else, and everything that is now being said is for the sake of these things. But practice in everything is easier in smaller things, rather than in relation to the greater. {YS} Very well said.

Here the use of division on ‘small things’ (i.e., subject matter that is perceivable) is important practice in preparation for hitting upon and discussing the ‘greatest and most valuable things’ that are image-and-bodi-less. Division, in other words, must be used for easier investigations when an individual is first starting out his philosophical education. To be clear, ‘dialektikē’ is not used in the passage above. Nor, for that matter, do we find any term for expertise or science (viz., ‘techne’, ‘epistēmē’). Yet the sort of ‘practicing’ alluded to by the EV, which again is clearly a reference to the employment of division, implies mastering a particular expertise by means of division. And even though a term for this expertise or science is not used, reference to bettering oneself as a dialectician for the sake of understanding ‘all things’ (περὶ πάντα, 285d5), coupled with the explicit mention of this expertise’s ultimate goal, knowledge of greatest Kinds, suggests that the expertise in question is none

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170 The EV may not have the exact same entities in mind here in the Statesman as he does in the Sophist. Nonetheless, in both dialogues those entities that the EV calls ‘greatest’ are safely identifiable as universals. The nature of these universals in and of themselves is expressly what the expert of dialektikē has as his special subject matter in these connected dialogues.
other than a science of dialectic. Accordingly, the philosopher who masters this super science must be the philosopher *par excellence*.

When we conjoin the two passages from the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, we have the following rough account of the highlighted philosopher: most generally, he is an expert in *dialektikē*, in the thorough discriminating/discerning/judging (διασθάνεται, *Sph.*, 253d7, διακρίνειν, 253e2) of Kinds as such, which is informed by his unique grasp of greatest Kinds. More precisely, in light of his knowledge of the greatest Kinds, this philosopher knows in general what Kinds are capable of blending and which ones are not. He also knows just how to divide things by Kinds and put them back together. With this body of knowledge in hand, the philosopher *par excellence* is able to address any number of issues that arise in discussion about Kinds (more on this activity below).

ON GILL’S PHILOSOPHER (OF THE *SOPHIST* AND *STATESMAN*)

Of course, not every scholar reads these admittedly difficult and rather cryptic passages of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* exactly as I do. Mary Louise Gill, for example, similarly maintains that the *Sophist* and *Statesman* reveal a rough insight into the nature of Plato’s philosopher, an expert distinguished in major part by his skill in ‘dialectic’ (i.e., division). Yet Gill distinguishes herself by claiming that the *Sophist*

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171 This is *not* to say that this philosopher fully knows *all* Kinds in the universe, or that Plato even expects a full-fledged philosopher to know everything that there is to possibly know.

172 Cf. Gill (2013) 211-14, 223-27. Note, though, that Gill (2013) sees a single professional philosopher in the selected group of dialogues (primarily the *Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman*), who is ascribed a distinguished knowledge (*epistēmē*); she holds that there is only one scientist who technically merits the appellation ‘philosopher’: the scientist of Being *qua* Being (see above). I disagree with Gill; whilst there is a topmost philosopher, whom I identify as the expert of the science
and *Statesman* only give us pieces of a greater puzzle regarding the philosopher’s ‘object’ (Gill’s term): the Form of Being.\textsuperscript{173} According to Gill, these dialogues are meant to be read as part of a greater group (along with the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*). The true, complete account of the philosopher is revealed only when all of the puzzle pieces regarding Being as such are put together correctly (i.e., when the problem particularly regarding the metaphysical status of Being as such is solved).\textsuperscript{174} Ultimately, Gill argues that the problem regarding Being is solved when we understand that Being as such both changes and is at rest (i.e., Being includes both things that change and things at rest).\textsuperscript{175}

The philosopher ‘is interested in all beings’,\textsuperscript{176} according to Gill, in contrast to other specialists who carve off a part of Being for their respective domains of expertise. Accordingly, she ascribes knowledge of Being as such solely to her expert philosopher. As Lloyd Gerson, remarking on Gill’s portrayal of the philosopher, has observed, ‘Plato’s philosopher is thus, as it turns out, an Aristotelian

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\textsuperscript{173} On Being as such being the philosopher’s ‘object’, see Gill (2013) Introduction.

\textsuperscript{174} The problem, according to Gill, stretches across the selected group of dialogues. Starting in the *Parmenides*, the first four hypotheses regarding Unity in the second half of the dialogue are meant to serve as a dialectical template for the problem regarding Being as such that Plato places across the related dialogues (cf. Gill (2013) Ch. 2). A summary of the way in which the pattern is taken up in each of the related dialogues is found in Gerson (2013).

\textsuperscript{175} More generally, it is a ‘necessary external attribute [of object X] (a feature an entity must have, though the feature stands outside its nature)’ (Gill (2013) 208, cf. 152-3). Gill calls Being as such a ‘structural kind’ that is always filled in with the contents of some ‘categorical kind’, cf. Gill (2013) 230, 241.

\textsuperscript{176} Gill (2013) 241
metaphysician.¹¹⁷ I shall not focus here on the contentious characterization of Plato’s philosopher post-Republic as ‘Aristotelian’.¹¹⁸ I shall, nonetheless, voice two issues I have with Gill’s account of the philosopher post-Republic.

Firstly, Gill says that ‘we will find him [sc. the philosopher] by investigating the subject-matter he studies, the form of being.’¹¹⁹ This remark is based upon what is said at Sophist 253e-254b. Now, in the Sophist the philosopher is indeed said to ‘stay near the form of being’ (τῇ τοῦ ὀντος…προσκείμενος ἰδέα, 254a8-9), in contrast to the sophist, who hides near that which is not. Yet this remark, by itself, cannot serve as convincing evidence for a single ‘object’ attributable to a single scientific philosopher. This is because it strongly echoes what is said in Republic V: any genuine intellectual is a philosopher so long as he aims to stay close to ‘that which is’ (cf. Rep. V, 476a-480a). More precisely, the passage in Republic V tells us that the real philosopher is distinguished from your typical craftsman and common man, your general ‘lover of sights’, in virtue of his close connection to ‘that which is’. This broad distinction between philosopher and non-philosopher is based on the former’s unique pursuit of ‘the things themselves that are always the same in every respect’ (αὐτὰ ἕκαστα…καὶ ἀεὶ κατὰ ταύτα ὑσαύτως ὄντα, 479e7-8). Given what is said in Book VII, that all approved studies aim at what is intelligible and eternal (cf. 527b, 529b), Plato arguably does not have a single science in mind at this point in Book V; all intellectuals, scattered across various disciplines, are genuine philosophers if they

¹¹⁷ Gerson (2013); Gill (2013), see esp. 9-10 and 241 with n. 90, could hardly deny the characterization.
¹¹⁸ Gerson (2013) raises some salient criticisms, which ultimately question the appropriateness of this characterization.
¹¹⁹ Gill (2013) 6
look (with varying degrees of awareness of the epistemological and metaphysical implications) to what is eternally selfsame.\footnote{This passage has also been discussed in \textit{Ch. II} (pp. 73–4).}

Taken by itself, then, the remark in the \textit{Sophist} about the philosopher staying near ‘the form of being’ could just as reasonably be taken to refer to the philosopher \textit{in general}, where ‘philosopher’ broadly marks off any intellectual who seriously pursues the truth (i.e., what is eternal and self-same), in contrast to the sophist.\footnote{So the \textit{Sophist} passage in fact complements the \textit{Republic} V passage: A true philosopher is distinguished from the person who is guided by opinion, of what is between truth and falsehood (cf. \textit{Rep.} V 478be), as well as from the sophist, who overlooks truth and opinion for falsehood.} To understand what actually distinguishes the philosopher of the \textit{Sophist} and \textit{Statesman} from all other philosophers (intellectuals), we have to look at what is said about his unique philosophical activities, which are not strictly limited to arriving at some sort of positive account regarding the nature of Kinds as such. I shall say more about the philosopher \textit{par excellence}’s unique activities next section. Ultimately, I shall argue that the philosopher \textit{par excellence} has an ‘epitactic’ or directive side that Gill does not consider. In the interim, it is important to note that \textit{Sophist} 253e-254b does not serve as convincing evidence for Gill’s account of the philosopher; all bona fide philosophical disciplines study ‘that which is’ in some sense. What is more, the account so far compiled of this philosopher of the \textit{Sophist} and \textit{Statesman} reveals that Being as such constitutes just one member of the indeterminate set of greatest Kinds that the philosopher consults when considering both the individual nature of a given Kind and that Kind’s relation to any given set of Kinds.

This brings me to the second issue I have with Gill’s account of Plato’s philosopher. I find it rather strange that, even after Gill purportedly puts all the puzzle pieces together correctly, her account of the philosopher reveals nothing substantial...
about the philosopher’s connection to the Form of the Good. We know that the Good as such is openly cast in the Republic as the greatest of Forms. It is said to be ‘beyond being, superior to it in rank and power’ (ἐπέκεινα τὴς οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος, Rep. VI, 509b9-10). In general, the Good as such is cast as a Form surpassing even Being’s epistemological and metaphysical importance (cf. Rep. VI, 504e-505b, 508e-509b).

Now, it is true that Gill acknowledges in passing the preeminent status of the Good in the Republic. Yet she says that the Good ‘does not figure prominently’ in the dialogues under consideration in her book. She does claim that the Statesman (particularly 296d-297b) alludes to the role of the Good itself: ‘any art concerned with human well-being aims to bring about and preserve the good of those in its care’. Yet the Statesman passage in question hardly elucidates the topmost philosopher’s unique connection to the Good as such—a connection that presumably would be distinguished from the other scientists’ and craftsmen’s respective connection to the various subordinate types of goods. Gill promises to elucidate the role of the Good, as well as the philosopher’s connection to it, in the last section of her book (Gill’s 7.9). Yet all Gill actually says in the concluding page of her book is that ‘Plato’s philosopher aims for the good in two spheres: to understand the nature of things and

182 In general, Gill has suspiciously little to say on the metaphysical status of the Good itself in the later dialogues. This may have something to due with the fact that Gill (cf. (2013) Ch. 1, as well as p. 202 n. 1, eschews the metaphysics of the Phaedo, Republic and Timaeus, embracing from the start of her book the view that in the later dialogues Plato has renounced the separateness of Forms. On the metaphysics of the Timaeus, which considers the role of the Good itself as a separate (i.e., non-immanent) universal, see, e.g., Broadie (2012) Ch. 3 esp. 80-2.

183 This is inferred from the text at 509b. The ‘objects of knowledge’ (τοῖς γνωσκόμαις) mentioned in this passage are surely Forms.

184 Gill (2013) 30 n. 30

185 Gill (2013) 193

186 Gill (2013) 30 n. 30, 193 n. 36
to help others find it (Stm. 285d5-8, 286d4-287a6). He hunts, he weaves, he often
distorts, but always with the good in view: to stimulate the audience to discover
things.\footnote{Gill (2013) 244} This remark hardly illuminates the philosopher’s connection to the Good as
such. Nor, moreover, does it explain the relation between Being as such, which is
purportedly the philosopher’s unique ‘object’, and the Good, what in the Republic is
cast as that which is ‘beyond being in rank and power’. The aforementioned
oversights are surely detrimental to Gill’s project of putting together a thorough
account of the philosopher post-Republic.

Of course, it is anyone’s guess where (knowledge of) the Good of the
Republic stands particularly in the Sophist and Statesman. There is at least one viable
explanation for Plato’s silence on the Good, which, pace Gill et al., incidentally does
not rely on any supposed change to Plato’s metaphysics post-Republic. In the Sophist,
Plato is not so much concerned with highlighting the nature of the Good as such and
its relation to other kinds, as he is shedding light on how sophistry might distort that
account of the Good (of anything that really is, for that matter). Accordingly, a
detailed discussion on what really constitutes the Good as such, and what really is its
relation to other Kinds, is simply out of place in context.

Having said that, I must register my view here that the silence regarding the
Good as such in the Sophist suggests a shift in Plato’s view of what his topmost
science, and so topmost philosopher, ought to be focusing on (a point returned to in
my concluding chapter). For sure, the Sophist, like the Republic, identifies a unique
philosophical science with a special subject matter. Yet surely when discussing this
science’s special subject matter (sc. the greatest Kinds) in the Sophist, at least a hint
of the Good’s nature and corresponding role would be expected. This is especially so
if in fact the Good as such retained the same status ascribed to it in the Republic. As is, there is not a hint of said status present in the Sophist. At minimum, then, the silence on the Good as such in the Sophist serves as evidence for a difference between the science of dialectic of the Republic and the similarly called ‘science of dialectic’ of the Sophist: the latter is not ascribed knowledge of the Good as such as its special subject matter.

Regarding the Good as such in the Statesman, perhaps Plato, from the point of view of the human context, replaces the Good as such with the more specific good of the Kind of Statesmanship (i.e., the inherent goodness in Statesmanship), which manifests itself in a well-ordered city-state. This is the type of goodness that Plato wants us to focus on in this dialogue. This explanation need not entail a change to Plato’s metaphysics after the Republic; the central themes of both dialogues naturally preclude detailed discussion on the nature of the Good as such. However, if the Form of the Good of the Republic, which is an essential part of the account of the ideal ruler therein, is absent from the Statesman, then this proves to be a big (non-metaphysical) difference between the Republic and the Statesman regarding proper statesmanship: the latter dialogue considers it unnecessary to have knowledge of the Good as such in order to be a good political leader. But this silence regarding the Good so intimately connected with the theoretically minded philosopher-king of the Republic should not seem out of place in a dialogue (sc. the Statesman) that clearly portrays its ideal statesman as practical, that is as city-and-citizen-oriented.

As Malcolm Schofield observes:

‘Crucial to the Republic’s treatment of ruling is the thought that the reason that a good person or the philosopher will rule only reluctantly is
awareness of a better life than politics. The *Statesman* gives us no reason to suppose that anyone who commanded the political knowledge it describes would feel the least reluctance about exercising rule. Its statesman is identified not as a philosopher (who would rather be doing philosophy), but as a political manager (whose expertise consist precisely in the ability to orchestrate the activities of a whole range of other experts, all contributing to the life and prosperity of the city). The philosophers of the *Republic* have to escape from the city-imaged by Socrates as the Cave-if they are ever able to rule it as it should be ruled. The *Statesman*’s statesman is “defined in terms of his relation to the city” [quoting Melissa Lane].

Admittedly, not every scholar would agree that the Good as such is missing from the statesman’s knowledge. Charles Kahn, for example, says that ‘it seems clear…that the τέχνη of the Statesman is, or presupposes, the knowledge constituted by dialectic [sc. knowledge of the Good and the rest of the Forms], just as it does in the *Republic*.’ Kahn cites *Statesman* 295e and 296d4 in support of his claim. However, the language in these passages at most relays a concern with what is objectively morally true. In other words, whilst it is safe to say that the lawgiver who sets down ‘what is just and unjust, fine and shameful, good and bad’ (295e) has a grasp of what is really just and unjust, good and bad, and so on, this description of the

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189 Kahn (1995) 51

190 Kahn (1995) 51 n. 5
statesman’s concern with what is right and wrong surely underdetermines the
metaphysics of Platonic Forms, especially the Good as such of the Republic.

ON THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY NATURE OF THE PHILOSOPHER OF THE
SOPHIST AND STATESMAN

In what follows, I produce a short diagram of the genuine statesman of the
Statesman, highlighting in particular that knowledge of statesmanship is found under
the directive branch (to epitaktikon) of what I term ‘gnostic knowledge’ (gnōstikē
epistēmē). I then show that the philosopher par excellence of the Sophist and
Statesman can also be ascribed directive or ‘epitactic’ expertise. After that, I turn to
compare and contrast the epitactic description of the philosopher with the more
explicit ‘critical’ or judgment-making description of him in the Sophist and Statesman.
My chief claim is that, in the Sophist and Statesman, Plato deliberately leaves the
account of the topmost philosopher open so as to allow his topmost philosopher to

191 Rowe in the Hackett translation has ‘theoretical knowledge’ for ‘gnōstikē epistēmē’. Yet this is a
dubious translation, particularly given the Aristotelian associations of ‘theoretical’ (see n. 192).
Accordingly, I translate ‘gnōstikē epistēmē’ as ‘gnostic knowledge’. I feel that this literal translation
reflects what is said about this epistēmē in the Statesman (258de, 259e-260a), whilst avoiding any
Aristotelian associations in the process: gnostic knowledge is a knowledge that does not rely on using
one’s hands, but rather one’s mind. More precisely, gnostic knowledge is generally an advanced
understanding of concepts. The arithmetician, for example, strictly speaking discerns the nature of
numbers (e.g., the two itself) and in turn notes the inherent differences between numbers (viz., the
general difference between the odd and the even). Any practical application which involves numbers
(imagine any task that involves arithmetic in order to bring about some product or goal) is left for
someone else to do; practical application (as per the Statesman) is that activity which applies the
gnostic expert’s findings for the sake of making something separate from anything initially discovered
by the theoretician (cf. Pol, 258de). Leaving practical expertise to one side, for it does not concern us
above, the difference between the branches of gnostic knowledge, as found in the Statesman, is
expounded below.
concern himself with asking and answering a variety of questions (e.g., ‘What is a sophist?’ ‘What is the relation between Being as such and Non-Being as such?’). In doing so, Plato prevents his topmost philosopher from being fixed to any particular sub-branch of gnostic knowledge. In other words, I claim that Plato subtly casts the topmost philosopher as someone who transcends the epistemic boundaries that mark off the typical statesman, the typical geometer, and so on. The philosopher par excellence is indeed an expert of dialektikē, a full-fledged ‘kritikos’ or judgement-maker. Yet he is also something more than this.

Below is a short diagram reflecting the EV’s and Young Socrates’ (hereafter YS) divisions toward the accurate account of the true statesman in the Statesman. I stop at the division of gnostic knowledge into ‘directive’ and ‘judgement-making’, because at no point during the course of their investigation do the EV and YS retract their initial categorization of the statesman’s knowledge as directive-gnostic. The true statesman, an expert (Pol., 258b, 292b), has:

\[\textbf{Knowledge (epistēmē) [258b]}\]

(/) \&

\[\text{192} \text{Perhaps it is worth highlighting at least two notable differences between Plato’s and Aristotle’s respective conceptions of knowledge (epistēmē). Importantly, political science would be considered a type of ‘practical knowledge’ (phronēsis), not epistēmē, for Aristotle (cf. EN VI, 1141b23-1142a30). Aristotle’s conception of epistēmē is reserved for that epistemic state (hexis) concerning what is universal, (i.e., unconditional, unchangeable and eternal). By contrast, phronēsis concerns all actions resulting from deliberation, which could have turned out differently, that immediately affect human agents (cf. EN VI, 1139b14 ff.). Accordingly, Aristotle’s epistēmē excludes any expertise that would be placed under Plato’s branch of ‘practical knowledge’ (praktikē epistēmē), e.g., house building. Instead, such expertise, according to Aristotle, would be considered ‘art’ (technē), or the know-how of producing something (cf. EN ibid.). Yet more importantly, Aristotle’s epistēmē excludes Plato’s true statesman’s knowledge, which is considered a type of epitaktikē (a branch of gnostic epistēmē) for Plato (see above).}\]
Practical (praktikē)  Gnostic (gnostikē) [259cd]

Judgement Making (to kritikon)  Directive (to epitaktikon) [260c, 292bc]

As an expert with directive-gnostic knowledge, the statesman is capable of discerning the differences about his subjects (e.g., one soul that is too rash in contrast to another that is too timid). The statesman acts upon these noted differences by handing down instructions to his subordinates (souls who, through the statesman’s blending and education, have obtained a virtuous balance), ultimately for the sake of achieving a virtuous equilibrium throughout the city-state and thereby preserving it.¹⁹³

Note that one may possess the epitactic knowledge of statesmanship without further playing the active role of statesman; one may advise the ruler and still be considered an expert of statesmanship:

‘{EV} If someone who is himself in private practice is capable of advising a doctor in public employment, isn’t it necessary for him to be called by the same professional title as the person he advises? {YS} Yes. {EV} Well then, won’t we say that the person who is clever at giving advise to a king of a country, although he is himself a private individual, himself has the expert knowledge (ἔχειν ἀὑτόν τὴν ἐπιστήμην) that the ruler himself ought to have possessed? {YS} We will.’ (Pol., 259a1-9)

Here the reader may interject: but surely the epitaxis in a city-state immediately arises from the ruler, not the advisor. Is it correct, then, to place the advisor under the branch of epitactic knowledge? I believe that in so far as the advisor is versed in political

¹⁹³ I shall address below the role of instruction as it is described in the Statesman.
management, then he too is rightly called an expert of statesmanship. Yet I also believe that it would be misguided to say that only the ruler who barks the orders to his subordinates is responsible for the epitaxis of the city-state. Instead, in a scenario where both an advisor and ruler arise, it must be the conjoined effort of the advisor and the ruler that is responsible for said epitaxis. Hence, the difference between the ruler and the advisor need not imply that the advisor ought to be classified under a different branch of knowledge, for he too is responsible for the epitaxis of a city.

Where does the philosopher par excellence fit into this picture? Let us accept that it is the expert of dialektikē who establishes what it truly means to be a statesman. It is the statesman who should listen to what this philosopher says and rule accordingly. If this philosopher ‘controls’ the statesman by portraying what the statesman truly is, if he guides the statesman on how to be a statesman by way of defining his expertise, does it follow that this philosopher is epitactic (given that the statesman is)? I say that he is. We just saw that someone can be epitactic without directly issuing orders to subordinate workers who use their hands. Accordingly, we can see the philosopher par excellence providing what is surely the most important kind of advice to the statesman: telling him how to be a statesman. If we accept this description of the way in which the philosopher advises the statesman, then the philosopher, like the statesman, is ‘kingly’, and if this entails epitactic, then the philosopher who employs dialektikē to arrive at a definition of the statesman, and is

194 Cf. Rowe (1995) 15 n. 11
195 The Statesman shows a bona fide philosopher (sc. the EV) employing division for the sake of achieving just that. Indeed, what other expert has the capacity to define, particularly via division, what it generally means to be a statesman? On the philosophical nature of the EV, see Blondell (2002) 318-26. Though see Gonzalez (2000), for a critical analysis of recent attempts to identify the EV as the endorsed mouthpiece for Plato.
thus correctly identified as a *kritikos*, is also correctly identified as an ‘*epitaktikos*’ (more on this below).\(^{196}\)

The rest of the *Statesman* (259c ff.) speaks of the possessor of the knowledge of statesmanship as being the one and only active ruler, thereby simplifying the scenario in which the correct constitution comes about in a city-state: for one city there is one correct constitution under the supervision of one statesman (no mention of any private advisor). Yet this need not jeopardize the identification of the philosopher as an epitactic expert. This is because the statesman *qua* statesman must still look to the definition of what it means to be a statesman in order to correctly rule a *polis*. And this can only occur if the philosopher is there to point him in the right direction in the first place. This must be so whether or not the philosopher directly advises a particular statesman on practical matters affecting a city-state at any given moment.

Now, there is at first blush a problem with this description of the philosopher as *epitaktikos* in the *Statesman*: it appears to conflict with the description of the philosopher in the *Sophist* and elsewhere in the *Statesman* as a *kritikos* (judgement-maker).\(^{197}\) Let us compare this general description of the philosopher’s expertise in the *Sophist* with the EV’s remarks in the *Statesman* on the judgement-making branch of theoretical knowledge, *to kritikon*. In the *Statesman*, the EV says that an expert falling under *to kritikon*, ‘recognized [and recognizes]’ (γνώσῃ, 259e5) certain

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\(^{196}\) I use the term ‘*kritikos*’ to refer to an expert judgment-maker. Yet I should point out that ‘*kritikos*’ does not occur in the *Sophist* passage. All the same, the description of judgment-making in the passage clearly distinguishes the judgment-maker from the epitactic expert (as the latter is described in the *Statesman*).

\(^{197}\) The tension is between, on the one hand, the description of the philosopher at *Sophist* 253b8-254b7 and *Statesman* 285d5-286b2, and, on the other, the conjectural epitactic role of the philosopher in the *Statesman*. 
theoretical distinctions (e.g., differences between numbers, cf. 259e). The expert in turn judges (note ‘κριναί’ at 259e7) the differences amongst the objects he has recognized. In the Sophist (253de), we see that the philosopher’s discerning or discriminating (diakrinein) kinds amounts to recognizing the differences amongst Forms, ‘[discriminating] by Kinds how things [that are different] can associate and how they can’t.’¹⁹⁸ In neither the Statesman nor the Sophist is the judgment-making expert said to prescribe functions or duties to others with the knowledge he has.¹⁹⁹ So the philosopher of the Sophist and part of the Statesman (285d5-286b2) as kritikos does not ‘prescribe’. And if he does not prescribe orders to others, yet he is a gnostic expert, then his knowledge must be found under the judgement-making branch of gnostic knowledge (where this entails not-directive, ‘not-epitaktikos’).

Thus the aforementioned tension: how can the philosopher of the Sophist and Statesman be described as both a judgement-maker and an epitactic expert, as someone found in both branches of gnostic knowledge? Ideally a definitive account of the Kind (genos) Philosopher, along the lines of those of the Sophist and Statesman, would clarify things. Yet in general all we have from Plato is an incomplete and at first blush conflicting insight into the philosopher scattered across two dialogues. Put differently, after the Sophist and Statesman, we should expect the Philosopher, and with it an informative and definitive account of the philosopher par excellence. But Plato never wrote this dialogue. Accordingly, he never set down the precise

¹⁹⁸ Compare what is said at Sph. 254e1-2, ‘ἳ τε κοινωνεῖν ἕκαστα δύναται καὶ ὅπερ μὴ, διακρίνειν κατὰ γένος ἐπιστασθαι’, with what is said at Pol. 295e5-7, ‘γνώσῃ δὴ λογιστικὴ τὴν ἐν τοῖς ἁρθμοῖς διαφοράν μὸν τι πλέον ἐργὴν δόσομεν ἢ τὰ γνωθίσθαι κριναί;’

¹⁹⁹ Prescription here specifically refers to the application of knowledge as attributed to the directive-gnostic expert: to prescribe is ‘to assign whatever is the appropriate task to each group of workers until they complete what has been assigned to them (προστάττειν δὲ ἐκάστοις τῶν ἐργατῶν τὸ γε πρόσφορον ἐως ἂν ἀπεργάσωσιν τὸ προστατεύω)’ (Pol., 260a6-7, cf. 259e-268a, 311ab).
differences and similarities between the sophist, statesman and topmost philosopher.
To complicate things, from the scattered remarks on the philosopher in the *Sophist*
and *Statesman* it seems as if Plato intentionally chose not to fix the philosopher to a
specific branch of knowledge (*epistêmê*). Why not?

My conjecture here is that, in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato is hinting at
what he sees as the multi-disciplinary nature of his philosopher *par excellence*. More
precisely, Plato is subtly projecting his topmost philosopher as a polymath that
masters above all the topmost science of dialectic, yet who is not restricted to being
identified only as someone who ‘judges’ things in the sense described in the *Sophist*
and *Statesman*. Why did not Plato explicitly say this? Why did he choose not to
compose the *Philosopher*, a dialogue that would presumably inform us once and for
all who is the philosopher *par excellence*?

I believe that Plato never wrote the *Philosopher* because he intended us to see
for ourselves that the project of defining the philosopher would require a different
dialectical path than the one used to define the sophist and statesman. The latter
path, exemplified by the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, uses division to track down each
expert to a specific branch of knowledge; to define the sophist or statesman via
division is to pinpoint what precise expertise each figure has. Yet the philosopher
*par excellence* cannot be defined in the same way. In the *Sophist* and *Statesman*,
‘philosopher’, unlike ‘sophist’ or ‘statesman’, does not mark off an expert of a single

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200 He’s not simply ‘some sort of spectator’ (*τινὰ θεατήν*), a phrase used to describe the *kritikos* in the *Statesman* (260c1-4).
201 Here I am in agreement with, e.g., Notomi (1999) and Gill (2013) on the conjecture that Plato never intended to compose the *Philosopher*; that Plato left to his readers the task of putting together an account of the philosopher.
202 Assuming that the sophist’s skill is rightly classified as an expertise (*technê*), *pace* Brown (2010) and Gill (2013) 170-72.
technē or epistēmē. The philosopher par excellence is interested in knowing (and so mastering) all things:

‘{EV} What then about our inquiry now about the statesman? Has it been set before us more for the sake of that very thing, or for the sake of our becoming better dialecticians in relation to all subjects (περὶ πάντα)?’ (Pol., 285d4-6)

Granted, the conditional remark about pursuing this philosopher in the Sophist (254b3-6), and the remarks at the start of the Statesman (257a3-5, c2-5) that an account of the statesman and philosopher, respectively, is still to come, naturally prepare us for the Philosopher, for the EV to continue the same investigation ultimately for the sake of defining the philosopher. Yet to expect the continuation of this investigation is to miss the point that Plato is rather subtly making in the Sophist and Statesman: a perusal of these dialogues reveals the philosopher par excellence, in contrast to the statesman and sophist under investigation, is not your ‘typical’ expert (i.e., someone found under a specific branch of knowledge). Accordingly, we should not expect to track him down in the same way we did the sophist and statesman. The general idea is that the multi-disciplinary nature of philosophy, of the pursuit of wisdom in general, is reflected in the multi-disciplinary nature of the philosopher par

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203 In context (sc. the Sophist and Statesman), ‘sophist’ and ‘statesman’ are terms ultimately used to refer to a specific expert found under a specific sub-branch of knowledge. All the same, nothing in the dialogues prevents the terms from having multiple referents (e.g., ‘sophist’ may refer to a rhetorician, an eristic speaker, a purportedly omniscient teacher, etc., etc.). In fact, Plato does not appear very concerned with settling once and for all on a term for a specific object (cf., e.g., Sph., 220d, 227bc, Pol., 261e-262a). What matters most to him is arriving at the correct account of the object in question.
Yes, the topmost philosopher in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* is an expert of *dialektikē*, a distinguished knower of the greatest Kinds. Yet this is not all he is, thus the space in the *Statesman* to identify the philosopher as both a *kritikos* and an *epitaktikos*, as someone who can define the statesman and in turn act as his advisor.

Of course, we are not told much about the contrast between the philosopher as *kritikos* and the philosopher as *epitaktikos*; the epitactic role of the philosopher described above is a conjecture. Is the contrast (to consider just one relevant question) more precisely based on a difference between the objects that can be brought into being versus those which never change? If so, then we should see the philosopher’s task of dealing with the paradoxes concerning Kinds necessary for division (I am here thinking of especially the five ‘greatest’ or ‘pervasive’ Kinds of the *Sophist*) is the mark of a *kritikos*, even though his work on the notion of the genuine statesman is epitactic. However, I think there is more to the story here.

So far I have only considered (what I would call) a ‘narrow’ sense of the philosopher’s epitactic function: the philosopher *par excellence* is epitactic insofar as he uses his knowledge of, say, statesmanship to direct someone on how to be a proper statesman. Yet I believe that there is space in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* for a ‘wider’ sense of expertise in *epitaktikē*, which is ascribable to the philosopher *par
excellence. The account of the philosopher in the Sophist and Statesman suggests a concern with paradoxes regarding Kinds. Accordingly, the philosopher’s work of putting an end to dialectical paradoxes about Kinds could be seen as primarily intended to correct clever people’s thinking, thereby defending the practice of division as an instrument in every field. Plato’s rationale could very well be that, since division is essential in every discipline (a claim considered in more detail next chapter), experts in every discipline ought to know how to properly use division. And what better way to help achieve the correct use of division then by having the philosopher par excellence address certain ‘meta-issues’ (e.g., paradoxes) on the relevant subject matter.

Surely the Sophist and Statesman themselves constitutes prime examples of the sort of corrective activity I have in mind. Note, for example, the EV’s remarks in the Statesman on the erroneous way in which most Greeks divide the human race into ‘Greek’ and ‘Barbarian’, and accordingly how we should be more mindful of dividing things into their natural ‘classes’ (eidē) and ‘parts’ (merē) (cf. 262a-263a). This corrective activity can be viewed as trying to change things, in particular how people think and argue about their subject matter. In this light, the philosopher par excellence can be seen as having a more interactive and passionate interest in division as such, paradoxes on Kinds, and the subject matter specific to each field.

The main idea is that Plato, far from simply having a detached concern with Being and the rest of the ‘greatest’ Kinds as subjects of a positive scientific exploration of what exists in reality, may also be interested in using division to correct the way we reflect on things just to the extent of being interested in protecting the way we think from basic mistakes which undermine all possibility of any sort of

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208 On the eidos/meros distinction mentioned in this passage, see, e.g., de Pinotti (1995).
209 In Ch. IV, I argue that the same could be said about the philosopher par excellence of the Philebus.
intellectual discipline. Accordingly, in this way Plato may view the work on Being, Difference, and so on as epitactic. Thus, the philosopher par excellence can be viewed as both a kritikos (viz., in virtue of his study of what it means for Kind X to be Kind X,) as well as an epitaktikos in the two senses described (viz., in virtue of instructing others how to function in accordance with a particular Kind, as well as in virtue of correcting the way people reflect and argue about Kinds in general).

On a separate note, viewing the philosopher’s epitactic activity in the wider sense of the term allows for a broad comparison with Socratic elenchus: the latter is not a ‘positive’ discipline (i.e., it does not yield positive scientific knowledge of what Kind X is; what it means for Kind X to be Kind X), yet it too is in a way corrective. Indeed, Socratic elenchus (whose corrective nature is mentioned by the EV in the Sophist) ultimately complements the work of the philosopher par excellence: the elentic philosopher gets pupils to think about certain things in the right way prior to sending them off to work on the most important questions with the philosopher par

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210 By the by, this suggested ‘corrective’ dialectical activity has its natural descendant in Aristotle’s Topics (1. 2) and Sophistical Elenchi (11), rather than in the Metaphysics (cf. the remarks on ‘first philosophy’ as the science of Being as such in Γ). Whilst the Topics and Sophistical Elenchi are traditionally classed as part of Aristotle’s Organon, this title reflects a post-Aristotelian controversy about whether logic is part of philosophy (this is the Stoic view) or simply a tool used by philosophy (the post-Aristotelian view, hence ‘Organon’ or ‘Instrument’), cf. Smith (2012). As such, the Topics and Sophistical Elenchi do not fall neatly into Aristotle’s distinction (understood in this way) between theoretical, practical, and productive/technical knowledge (cf. EN VI, 1139b14 ff.). As far as I can see, Gill (2013) does not address this point. Yet surely she should. For, if the classification of the Topics and Sophistical Elenchi does not matter for Aristotle (i.e., if ‘dialectic’ is not specifically placed in one of the classes aforementioned), then why should the comparable point matter for Plato? On dialectic in Aristotle, see, e.g., Owen (1968) and Hamlyn (1990).

211 Surely the sixth definition of the sophist (Sph. 227a-231b) is a not so thinly veiled account of the corrective/therapeutic nature of Socratic elenchus. On the sixth definition, see Notomi (1999) 64-8 and literature therein.
Here we are reminded once more of the multi-disciplinary nature of philosophy itself: ‘philosophy’ in Plato does not mark off just one thing; its referent is not just one art or science. We should also highlight the point that neither is philosophy portrayed as wholly ‘positive’; the corrective activities discussed above show a ‘negative’ side to the pursuit of wisdom.

Now, we saw in Ch. I and II that ‘philosophia’ in the Republic does not refer to just one discipline, that philosophy is multi-disciplinary. This notion of philosophy as a generic kind, as a set of various disciplines, also appears in the Timaeus:

‘…our ability to see the periods of day-and-night, of months and of years, of equinoxes and solstices, has led to the invention of number, and has given us the idea of time and opened the path to inquiry into the nature of the universe. These pursuits (ἐξ ὁν) [viz., astronomy, arithmetic and calculation, physics, and probably what we would call metaphysics as well] have given us the genus of philosophy (φιλοσοφίας γένος), a gift from the gods to the mortal race whose value [lit. good (ἀγαθόν)] neither has been nor ever will be surpassed.’ (47a4-b2, with minor adjustments on my part; cf. Tim. 46c-47b)

One thing we can infer from this passage in the Timaeus is that the best philosopher is the best polymath, a man who seeks to embrace the whole of the gods’ gift.

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212 In Ch. V I argue that we can see a similar relationship between Socrates the intellectual midwife and the philosopher of Socrates’ digression in the Theaetetus.

213 The positive-negative fashions of philosophy are easily seen in philosophy as depicted in the middle books of the Republic (viz., as the relation between dialektikē, or any ‘positive’ science, for that matter, and Socratic elenchus). In Ch. V, we shall see both fashions reappear in the Theaetetus.

214 Could Plato have in the back of his mind at this point in the Timaeus a hierarchy of philosophical enquiry, with what we would call metaphysics (i.e., the study of Forms as such) surpassing even
I believe that the account drawn of philosophy in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* in this chapter, which in particular promotes the idea of the philosopher *par excellence* as a polymath, harmonizes well with Plato’s remarks elsewhere on philosophy as such. In fact, in light of the recurring multi-disciplinary depiction of philosophy in Plato, it should come as no surprise that the philosopher *par excellence* of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* is himself cast as multi-disciplinary. This philosopher is indeed an expert of a supreme science called ‘dialectic’, yet he is also much more than that. In general, he is the seeker after the truth in the most important and difficult questions ranging across all domains of knowledge.

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*215* This point about the multi-disciplinary nature of philosophy also appears in the *Phaedrus*, *Philebus* and *Theaetetus*, dialogues that I focus on in subsequent chapters.
This chapter is generally concerned with the depiction of philosophy in the *Phaedrus* and *Philebus*. In particular, it analyzes how both dialogues distinguish philosophy: in the *Phaedrus*, a contrast is drawn especially, though not exclusively, between philosophy and proper rhetoric (my term, explained below). Plato distinguishes the two by highlighting the different aims each seeks to satisfy via the same method: division. The philosopher is distinguished not on account of any unique method, or specific domain of knowledge, but by being someone who always seeks to grasp and in turn reflect with others on the truth of the matter, always accepting that his account may not be absolute. In the *Philebus* a hierarchy of sciences, reminiscent of the one in the *Republic*, is alluded to toward the end of the dialogue. The science of dialectic is found at the top of this hierarchy. Accordingly, the *Philebus* shows us that Plato continues to cast a supra-mathematical science as the theoretical pinnacle of the philosophical life.

**PROPER RHETORIC AND DIVISION IN THE PHAEDRUS**

A close analysis of key parts of the *Phaedrus* will show us that there are especially two distinct figures (philosopher, proper rhetorician) compared and contrasted by Socrates. These figures are *both* correctly called ‘*dialektikoi*’ (dialecticians), just in so far as both expertly employ an art (*technē*) of division for the sake of crafting speeches (*logoi*). However, the two *dialektikoi* highlighted in the
dialogue ultimately use the same method for fundamentally different aims. The overarching aim of the philosopher is to use a *logos* to implant the seed of knowledge into a proper soul, something that ultimately benefits both master and pupil after additional reflection. This aim contrasts with the overarching aim of the proper rhetorician: to craft a *logos* as absolute for the sake of persuading an audience (i.e., ‘produce conviction’) at the cost of telling the complete truth.\(^\text{216}\)

‘{Socrates} Well, everything else in it [sc. Socrates’ second speech on Love] really does appear to me to have been spoken in play. But part of it was given with Fortune’s guidance, and there were in it two kinds of things the nature of which it would be quite wonderful to grasp by means of a systematic art (ἐὰν οὐτοῖς τὴν δύναμιν τέχνη λαβεῖν δύναιτό τις).’ (265c8-d1)

The art (*technē*) highlighted in the quotation is division: broadly put, the art collects the related parts encompassed by a given genus (e.g., Madness), which is essential for defining that genus (cf. 265d). It also divides the collection for the sake of elucidating a particular species (e.g., Divine Madness) or subspecies of said genus (cf. 265e-266a).

Phaedrus accepts Socrates’ description of the ‘kind dialectic’ (τὸ εἴδως...διάλεκτικῶν, 266c7-8), in turn differentiating it from the so-called ‘art of speaking’ (*hē logōn technē*) that typical orators like Thrasymachus use to produce

\(^{216}\) Proper rhetoric is a projected art of persuasion. It is contrasted in the dialogue with what I call ‘conventional rhetoric’, which is principally distinguished from proper rhetoric by its lack of knowledge regarding its speech’s subject matter and the audience to which a speech is directed (cf. *Phdr.*, 266d-269c). I focus on proper rhetoric.
their speeches (266c). This brings Phaedrus to declare that rhetoric (τὸ ῥητορικὸν, 266c8, τῆς ῥητορικῆς, 266d4) has yet to be defined. Socrates appears surprised to hear this:

‘{Soc} What are you saying? Could there be anything valuable which is independent of {these} (τούτων) [sc. collection and division] I mentioned and is still grasped by art?’ (266d1-2)

Phaedrus suggests the material found in rhetorical textbooks, ‘in the books on the art of speaking’ (ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις…περὶ λόγων τέχνης, 266d5-6) examples thereof follow (266d-268a). This moves Socrates to point out that at best all of this material serves as ‘necessary preliminaries to proper rhetoric’ (τὰ πρὸ τῆς τέχνης ἀναγκαῖα μαθήματα, 269b7-8); that the true nature of rhetoric has hitherto eluded the typical orators and speechwriters recognized by Phaedrus (268a-269c). The reason for this? As Socrates openly declares, ‘they are ignorant of dialectic’ (μὴ ἐπιστάμενοι διαλέγεσθαι, 269b5), grasping and in turn teaching only the preliminaries of proper rhetoric.

The bottom line is that, without knowledge of ‘conversing’ (dialegesthai), in context clearly division, no one is employing proper rhetoric.

‘{Soc} It follows that whoever wants to acquire the art of rhetoric must first (πρῶτον…δεῖ) make a systematic division and grasp the particular character’ (263b6-7).

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217 Could the distinction between proper and conventional rhetoric in this passage be viewed as an application of division? On the application of division in the Phaedrus, see, e.g., Santa Cruz (1992) and Piccone (1992)

218 Literally, they do not know how to converse (dialegesthai). Yet context indicates that knowledge of dialegesthai means knowing how to apply division to form speeches (logoi). See below.
Phaedrus subsequently requests ‘how, from what source, could one acquire the art of the real rhetorician, the really persuasive speaker?’ (τὴν τοῦ τῷ ὑπὸ ῥητορικὸν τε καὶ πιθανοῦ τέχνην πῶς καὶ πόθεν ἂν τις δύναι τοιοῦτο τοῦτο πορίσασθαι, 269c9-d1). What follows (269d-274a) is Socrates’ reply. Let us now turn to expound the account of proper rhetoric. In the process, we shall elucidate how division is used by it.

Proper rhetoric is based upon natural talent coupled with ‘knowledge and practice’ (ἐπιστήμην τε καὶ μελέτην, 269d5). Yet understanding the format of a given speech (i.e., preamble, summation, and everything in between) is just preliminary knowledge (cf. 269b). Mastery of proper rhetoric involves knowing how to deceive an audience (261d-263c). Yet it is important to note that the aim of deception (as deception is described in the dialogue) is not necessarily to inculcate false conclusions (i.e., what the speaker believes to be false) as such, but rather to deceive people into thinking that they have been led to the conclusion by logical steps, and/or by steps not of a sort to lead equally ‘cogently’ to the opposite conclusion. The conclusions may be imprecisely or approximately true; the deception is principally in the audience’s belief that they have been shown the precise or absolute truth of the matter. Put somewhat more formulaically, deception is generally the act of taking advantage of the (close) similarity between things. To deceive is to convince an audience, say, that X is precisely just, when in fact it might not be precisely just. This is not to say that X is in fact wholly unjust; to deceive in this case may just mean to present an account of X as being unconditionally just, when in fact there may be more to the story.\textsuperscript{219}

\textsuperscript{219} The more similar one thing is to another, the easier it is to deceive an audience (262a). Using the example above, the closer X is to being just, whilst not necessarily being precisely just, the easier it is to persuade an audience that X is precisely just. The idea is that it is more difficult to spot where exactly X fails in being just, if X is otherwise quite close to being just.
To be able to tinker with the account of X, to properly ‘persuade’ (i.e., deceive) an audience that X is precisely just (when it might not be), the proper rhetorician must have prior understanding of both the nature of X and Justice (cf. 262ab). For it is only in light of understanding these two respectively that the rhetorician is able to ‘discern precisely’ (ἀκριβῶς διειδέναι, 262a7) the actual difference and similarity between the two, to spot where exactly X fails in being just, and where exactly X is in fact close to being just. Only after obtaining this knowledge is the proper rhetorician able to tinker with the relation between X and Justice for the sake of crafting a persuasive speech directed at those who do not know the individual natures of X and Justice and so the relation between them.\(^\text{220}\) Importantly, to tinker with the truth does not restrict the proper rhetorician to crafting ignoble speeches, as we shall see ahead.\(^\text{221}\)

Note, in the interim, that the knowledge ascribed to proper rhetoric is obtained by means of division:

‘{Soc}…whoever wants to acquire the art of rhetoric must first make a systematic division (ὁδῷ δηρησθαι) and grasp the particular character of each of these two kinds of thing, both the kind where most people wander in different directions and the kind where they do not [the former being key to deceiving an audience]…Second, I think, he [sc. the proper rhetorician] must not be mistaken about his subject; he must have a sharp eye for the class to which whatever he is about to discuss belongs (περὶ οὗ ἄν μέλλῃ ἐρείν ποτέρου ἃν τυγχάνει τοῦ γένους).’ (263b6-c5)

\(^\text{220}\) Further ahead in the text it is suggested that understanding the nature of the subject matter of one’s speech can, and indeed ought to be, reviewed and, when need be, adjusted; that one need not have an absolute grasp of X in order to properly craft a speech on X. I return to this important point below.

Additionally, the proper rhetorician must understand his audience. Indeed, it is essential that the proper rhetorician know the nature of the soul listening to a given speech in order to make that speech most persuasive (271a). Generally speaking, knowledge of the soul is somehow intimately connected to grasping ‘the nature of the whole’ (τῆς τοῦ ὅλου φύσεως, 270c2). Knowing a soul involves understanding whether the soul, as the object to which a speech is applied (270e-271a), is ‘simple or complex’ (ἀπλοῦν ἢ πολυειδές ἐστιν, 270d1-2); what capacity (dunamis) it has to act and be acted upon; what causes act upon either the simple or complex entity; how many forms (eidē), if the entity is found to be complex, an entity takes on. The importance of knowing the nature of your audience cannot be overstated: without knowledge of the soul, proper rhetoric cannot instill in an audience ‘reasons and customary rules for conduct that will impart to it the convictions and virtues {you} want’ (τῇ δὲ λόγους τε καὶ ἐπιτηδεύσεις νομίμους πειθὼ ἣν ἄν βούλῃ καὶ ἀρετὴν παραδώσειν, 270b7-9).

We should note the divisions implied here. For proper rhetoric the use of division, albeit not explicitly called so between 271d-272a, must occur more precisely on a case by case basis as follows: beyond knowing the nature of the subject matter,
which is obtained via division, the proper rhetorician divides the greater genera of soul and speech, respectively, in accordance with the particular soul (individual, audience member) present for the sake of understanding both the exact nature of the particular soul and in turn what speech and topic is best suited to persuade said soul. More precisely, he collects all the kinds of soul there are (x-number existent, of y-sort or quality, which account for individuals of this z-character or disposition) and with such knowledge of soul, he turns to collect all kinds of speeches (l-number existent, of m-sort or quality). Putting to use his knowledge of soul and speech, the proper rhetorician discerns that a certain soul is best persuaded by a certain speech in connection with a certain topic.

This argument of 271d-272a is supported by what Socrates says between 273d-274a in response to the proponents of ‘the likely’ (i.e., no need for knowledge) conception of conventional rhetoric (cf. 272d-273c):

‘No one will ever possess the art of speaking, to the extent any human being can, unless he acquires the ability to enumerate the sorts of characters to be found in any audience, to divide everything according to its kinds, and to grasp each single thing firmly by means of one form. And no one can acquire these abilities without great effort - a laborious effort a sensible man will make not in order to speak and act among human beings, but so as to be able to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods as much as possible.’ (273d8-e8)

Wanting to defend the account of proper rhetoric in the Phaedrus, Christopher Rowe maintains that Socrates (Plato) seriously ascribes to proper rhetoric the function
of imparting virtuous convictions. \textsuperscript{225} I agree with Rowe here (more below). Nonetheless, I wish to highlight the fact that, whilst nothing in the \textit{Phaedrus} prohibits the proper rhetorician from presenting a very close approximation of the truth, in order to persuade a given audience, the proper rhetorician must tinker with the truth; he must present a given topic in such a way, say by using similes, metaphors, and so on, in order to make a speech appealing to the crowd.\textsuperscript{226}

\textquote{\{Soc\} In fact, by chance, the two speeches [i.e., Lysias’ and Socrates’ initial speech] do, as it seems contain an example of the way in which someone who knows the truth can toy with his audience and mislead them (ὁς ἄν ὃ εἰδὼς τὸ ἀληθὲς προσπαίζων ἐν λόγοις παράγοι τούς ἀκούοντας)’ (262c10-d2).\textsuperscript{227}}

On a related note, Rowe says that 273d-274a informs us that the proper rhetorician ought to aim for the ‘right ends’, and do so for the gratification of the gods; ‘in so far as [persuasion] is identified with scientific rhetoric, this will mean persuasion for the right ends.’\textsuperscript{228}

\textquote{Wiser people than ourselves, Tisias, say that a reasonable man must put his mind to being pleasant not to his fellow slaves (though this may happen as a side effect) but to

\textsuperscript{225} Rowe (1989) 180

\textsuperscript{226} This point is obviously consistent with Rowe’s (1989) 179-83 account of the proper rhetorician. All I am doing here is emphasizing this one aspect of it.

\textsuperscript{227} A description of a rhetorician which is curiously evocative of the expert in ‘informed mimicry’ (\textit{historikē mimēsis}) in the \textit{Sophist} (267b7-12, cf. 267de):

\textquote{‘Some imitators know what they’re imitating and some don’t…Wasn’t the imitation that we just mentioned the kind that’s associated with knowledge? Someone who knew you and your character might imitate you, mightn’t he?’

\textsuperscript{228} Rowe (1989) 180-1}
his masters, who are wholly good [sc. the gods].\textsuperscript{229} So, if the way round is long, don’t be astonished: we must make this detour for the sake of great things (\(\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\omicron\omicron\varnothing\dot{\varepsilon}\nu\kappa\alpha\)), not <do> as you think one should.’ (\textit{Phdr.}, 273e8-274a3)\textsuperscript{230}

I agree with Rowe that the proper rhetorician seeks to gratify the gods by speaking well. To be precise, the proper rhetorician seeks to please the gods whilst indirectly benefitting his mortal audience, satisfying what Rowe calls ‘the right ends’. And this rhetorician does so without having to impart the whole truth to his mortal audience. Similar to the ‘noble lie’ of the \textit{Republic} (III, 414bd),\textsuperscript{231} a proper rhetorician’s speech can bring about moral ends, namely improved moral comportment, without relaying the whole truth.\textsuperscript{232}

\textsuperscript{229} \textit{Cp. ‘homodouloi’ with the same notion in the \textit{Theaetetus} (173e5-6, cf. 173d-173b): ‘The talk is always about a fellow-slave (\(\pi\epsilon\rho\iota\ \omicron\mu\omicron\delta\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\)), and is addressed to a master, who sits there holding some suit or other in his hand.’

\textsuperscript{230} \textit{Tr. Nehamas and Woodruff, with some adjustments on my part. Here in the \textit{Phaedrus}, the referents of ‘great things’ are apparently certain \textit{eidē} and \textit{ideaī}, any given \textit{eidōs} ostensibly filing under a particular \textit{idea} (cf. 273d8-e3). Perhaps most immediately, given the context, the referents concern an overarching genus and subgenera of soul, though surely this \textit{eidōs} under one \textit{idea} relationship concerning soul is not the sole referent of all ‘great things’ in the world (cf. 273d-274a, 277e-278b).

\textsuperscript{231} A fabricated story, on the class structure of the ideal city-state, whose aim it is to move people to care more for the state and each other.

\textsuperscript{232} Perhaps Rowe’s (1987) 125-37 earlier identification of Socrates’ second speech in the \textit{Phaedrus} as an example of the rhetoric promoted in the \textit{Statesman} (303e-304e) is misguided (cf. Heath (1989) 154-60; Rowe (1989) 181). More recently, the case for the proper rhetorical nature of Socrates’ second speech is made by, e.g., Scott, (2011). By contrast, Werner (2012) Ch. 7 argues that Socrates’ second speech exemplifies conventional rhetoric; that the proper rhetoric spoken of by Socrates in the \textit{Phaedrus} is unobtainable by man. I do not wish to enter into this debate regarding the purported rhetorical nature of Socrates’ speeches. That being said, I do maintain that the description at 273d-274a of the proper rhetorician’s activity does harmonize with the account of rhetoric in \textit{Statesman}. Above all, neither account suggests that the approved art of rhetoric imparts the whole truth on virtue. Yet both may apply their skill for virtuous ends.
Moving on, ‘[proper] rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*,’ according to Rowe, ‘is defined exclusively in terms of persuasion (as opposed to teaching, which is the function of dialectic).’\(^{233}\) Rowe has a very specific sense of teaching in mind, which I generally have no issue with: broadly put, to properly teach subject matter X is for A to intend to relay the truth (as much of it as A grasps) of X to B via a speech whose epistemic status is purposefully left open so as to invite further scrutiny on the part of both A and B of the account of X (more on this action below).\(^{234}\) That the author is present when broadcasting his account of X, and that he is able to defend the content therein in person, are important criteria for teaching. However, Rowe stresses that the author’s intention to relay the truth of X, with the public acknowledgement that his speech on X is not *definitive*, are ultimately what distinguish ‘dialectic’ (i.e., philosophical exchange) from proper rhetoric. In general, this is what ultimately separates proper rhetoric from philosophy: in contrast to the open-ended nature of a philosophical speech, the speech of a proper rhetorician is always cast as definitive. For proper rhetoric, there is no invitation to question the speech. Indeed, the success of the proper rhetorician is gauged principally on whether his speech on X is accepted by his audience without question.

I shall quickly return to speak about this contrast between proper rhetoric and philosophy. In the interim, a brief remark on teaching in the *Phaedrus* is in order. I note that the activity of ‘teaching’ (i.e., instruction) is attributed to the proper rhetorician, albeit as a secondary task:

\(^{233}\) Rowe (1989) 180. By ‘dialectic’ Rowe means the philosophical exchange discussed between 276e-277a. I return to this below.

\(^{234}\) Cf. Rowe (1989) 183
‘{Soc}…whoever studies anything on the basis of an art must never be compared to the blind or the deaf. On the contrary, it is clear that someone who teaches another to make speeches as an art (τῷ τις τέχνη λόγους διδῶ) will demonstrate precisely the essential nature of that to which speeches are to be applied. And that, surely, is the soul’ (270e2-5, cf. 270de).

The proper rhetorician takes on the role of instructor when teaching others how to become proper rhetoricians. To be clear, I still stand in general agreement with Rowe: what it principally means to be a proper rhetorician is to employ division for the sake of presenting a persuasive speech on some X, which is in turn accepted by a particular audience as the whole story about X. Crafting and in turn presenting persuasive speeches is the rhetorician’s primary task. Passing on to aspiring rhetoricians the tools of the trade, division clearly being one of (if not the) most important, is surely an auxiliary task. All the same, I must point out that the proper rhetorician in the Phaedrus is ascribed a teaching role.

DISTINGISHING THE PHILOSOPHOS OF THE PHAEDRUS

Let us now turn to examine the contrast drawn between the proper rhetorician and the philosopher in the Phaedrus. The contrast begins indirectly within the dramatic setting of the dialogue, by way of critiquing all written speeches (274b ff.). The criticism is that written speeches have certain intrinsic faults: (1) they can only repeat the same argument; written speeches cannot amend themselves. (2) They are prone to misinterpretation, and so unfair abuse, because they are published for everyone (i.e., informed and uninformed readers) to read. (3) Because of (1) and (2),
they require the active voice of their authors to defend them; written speeches serve as passive media transmitting arguments that require qualification on the part of the author (cf. 275de). What is more, written speeches provide only the ‘appearance of wisdom’ (σοφίας...δόξαν, 275a6), because they facilitate taking the arguments transcribed at face value, as absolutely true. This discourages needed critical analysis of the arguments, thereby rendering readers only apparently wise themselves, only capable of regurgitating the arguments verbatim (275ab).

In contrast to, and preferred over, written speech in the Phaedrus is what we may call ‘psychical speech’ (sc. Rowe’s ‘dialectic’): a speech formatted by an informed author, which is vocally transmitted to an active listener, and which, importantly, is open to analysis and adjustment (276a,e and 277a). Only psychical speech is singled out as being that which ‘renders the man who has it as happy as any human being can be’ (τὸν ἔχοντα εὐδαιμονεῖν ποιοῦντες εἰς ὅσον ἄθρωπος δύνατόν μᾶλιστα, 277a3-4). This sort of speech is selectively broadcast; it is only transmitted by the informed author to someone capable of critically engaging with the argument (276be, 277a). For the man who truly knows what is ‘just, noble, and good’ (i.e., what is truly worth knowing), the written word serves at best (apparently when old age approaches) to remind one of his past insights and views on these topics (276d, 277e-

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235 It is an argument figuratively ‘written down, with knowledge, in the soul of the listener’ (276a5-6).

236 Nothing in the Phaedrus prohibits the author of psychical speeches from passing on informed content regarding non-moral subjects. In fact, the exact range of informed discourse that he may possess, and in turn pass on, is never specified:

‘{Soc}…take a man who thinks that a written discourse on any subject (περὶ ἔκαστου) can only be a great amusement…He believes that at their very best [sc. written speeches] these can only serve as reminders to those who already know (ἰδότων). And he also think that only what is said for the sake of understanding and learning, what is truly written in the soul concerning what is just, noble, and good can be clear, perfect, and worth serious attention’ (277e5-278a5).
278a). Such a pastime pales in nobility compared to the activity of instilling in promising intellectuals psychical arguments that will hopefully blossom into full knowledge of the given subject matter after due scrutiny (278ab).

This last point is worth emphasizing. Apart from the time needed to implant the seeds of knowledge (cf. 277e-277a), the remark on the author’s own informed accounts undergoing maturation (278ab) suggests that repeated reflection, theoretical activity in general, is part of what makes this composer of psychical speeches who he is. This implies that, prior to crafting a given speech for a given audience, he does not have an absolute understanding of the relevant subjects; what one ‘knows’ about X at a given point in time may not be all that can be known about it. The composer of psychical speeches is aware of that, and further open, unlike the proper rhetorician, to notify his audience of that too.

To backtrack a bit, how does one go about instilling psychical speeches? Via division or the art of dialectic (note τῇ διαλεκτικῇ τέχνῃ χρώμενος, 276e6). Before we progress any further in the text, though, a word or two on the use of ‘dialektikē’ in the Phaedrus is in order. In earlier chapters I spoke of ‘dialektikē’ as referring to either the science of the Good as such of the Republic, or to the science of the greatest Kinds in the Sophist and Statesman. Yet here in the Phaedrus we have a clear use of the term referring to the method or art (technē) of division that is apparently used by a variety of disciplines (cf. 276a-277c, as well as 265d-266c; more on remarks concerning division in the Phaedrus follows). This varying use of ‘dialektikē’ in Plato poses no problem to my overall project. Up till now, the most I have committed myself to is the claim that ‘dialektikē’ may refer to a particular science in a given

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237 This is not to say that writing serves no purpose for the philosopher; written speeches, like all other speeches, psychical ones included, supplements the philosopher’s life-long desire for inquiry. Cf. Rowe (2007) Ch. XI for a similar interpretation of the use of speech (written or oral) in the Phaedrus.
dialogue; I have not argued that ‘dialektikē’ only refers to (i) a science, (i*) especially one and the same science in the whole of Plato. Accordingly, I take no issue with the fact that Plato, in a given dialogue, chooses to use ‘dialektikē’ to refer either to a method or science (not simultaneously, of course). Again, context in the *Phaedrus* clearly tells us that the *technē* of *dialektikē* is the art or method of division, not a science with unique access to intelligibles as such.\(^{238}\)

Now, this *dialektikos* who applies psychical speech (unnamed as such at 276e-277a, though obviously identifiable as a *dialektikos* because of his use of *dialektikē*), must have knowledge of both the nature of the content and speech (*logos*) fit for a particular soul, as well as knowledge of the recipient soul. This body of knowledge, as we have already seen is the case with the proper rhetorician, is obtained via division: the informed author of psychical speeches must know how to define the subject matter of his speech, ‘how to delimit’ (ὁρισάμενός) it [sc. the content of one’s speech] into kinds until he reaches something indivisible (277b, cf. 263bc, 265d-266a). Further, he must know the nature of the soul listening to the speech, offering a complex and elaborate speech to a complex soul, and a simple speech to a simple soul (277c, cf. 270d-271e, 273de).

So what exactly separates this *dialektikos* between (roughly) 276a-278b from the proper rhetorician described earlier? The difference between the two obviously does not lie with the chief method employed; both use division for the sake of obtaining the aforementioned knowledge, which is needed for crafting any sort of artful speech. To thoroughly distinguish the two dialecticians we must turn to their respective speeches.

\(^{238}\) On evidence elsewhere in the dialogues that Plato has a secondary interest in fixing a specific term to a particular object, cf. *Ch. III* p. 130 n. 203.
The dialectician described between 276a-278b is distinguished by his use of psychical speeches. What is unique about psychical speech is its philosophical feature: it primarily serves to move author and listener to reflect on the subject matter, to pursue the matter further. In other words, it is left open-ended, its author never presenting the argument therein as absolute. It is important at this juncture to highlight the educative nature of psychical speech. As was briefly discussed above (p. 145), to teach subject matter X is for A to intend to relay the truth (as much of it as A grasps) of X to B via a speech whose epistemic status is purposefully left open so as to invite further scrutiny on the part of both A and B on the account of X. There is no hint that a psychical speech ought to instil unreflective conviction, no suggestion that the teacher is dogmatic. Again, how unlike the proper rhetorician: the proper rhetorician uses his knowledge specifically to craft oral speeches or written prose for the sake of persuading an audience, of professing an absolute grasp about any given subject matter (cf. 271d-272b), not for the sake of rendering it happy (i.e., leading it toward the whole truth).

All that being said, what grounds do we have to identify the dialektikos between 276a-278b with the philosophos explicitly mentioned ahead?

‘{Soc} If any one of you has composed these things [sc. oral and written speeches] with a knowledge of the truth, if you can defend your writing when you are challenged, and if you can yourself make the argument that your writing is of little worth, then you must be called by a name derived not from these writings, but rather from those things that you are seriously pursuing…To call him wise, Phaedrus, seems to me too much, and proper only for a god. To call him wisdom’s lover-a philosopher...
(φιλόσοφον)-or something similar would fit him better and be more seemly. (278c4-d6)'

Starting at 277e the philosopher (at this stage unnamed as such) is described as someone who does not put his faith in written or oral set speeches (i.e., those rhetorical speeches cast as professing the absolute truth, whose chief aim is persuasion). At best, these set speeches serve as reminders, starting points for more serious critical reflection on the given subject matter (278a). For the philosopher, the only serious speeches are those psychical ones that serve primarily an educative (i.e., reflective, investigative) purpose, particularly regarding what is just, noble and good (ibid.). For sure, all of this between 277e-278a does not explicitly link the philosopher to the art of dialectic (dialektikē). However, the preceding lines (276a-277c) show that psychical speeches can only be properly crafted and applied by means of division. Again, the philosopher expressly uses psychical speeches. Accordingly, we may infer that the philosophos described between 277e-278d is that type of dialektikos described between 276a-277c, a user of division whose chief aim by means of the art is the production and application of psychical speeches. 239

To review, in the Phaedrus Plato marks off the philosophos by a combination of two characteristics: (A) the philosopher does not take rhetorical set speeches as worthy of critical reflection regarding what truly ought to be known. (B) Preferring the open-ended nature of psychical speeches, the philosopher continuously pursues knowledge of what is truly valuable by means of the art of dialectic (division). For sure, the philosopher shares in the use of division with, in particular, the proper rhetorician. But, to be clear, what separates the former from the latter is the overarching aim: unlike the proper rhetorician, the philosopher seeks to transmit only

239 By the by, the conversational connotation of ‘dialektikos’ goes better with the open-ended nature of psychical speeches than with persuasive set pieces.
the truth (as much as he has of it) of a given subject matter to gifted individuals via psychical speeches, leaving the argument open-ended for further critical reflection. Bottom line: there is almost always more to be said about something; philosophy is first and foremost a perpetual inquiry into what is truly worth knowing.

On a different note, Malcolm Heath finds the account of the proper rhetorician philosophically problematic:

‘if the scientific rhetorician has adopted philosophical ends, why will he engage at all in non-teaching discourse, to which (on my [sc. Heath’s] view) the philosopher attaches no positive value?...I believe that this is a problem for Plato…’

By ‘non-teaching discourse’, Heath means persuasive set speeches, in contrast to what I call ‘psychical speeches’, which are used by the philosopher.

Granted, the same person could take on both roles at different times; A could engage in rhetoric at T1 and in philosophy at T2. Hence (I take it) Heath’s concern: why would A engage in rhetoric at all (assuming he can philosophize), when engaging in rhetoric is always inferior to engaging in philosophy? My response is that, whilst the actual philosopher may not attach much value on non-teaching (i.e., rhetorical) discourse for his (and his pupil’s) philosophical progression, this certainly does not rule out said discourse’s usefulness for directing non-philosophers toward moral ends. Put differently, the philosopher is only interested in psychical speeches for his and his pupil’s intellectual betterment. Regarding all other speeches, specifically when considering his and his pupil’s intellectual betterment, the philosopher does indeed ‘say goodbye’ to them (278b2). Yet this does not

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240 Heath (1989) 190 n. 3
immediately rule out non-philosophical set speeches being beneficial to non-philosophers. Accordingly, rhetorical speeches, whilst not conveying the whole truth of the matter, could still serve an admirable purpose: the promotion of good moral conduct for the masses (cf. pp. 142-4). There is, then, no real problem; you can engage in non-teaching discourse and seek a moral goal, at least up to a point. The philosopher ultimately realizes that these rhetorical speeches can only take you, both intellectually and morally, so far.

Perhaps one may wonder why Plato presents a picture of philosophy in the *Phaedrus* so broad in scope that it simply cannot be equated with a specific art or science. In reply, I say that the depiction of philosophy, broad as it may seem, is definitely not unique to the *Phaedrus*. In Ch. I we saw that in several of the so-called Socratic dialogues philosophy is not spoken of as exclusively one art or science. We also saw that the majority of instances of ‘philosophia’ and cognates in the *Republic* refer not to an expert of a unique science of the Good as such, but rather to a desire for study in general, or a psychical disposition to pursue what is really worth knowing. Last chapter, we saw that in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* the philosopher par excellence is subtly cast as a polymath, as someone not to be a fixed to any specific discipline (i.e., branch of knowledge). The general message is that the multi-disciplinary nature of the topmost philosopher is meant to reflect the multi-disciplinary nature of philosophy itself. Hence, seldom does Plato go out of his way to highlight (what he sees as) the hierarchical division within philosophy—a division that requires identifying certain sciences and experts as more philosophical (i.e., with a closer grasp of reality) than others. Instead, what Plato is usually concerned with doing is distinguishing philosophy in general from that which runs counter to it.

241 Recall the momentary identification of ‘philosophia’ with the science of dialectic at the end of *Republic* VII (cf. Ch. II p. 74-5).
What the *Phaedrus* contributes to Plato’s project of distinguishing philosophy from all that is generally construed as non-philosophical is a certain type of argumentation (sc. psychical speeches), which is crafted by means of division, that only the true philosopher employs, in whatever scientific field he finds himself, for the sake of his and his pupils’ intellectual development. Indeed, the strictures against writing in the *Phaedrus*, specifically in connection to the philosopher’s development, can be exhibited as the result of a philosophical employment of division. Hence, the philosophical question ‘written or psychical *logos*?’ is a disjunction meant to mark off the philosopher more precisely. This disjunction would be applied after the disjunction of aims between rhetoric and philosophy, namely after the question ‘to persuade or to teach?’ had been sufficiently addressed. The central idea conveyed by the *Phaedrus* on philosophy, then, is that true philosophical instruction depends on the constant backward and forward movement of a live reflective discussion between an established philosopher and an aspiring one (i.e., the former’s pupil).  

**SOME BRIEF REMARKS ON THE UNIVERSAL APPLICABILITY OF DIVISION AND THE SILENCE ON MATHEMATICS IN THE *PHAEDRUS***

Between 270ab Socrates tells Phaedrus that there is a certain similarity between the art of medicine and that of rhetoric: both seek to determine the nature of something:

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242 This notion of philosophy as a constant process of critical reflection on what is thought of as truly worth knowing, of a perpetual contemplative movement concerned with matters considered really ‘just, noble, and good’, connects quite well with the remarks in the palinode myth on the philosophical soul (cf. esp. 248e-250c). There, we are told that the philosophical soul is very inquisitive. It is constantly fluttering, desperately seeking ‘to rise up’ and see Justice itself, and Beauty itself, and so on. Such a soul is eager ‘to gaze aloft, like a bird, paying no attention to what is down below’ (249d).
Ἐν ὠμοφόραις δεῖ διελέσθαι φύσιν. σώματος μὲν ἐν τῇ ἐτέρᾳ [sc. medicine] ψυχῆς δὲ ἐν τῇ ἐτέρᾳ [sc. proper rhetoric].’ (270b4-5)

‘διελέσθαι φύσιν’ could be translated as ‘dividing or cutting up the nature (of something)’. This must be alluding to the use of division for both arts. Accordingly, the arts’ respective use of division reveals that the same method can be used for different ends by different arts: expertise and corresponding treatment of the body for medicine, expertise and corresponding ‘treatment’ (persuasion) of the soul for rhetoric.

The importance of the method for any genuine art is confirmed further ahead in the dialogue. After reviewing how the method is used to understand the nature of practically anything (270cd), Socrates iterates that

‘proceeding by any other method (µέθοδος) would be like walking with the blind. Conversely, whoever studies anything on the basis of an art (τέχνη) must never be compared to the blind or the deaf’ (270d9-e2).

That a wide class of arts and sciences is expected by Plato to employ division is, I argue, confirmed in the Philebus. We shall discuss this point below.

Before turning to the Philebus, though, I would like to briefly consider what role mathematics has in the philosopher’s intellectual progression in the Phaedrus. The answer is seemingly straightforward enough: mathematics has no prominent role; there is no suggestion that mathematical methods, like hypothesizing, are essential to the crafting and transmitting of psychical logoi. Yet, with so much ink spilled in the

243 ‘Consider then, what both Hippocrates and true argument say about nature. Isn’t this the way to think systematically about the nature of anything (περὶ ότου οὐδὲν φύσεως)?’ (270c9-d1).
Republic about mathematics, particularly concerning the philosopher’s use of hypothesizing leading up to knowledge of the Good itself, we are entitled to ask why nothing is said about mathematics in the Phaedrus.

Indeed, why does Plato choose not to single out mathematics in the Phaedrus, as in the Republic, as the penultimate stage of the philosopher’s intellectual development? Why make mathematics seem no more remarkable than proper rhetoric? My conjecture, which I only roughly develop here, is that with the promotion of division in the Phaedrus Plato is signalling that he is not tied to mathematics as his prime model for intellectual discipline. More substantially, he shows that a distinct, versatile and ultimately superior method substitutes any mathematical one as that which will assist in making someone into a genuine philosopher.

‘{Soc} First, you must know the truth concerning everything you are speaking or writing about; you must learn how to define each thing in itself; and, having defined it, you must know how to divide it into kinds until you reach something indivisible’ (277b4-8).

Moreover, I surmise that Plato noted that division was used a lot (consciously or not) already in mathematics: e.g., numbers are generally separated into odd and even; geometers distinguish certain kinds of triangles, five regular solids, and so on. Accordingly, Plato saw a technique used in mathematics as applicable to every topic. This would explain the remarks in the Phaedrus on the use of division by natural sciences like medicine, physics and psychology: division is a method which is not tied down to any one discipline, even though all disciplines (ought to) use it. Ultimately,
Plato believed that the apparent universal applicability of division made it superior in praiseworthiness and intellectual importance to any particular mathematical method. To be sure, the *Philebus* affirms that mathematics and its discipline-specific methods are still important for Plato’s conception of philosophy (see below). Yet the *Philebus* likewise confirms that the art *most* important to master is division.

DIVISION IN THE *PHILEBUS*

‘It is not very difficult to describe it, but extremely difficult to use. For everything in any field of art that has ever been discovered has come to light because of this’ (*Phlb.*., 16e2-3)

Does ‘dialectic’ have multiple referents in the *Philebus?* Dorothea Frede suggests that ‘dialectic’ refers just to division. 244 By contrast, I argue that there are two ‘dialectics’ in the *Philebus*: one indeed being the method of division, 245 the other being cast as the science *par excellence* of philosophy. 246

244 Frede (1993) lx-lxiii and 70
245 Frede (1993) xxv ff. sees division in the *Philebus* as a more rigorous version of the method found in the *Phaedrus, Sophist* and *Statesman*. Similarly, Benson (2010) 19-24 argues that division in the *Philebus* is ‘roughly identical’ (20) to division in the *Phaedrus*. By contrast, Gill (2010) 36-46 argues that there are two types of division at play in the *Philebus*; there is a ‘divine’ method of division alongside the ‘ordinary (dichotomous)’ division (also called ‘standard division’): ‘the divine method differs from standard division in that the target investigated is the kind divided, not something that kind divides into.’ (41) I am inclined to agree with Frede and Benson, and see a single method of division in the *Philebus*, which is roughly identical to division particularly in the *Phaedrus*.
246 Again, a science is marked off by its special subject matter, whilst a method may be used by the science to obtain said subject matter.
Before we begin our examination of dialectic in the Philebus, I should state that I avoid accounting for the exact nature of Forms or Kinds in the dialogue. It suffices for the moment (though a bit more is said below) to simply identify them as universals. All Kinds, from Weaving to Being, are ontologically the same just in so far as all Kinds are something with determinate, static natures. In what follows we shall see that what particularly distinguishes the science of dialectic in the Philebus from any other science is the former’s strict focus on universals as such. This science is marked off as having knowledge of what it means for Kind X to be Kind X. Its expert, the philosopher par excellence, is also distinguished by way of its inquiries into the relation between Kinds (e.g., how Being as such relates to Non-Being as such). Whilst not explicitly called ‘hē epistēmē dialektikē’ in the Philebus, the superior epistēmē mentioned by Socrates (cf. 57e-58a), which explicitly concerns itself with universals that no other science has direct access to, is certainly evocative of (though to be sure not identical with) both the science of dialectic of Republic VI-VII, and the similarly called science of dialectic of the Sophist.

Let us turn to review what is said about ‘dialectic’ (τό…διαλεκτικός, 17a3-4), that is division, in the Philebus between 16c-18d. Division generally works by first collecting many commonly perceived or conceptualized objects (e.g., a red thing, a cow, a courageous man) and ultimately discerning how these objects respectively relate as parts to an integral, abstract whole (e.g., Colour as such, Animal as such, Virtue as such), as well as understanding how that whole relates to its parts. In
other words, division is employed for the sake of knowing a common object’s
taxonomical relation to a particular abstract genus (the One), which is revealed to be
impressed on said object and all similarly classified objects (the Many). It results,
simultaneously, in gaining insight into the very eternal and unchanging nature (cf.
15a) of the genus or kind (eidos) that is impressed on the common object. 250

For example, starting from the unlimited variety of spoken sound, an
investigator discerns that all instances of spoken sound can be filed under three
species (vowel, consonant, semivowel), and that these kinds contain the subspecies of
letters (e.g., α, δ, υ). Upon discovering this, he is able to see what binds the unlimited
variety of sound (viz., what connects the three kinds), the genus ‘letter’; the unlimited
variety of spoken sound are identifiable as (the many) letters, the (one) genus letter is
what is impressed on the unlimited variety of spoken sound.

The prior example, explicating 17ab and 18ad, is meant to illustrate not only
the power of division, but also how ubiquitous it is:

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250 This rough description of division is influenced by Reshotko’s (2010) 92-7 interpretation of division
in the Philebus. Her interpretation is based on her translation of 16c9-10, which I generally accept:
‘Understanding tôn aei legomenón einai as “those things always spoken of as existing” is a
straightforward rendering of the Greek at Philebus 16c9-10. When we take this "aei" as an exclusive
always, the subject of the sentence refers to all of the things that everyone in the past has always
spoken of as existing; the things that everyone in the past has agreed exist. These are the physical
objects. Understanding this phrase to refer to those objects that come-to-be and pass-away allows for
16c9-18b7 and 23e3-26a4 to cohere with one another [sc. it allows us to make sense of how division
works]. It also gives us the cleanest picture of the role played by abstract objects in the method of
division at Philebus 16d-18b [viz., they are the objects (the abstract genera) discovered at the end of a
division that starts with ‘physical objects.’]’ (97) In passing, I question Reshotko’s identification of the
initial set of objects compiled during a given division as ‘physical objects’. Surely everyone speaks of
virtues or vices, for example. These objects are not technically physical.
‘It [sc. division] is not very difficult to describe, but extremely difficult to use. For everything in any field of art that has ever been discovered has come to light because of this (πάντα γάρ ὅσα τέχνης ἐχόμενα ἀνηρέθη πώποτε διὰ ταύτης φανερὰ γέγονε).’

(16c2-3)

Socrates’ other example with the music theorist (17bd) enforces the idea that all arts similarly use division. It is specifically via division (‘the gods’ gift’) that men grasp how ‘to inquire and learn and teach one another’ (σκοπεῖν καὶ μανθάνειν καὶ διδάσκειν ἄλληλους, 16c3-4). In fact, ‘every investigation {must} search for the one and many’ (δεῖ περὶ παντὸς ἐνός καὶ πολλῶν σκοπεῖν, 17d7), if its investigators wish to become true experts (17e). What Socrates is saying, then, is that full knowledge, be it of astronomy, music or what have you, can never be obtained so long as (i) division is not used, or (ii), if it is used, it is imperfectly applied (cf. 17e, 19b).

Do all disciplines actually employ division? At first blush it is rather difficult to produce evidence for this claim. Yet let us assume that all disciplines use division. This need not entail that all disciplines are (fully) aware of using division. This brings us to reflect on (ii) and ask, ‘what does it mean to imperfectly apply division?’

Between 16c-17a Socrates claims that hitherto whenever actual scientific discoveries were made (note ἀνηρέθη πώποτε, 16c2-3), all of them (πάντα...ὅσα, 16c2) were made specifically ‘by means of this’ (διὰ ταύτης, 16c3), ‘the gods’ gift’

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251 ἐν τῇ ταῖς κινήσεις αὖ τοῦ σώματος ἄλλα ταμάτα ἐνόντα πάθη γεγονόμενα, ὡ δὴ δὲ άριθμόν μετρηθέντα δὲν αὖ φασι ρυθμίου καὶ μέτρα ἐπονομάζειν (17d4-6). Perhaps Socrates may be referring to two distinct experts (note αὖ ['moreover'? Frede (1993) 10 has ‘again’], the latter being someone (a dance instructor?) who applies his understanding of music theory (cf. Frede (1993) 10 n. 2) specifically to the rhythmic motions of the body.

252 See, e.g., Frede’s (1993) xxvi-viii effort to explain how music theory employs division.
(Θεὸν…δόσις, 16c5), i.e., division (cf. 16ce). But nowadays (δὲ νῦν, 16e4), the method is often mishandled; many so-called experts use the method haphazardly, typically for the sake of winning arguments, not for the sake of making scientific progress.253 As Frede observes:

‘that he [Socrates] calls it [division] a venerable tradition does not mean it has been consciously and conscientiously observed by mankind all along. He finds his contemporaries delinquent in that respect: They do not proceed methodically but skip the important ‘middle part’ in their divisions and therefore do not really practice dialectic but remain on the level of mere eristic argumentation [16e-17a].’254

We can formulate this way in which division is imperfectly applied as follows:

(A) Division is employed to some conscious yet hardly conscientious extent. It is improperly used as an eristic tool (viz., imprecise or ‘unnatural’ divisions of genera and species are made), ultimately for the sake of victory in argument (where this entails choosing not to arrive at the truth concerning the relevant topic).

Yet eristic troublemakers cannot represent the entire intellectual community; not everyone who imperfectly uses division intentionally engages in eristic debate. Accordingly, we need to get a clearer picture of the ways in which division is

253 Compare Philebus 14c-16a with the EV’s remarks in the Sophist on how confusion concerning one and many have ‘prepared a feast for young people and for old-late-learners’ (cf. Sph., 250e-251c).
254 Frede (1993) xxviii-ix
imperfectly applied.\textsuperscript{255} We can infer from the following quotation how someone, who does not wish to engage in eristic debate, still falls short of completeness in his use of division:

‘{Socrates} Sound is also the unit in this art, just as it was in writing. {Protarchus} Yes, right. {Soc} We should posit low and high pitches as two kinds, and equal pitch as a third. Or what would you say? {Pro} Just that. {Soc} But you could not yet claim knowledge of music if you know only this much (Ἀλλ’ οὖπω σοφὸς ἢν εἶης τὴν μουσικὴν εἰδός ταῦτα μόνα), though if you were ignorant even about that, you would be quite incompetent in these matters, as one might say. {Pro} Certainly.’ (17c1-10)

There are at least two possible ways to flesh out the imperfect use of division here.

(B): Division is used intuitively, yet without any real awareness or understanding of it, which is consistent with someone missing points in a typical investigation where division ought to be used but is not.

(C): Division is used in a particular discipline with some reflective grasp of it \textit{qua} method aiming at completeness. This still leaves open the possibility of someone missing points in a typical investigation where division ought to be used but is not.

\textsuperscript{255} The aim in what immediately follows is to expand on Frede’s (1993) ibid. remarks on the imperfect use of division.
I am inclined to say that the text at 17c alludes to (C). All the same, what I want to focus on is the point that both (B) and (C) can account for an inexact grasp of the subject matter.

Of course, we are still left asking what exactly does it mean to consciously and conscientiously use division? In particular, how can we avoid falling into eristic debate when employing division? Philebus 17a suggests that to properly use division means to never skip the sequential steps in a given division (be it going ‘bottom up’ or ‘top down’, cf. n. 249). This must mean understanding what justifies the order of the divisions and the criteria for said ordering as they pertain to a given discipline. As Frede puts it, ‘the critical scientist will have to ask how many kinds are on each level and whether and why there should be these and only these. The important issue is that there should be no omissions.’

In general, then, to properly employ division in a particular discipline involves constantly checking to see whether the steps taken in an instance of division are in fact picking out the right branches [species, subspecies] (ii) in the correct sequence, (iii) before ultimately arriving at an understanding of where the main object of inquiry (e.g., Weaving) is located in the taxonomical tree.

What about reflection on the method as such? Surely one can systematically employ division (viz., without skipping steps in the taxonomical hierarchy) yet never reflect on it as a method as such. Here is where, I submit, the philosopher par excellence and his use of division come in: reflection on the method as such is part of the distinguishing mark of Plato’s topmost philosopher. The attention given to the analysis of the method as such in Plato is certainly noteworthy. Aside from the Philebus, the Sophist and Statesman are filled with passages that reflect on the

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256 Frede (1993) xxviii
257 Note, for example, the constant checking and adjusting of the divisions in the Sophist and Statesman - see below with n. 258.
method *qua* method.\textsuperscript{258} This amount of attention is no doubt motivated by Plato’s effort to systematize division within a unique conception of philosophy grounded in a particular metaphysics and epistemology. We can see how, in reflecting on the method as such, the philosophical problems and paradoxes regarding, say, the One and Many, or Being and Non-Being arise in discussion in post-Republic dialogues like the *Sophist, Statesman, Parmenides* and *Philebus*. Accordingly, we can also see how the philosopher concerned with division as such would be differentiated from other experts by way of his concern with those particular problems and paradoxes that result from his reflections on division as such.\textsuperscript{259}

To highlight just one example, the remarks in the *Philebus* (14b-15c) on the puzzles concerning the One and Many speak of a close connection between these puzzles and division: ‘zealous concern with divisions of these unities [sc. Man as one, Ox as one, Beauty as one, Good as one] and the like gives rise to controversy’ (15a6-7).\textsuperscript{260} We can surmise that a distinguishing feature of the philosopher *par excellence* is his concern with putting an end to these puzzles.\textsuperscript{261} I shall return to say more on the

\textsuperscript{258} Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, see *Sph.*, 217c-218d, 227ac, 253b-254a and *Pol.*, 261e-263b, 264b, 265ab, 266d, 283ab, 285c-287b. Incidentally, the *Phaedrus* also talks a lot about division (cf. esp. 265d-266e), but it does not use the method to the extent that we find it being used in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Frede (2004) treats the extent to which division is used in the *Philebus*. In particular she argues that the Socrates witnessed in the *Philebus*, who plays the part of the ‘noble sophist’ of the *Sophist*, employs only a limited version of the method; that Socrates is not an expert user of division due in major part to the limited scope of his elenctic art. Sidestepping the exact role of Socrates in the *Philebus*, I defer to Frede in showing how Socrates’ use of division falls short of what is expected of a master of the method.

\textsuperscript{259} This was also discussed last chapter (cf. esp. pp. 131-3).

\textsuperscript{260} These puzzles are to be contrasted with the ‘commonplace’ ones that, we may infer, should not concern the philosopher *par excellence* (cf. *Phlb*. 14ce).

\textsuperscript{261} I am here seeking to connect the philosopher *par excellence* of the *Philebus* with the philosopher *par excellence* of the *Sophist* and *Statesman.*
philosopher *par excellence* of the *Philebus* further below. In the interim, let us turn to reflect further on the use of division in all the arts and sciences.

**ON THE ULTIMATE AIM OF DIVISION**

In the *Philebus*, we are told that the ultimate aim of division for anyone in any field who correctly employs division is knowledge both of what is invariable and one, the all-encompassing genus or kind, and how that kind relates to all of its parts (cf. 15ab, 16ce). But should not the philosopher alone possess knowledge of what is invariable and one? Whilst Plato identifies the philosopher *par excellence* as someone who aims to comprehend Forms or Kinds as such, he believes that any craftsman or scientist classifies as such when he too looks toward an eternal, intelligible paradigm (i.e., Kind) before turning to spot or produce an approximation of said paradigm. The major difference between the philosopher *par excellence* and the typical craftsman or scientist is that the latter may have a grasp of the nature of a specific Kind X that concerns him, yet he fails to fully grasp how to answer such questions as ‘what does it mean for Kind X to be a Kind as such?’ Nor, moreover, does the typical craftsman or scientist understand what it means for a Kind as such to be related to any other Kind as such (more on this below). All the same, it is important to reiterate that a true expert in any field is expected to grasp, particularly by means of division, the nature of an everlasting and invariable Kind for direction in his line of work (even if this expert fails to understand the epistemological and metaphysical implications).

The *Republic*, for example, attributes to abstract mathematics an insight into what really is eternal and invariable:
‘{Socrates} And mustn’t we also agree on a further point? {Glaucon} What is that? {Soc} That their [sc. geometers’] accounts are for the sake of knowing what always is, not what comes into being and passes away (Ὡς τοῦ ἀεὶ ὁντὸς γνώσεως, ἄλλα ὡς τοῦ ποτὲ τι γιγνομένου καὶ ἀπολλυμένου). {Glaucon} That’s easy to agree to, for geometry is comprehension of what always is (τοῦ γάρ ἀεὶ ὁντὸς ή γεωμετρικὴ γνώσις ἐστιν).’²⁶² (VII, 527b5-8)

Furthermore, in the Timaeus it is said that any genuine craftsman produces a beautiful copy of something only if said copy is produced in accordance with an eternal and changeless paradigm:

‘Whenever the craftsman keeps in view what is always changeless (ὁ δημιουργὸς πρὸς τὸ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον βλέποντα ἀεί), and using a thing of that kind as his paradigm reproduces in his work its form and meaning (τὴν ιδέαν καὶ δύναμιν αὐτοῦ), everything that he completes in this way is, of necessity, beautiful. But whenever <the craftsman has in view> something that has come to be, using a paradigm that has been generated, beautiful his work is not.’ (28a6-b2)²⁶³

One last example: in the Statesman, the grasp and according use of a universal paradigm is not restricted to any science, particularly equated with philosophy, as the example of the grammarian instructing the alphabet to young pupils indicates (277e-278c):

²⁶² Replacing Grube’s ‘knowledge’ with ‘comprehension’ for ‘γνώσις’. I restrict use of ‘knowledge’ to translate ‘ἐπιστήμη’, for, as already highlighted in this dissertation, the latter term in the Republic comes to be especially associated with the science of dialectic.

²⁶³ See Broadie (2012) 28-9, on the reference to any legitimate craftsmen (i.e., not just the cosmic one) in this passage.
‘Well then, have we grasped this point adequately, that we come to be using a model when *a given thing* (όν), which is the same in something different and distinct, is correctly identified there, and having been brought together with the original thing, brings about a single judgment about each separately and both together?’ (278c4-7)

In general, then, the quotations above help to show that various experts aim, to some conscious extent, toward understanding the respective nature of universals. What is more, we may infer from the remarks in the *Philebus* and *Phaedrus* on division that these experts hit upon the nature of these universals particularly by means of division.264

**DRAWING DIVISIONS INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TO PHILOSOPHY IN THE *PHILEBUS***

Yet the use of division for the sake of reaching insights into the nature of universals does not make these experts full-fledged philosophers. All experts are subordinate to the philosopher *par excellence* particularly on account of their limited epistemological and metaphysical insight into their subject matter. To take just one example, let us go back to what is said about abstract mathematics in *Republic* VII.

‘{Socrates} And mustn’t we also agree on a further point? {Glaucon} What is that? {Soc} That their [sc. geometers’] accounts are for the sake of knowing what always is,  

264 Surely division can applied in tandem with other methods to arrive at knowledge. We can think of geometers, for example, who use division in tandem with hypothesizing to arrive at their theorems, constructions, etc. (more on this below).
not what comes into being and passes away (Ὡς τοῦ ἀεί ὀντὸς γνώσεως, ἀλλὰ οὗ τοῦ ποτὲ τι γινομένου καὶ ἀπολλυμένου). {Glaucon} That’s easy to agree to, for geometry is comprehension of what always is (τοῦ γάρ ὀντὸς ἡ γεωμετρικὴ γνώσις ἐστιν).’ (VII, 527b5-8)

Mathematicians do not understand mathematical objects in the way the philosopher *par excellence* does; mathematicians do not think of their idealized shapes and numbers in rigorous metaphysical terms.\(^{265}\) Yes, their objects are most generally understood as universals, they are ideal paradigms. Yet to think of an ideal square, for example, is different from positing a Platonic square itself. For the mathematician, the mathematical object need only be understood as ‘an ideal exemplification of the relevant definition.’\(^{266}\) Further, the mathematician’s reliance on hypotheses prevents him from engaging in the sort of metaphysics that ultimately distinguishes the philosopher *par excellence* from all other scientists. The mathematician’s theorems and constructions, which ultimately do not (according to Plato in the *Republic*) amount to ‘knowledge’ (*epistēmē*), come about by taking for granted certain principles at the start of a given investigation (cf. *Rep.* VI 510c-511d, VII 533c).

This is not to say that Plato criticizes mathematics for its reliance on hypotheses, that he finds fault with mathematics as such. As Burnyeat explains,

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\(^{265}\) My understanding of the remarks on mathematics in *Republic* VI-VII is influenced by Burnyeat (2000) 33-42. I should note that the exact metaphysical status of mathematical objects, particularly in the *Republic*, is a controversial topic. See, e.g., Burnyeat (2012) 145-72.

\(^{266}\) Burnyeat (2000) 37
‘To demand that the mathematicians give an account of their initial hypotheses…would be to make them stop doing mathematics and do something else instead. The best and brightest of the Guards will indeed do that later. They will stop treating mathematical hypotheses as starting-points [511b]…and try to account for them in terms of Forms (511bc, 533c).….But this activity is dialectic, not mathematics reformed to meet a criticism. Socrates expressly says that only dialectic can do the job (533c), the soul engage in mathematical thought cannot (511a5-6)’.

All the same, Plato is keen on putting mathematics in its place. It is the limited epistemological and metaphysical grasp of its subject matter, influenced in major part by a reliance on hypotheses (be they derived from perceivable things or not), which situates mathematics in a subordinate position to the science of dialectic. It is the latter that the philosopher par excellence ultimately masters which makes him who he is.

So, the abstract mathematician (amongst other experts) is not the philosopher par excellence. Yet he is still very much a philosopher. And the Philebus, just like the Republic, takes pains to distinguish the philosopher in general from the non-philosopher in general. In the Philebus, Socrates and Protarchus agree that there exist

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268 Not all mathematical principles are derived from perceivable diagrams. In fact, there is a lot of mathematical subject matter that cannot be illustrated by any diagram (e.g., the concept of unity, being, etc.). It is hard to tell whether Plato fully acknowledges this different type of mathematical principle in the Republic, though his general remarks on the epistemic limitations of hypotheses qua hypotheses can be applied to all principles that are not derived from perceivable objects.
certain philosophical arts and sciences (*technai* or *epistēmai*),\(^{269}\) that the arts and sciences used by genuine philosophers ([ὁντως] φιλοσοφούντων, 56d6, 57c2, d1; κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν, 57e8) are superior to those used by ‘the masses’ (τὸν πολλόν, 56d5, cf. 56d-57e). The general point in this part of the text is clear enough: not all arts and science are on equal footing; the philosophers’ arts and sciences, distinguished by way of their ‘precision’, that is their application of abstract mathematics for the sake of obtaining theoretical insights (cf. 56be), are ultimately closer to comprehending reality than any of the empirical arts and sciences.\(^{270}\) For example, building, in light of its use of certain instrumentation, is said to be a craft with more precision than music (cf. 56bc)-building’s greater precision is due to its use of calculation and measurement. All the same, its insights pale in comparison to those of the philosopher: the former’s use of mathematics achieves precision and accuracy in the crafting of physical structures, the latter’s use of mathematics achieves insights into the natures of shapes and numbers.

Note how every theoretical expert in this passage of the *Philebus* is classified as a philosopher. Again, this distinction between philosophy and non-philosophy is not unique to the *Philebus*. Here we need only recall the evidence for such a distinction in the *Phaedrus* (cf. pp. 153-4). What is more, the *Philebus* in no uncertain terms affirms a central message of *Republic* VI-VII: a true philosopher is someone

\(^{269}\) Both *epistēmai* and *technai* are used interchangeably to refer to arts and sciences in the *Philebus*. At 58e-59a, Socrates is highlighting the epistemic distinctions between the disciplines. He is not distinguishing *epistēmai* from *technai*:

‘[ΠΡ.]} Ἀλλὰ σκοπῶ, καὶ χαλεπῶν οἶμαι συγκριθῆσαι πινα ἄλλην ἐπιστήμην ἢ τέχνην τῆς ἀληθείας ἀντέχεσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ ταύτην. [ΣΩ.] Ἀρ’ οὖν ἐννοήσας τὸ τοιοῦτο εἴρηκας ὅ λέγεις νῦν, ὡς αἱ πολλαὶ τέχναι, καὶ ὅσοι περὶ τούτο πεπόνηται, πρῶτον μὲν δόξας χρῆναι καὶ τί περὶ δόξαν ζητοῦσι συντεταμένος;’ (58e1-59a2)

\(^{270}\) Not closest, however. I return to comment on the hierarchy of the theoretical (‘philosophical’) sciences below. Cf. Gosling (1975) 222-3.
who pursues knowledge of what is determinate and changeless, particularly by means of abstract mathematics. And yet, what the *Philebus* also affirms is that mathematics can only take you so far into understanding reality. This brings us to reflect further on the divisions internal to philosophy.

For Plato, mastery of abstract mathematics is essential in order to master the whole of philosophy. However, in the *Philebus*, just like in the *Republic*, Plato wishes to make it clear that the pinnacle of philosophy is *supra* mathematical:

‘{Socrates} Do we maintain that these kinds of sciences (ἐπιστήμαις) [sc. the mathematical sciences discussed] are the most precise? {Protarchus} Certainly. {Soc} But the power of dialectic (η τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δύναμις) would repudiate us if we put any {power} ahead of her (εἰ τινα πρὸ αὐτῆς ἄλλην κρίναμεν). {Pro} What {power} do we mean by that again? {Soc} Clearly everybody would know what {power} I am referring to now! For I take it that anyone with any share in reason at all would consider the discipline concerned with being and what is really and forever in every way eternally self-same by far the truest of all kinds of knowledge.’ (57e3-58a5)

We have seen that all proper philosophical sciences in some sense study what is eternal and changeless; all intellectual sciences have some sort of grasp of Kinds. So what in this passage ultimately distinguishes the science of dialectic in the *Philebus*?272 Surely it must be this science’s unique concern with (what we would call) the concept of being X, with what it means for Kind X to be Kind X as such. I

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271 Apart from ‘ἐπιστήμαις’ at 57e3, there is no additional use of *epistēmē* in the quoted passage; Frede has ‘science’, where I use ‘power’. That being said, it is important to note that *dunamis* and *epistēmē* are used interchangeably to refer to the same thing.

272 To avoid confusion, I refrain from calling this science ‘*dialektikē*’ in the *Philebus*, in light of the fact that ‘*dialektikē*’ never occurs in the *Philebus*. 
speak here of a *science* of dialectic, not a *method* (i.e., division). Note that when a
‘power of conversing’ (*tou dialegesthai dunamis*),\(^{273}\) correlative described as an
*epistêmê*, is mentioned in this passage, it comes across as something apparently new
to the discussion (note ‘γε νῦν’, 58a1).

Of course, what is novel at this juncture may reasonably be understood as a
change to the account of division discussed earlier in the text. As Frede observes:

> ‘Since the divine method was applicable to all disciplines [earlier in the
text], he [sc. Plato] might have in mind here an even higher employment
(strictly limited to philosophers), or he might be indicating that the method
when properly employed deals with unchangeable beings (cf. Introd. P.
Iviii-lix). A distinction might also be intended between applied and
philosophical dialectic (cf. the ‘Prometheus’ at 16c).’\(^ {274}\)

Yet it is difficult to see what the precise distinction would be between ‘applied’ and
‘philosophical’ dialectic.\(^ {275}\) Surely it cannot allude to the distinction Socrates draws
between the empirical and philosophical arts and sciences (cf. 56d-57e); at 58a
dialectic is contrasted particularly with abstract mathematics. On the suggestion that
the method, when properly employed, deals with ‘unchangeable beings’, we have
already seen that Socrates has, albeit rather obliquely, informed us of this earlier in
the text; all disciplines use division ultimately to hit upon the nature of kinds, which
are in essence ‘unchangeable beings’. Accordingly, it is difficult to see why Plato

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\(^{273}\) Frede (quoted above) translates ‘power of dialectic’; Gosling (1975) 60 ‘dialectical ability’

\(^{274}\) Frede (1993) 70 n. 1

\(^{275}\) As far as I can see, at no point does Frede (1993) explain the terms. The reference back to
Prometheus at 16c does not clarify things.
would have Socrates repeat this point, yet cast it as something apparently new to the discussion. On the suggestion that the text refers to a ‘higher employment’ of division, whilst I think that Plato in the *Philebus* indirectly speaks of a higher employment of division (*viz.*, the science of dialectic’s use of the method), that is not what is primarily at stake in this part of the text.

*Pace* Frede, I believe that the contrast between dialectic and other branches of knowledge at 57e-58a only makes sense if we see Socrates distinguishing *sciences* and their respective subject matter. All sciences use division, yet only the science of dialectic uses division to study Kinds as such, that is as intelligibles in and of themselves. Whilst conjectural, in light of the remarks in the *Sophist* on the science of dialectic, surely this study of Kinds as such is possible only on account of some prior understanding of an indeterminate set of distinguished Kinds. The philosopher *par excellence*’s thinking, for example, about how Being can non-absurdly combine with Non-being is not reaching conclusions that are or can even conceivably be ‘applied’ at some lower (empirical) level in the way, say, engineering applies abstract mathematics. Reflection on Kinds as such, which (presumably) is informed by knowledge of a distinguished subset thereof, is truly in a league of its own.

One may say that hitherto my treatment of the science of dialectic in the *Philebus* is frankly too charitable to Plato; that it tries too hard to smooth things out for Plato when it comes to distinguishing the super science from all other subordinate philosophical sciences. In many ways the criticism is spot on, because Plato does leave much to conjecture. Nonetheless, in what follows, I attempt to further elucidate and in turn expand on Plato’s brief, and arguably cryptic, remarks concerning the science of dialectic in the *Philebus*. Again, I maintain that what distinguishes the science of dialectic from all other philosophical sciences in the *Philebus* is that only it
grasps the nature of distinguished Kinds. With this knowledge, the science of dialectic rigorously investigates by means of division the metaphysical status of Kinds in general. And it does so particularly irrespective those Kinds’ variable and temporal instantiations (cf. 58e-59b).\footnote{A different, although surely connected claim, is that the science of dialectic uses thought (reason, intellect) without appeal to any of the senses in order to study its subject matter (cf. Rep., VII, 532ab; Pol., 285e-286a). This feature separates it from all other sciences, even the mathematical ones, which are constrained at times to look to or rely on, say, perceivable diagrams to comprehend their subject matter. Kahn (2010) 66-7 similarly holds that there is a distinct sort of ‘dialectic’ witnessed toward the end of the dialogue. This dialectic ‘is an exercise of nous, its objects are all noêta -intelligible through and through. It is, as it were, the function of nous to see things sub specie aeternitatis. So to this extent its objects are all eternal beings, existing in unchanging logical space, in the noêtos topos of Republic VI’ (67). Note that Kahn does not identify this type of dialectic as a science, but rather as an ‘exercise of nous’.
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The expert of this most powerful science concerns himself, not with instances of justice, but with Justice as such (αὐτῆς περὶ δικαιοσύνης, 62a2)-we may infer all the virtues in abstracto. He deals with mathematical and astronomical objects strictly in metaphysical terms too; he studies ‘the circle and the divine sphere itself’ (κύκλου...καὶ σφαίρας αὐτῆς, 62a7-8) - we may assume without relying on hypotheses. Generally speaking, the philosopher versed in the epistêmê of dialectic is in no way concerned with ‘subject matter that comes to be and perishes’ (τὰ γεγονόμενα καὶ ἀπολλόμενα, 61e1). Instead, he always searches for that which is ‘external and self-same’ (κατὰ ταῦτα δὲ καὶ ὡσαντῶς ὄντα ἀεί, 61e2-3). To distinguish the science of dialectic from all subordinate philosophical sciences - sciences that also study what is eternal and self-same in some sense - we must take this reference to searching for what is ‘external and self-same’ to be alluding to the study of Kinds as such irrespective all temporal and sense-based instantiations.

This at once sets the science of dialectic apart. For even abstract mathematics is dependent in certain ways on what is temporal and sense-based. Abstract
mathematics is reliant, for example, on diagrams and perceivable shapes and motions in its field. What is more, it simply assumes certain concepts, like Being as such, Sameness and Difference as such, and so on, which the expert of the science of dialectic does not.

Here the echoes of the Republic come through the loudest:

‘{Socrates} Then also understand that, by the other subsection of the intelligible, I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic (τῇ τοῦ διαλέγεσθαι δυνάμει). It does not consider these hypotheses as first principles but truly as hypotheses-but as stepping stones to take off from, enabling it to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything. Having grasped this principle, it reverses itself and, keeping hold of what follows from it, comes down to a conclusion without use of anything visible at all, but only forms themselves, moving on from forms to forms, and ending in forms (ἀλλ’ εἴδεσιν αὐτοῖς δὴ αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτά, καὶ τελευτᾷ εἰς εἶδον).’ (Rep. VI, 511b3-c2)

A closer look at the connection between Republic VI-VII and the Philebus will lend further evidence to the argument that the Philebus is likewise referring to a supra-mathematical science which caps the whole of philosophy.

In the Republic the discussion regarding mathematics is immediately followed by the account of the ‘science’ (epistêmê), earlier called ‘power’ (dunamis, 511be, cf. Phlb., 57e), of dialegesthai, which in context is clearly different from any investigative method ascribable to a given science (531d ff.). The general point being made is that no other science is better than the science of dialectic, because no other science studies universals in and of themselves. Likewise in the Philebus, Socrates
moves from speaking about the mathematical sciences, to speaking directly about and in turn asserting the superiority of a ‘science of dialectic’. This science, like the supreme one of the Republic, similarly concerns itself with universals as such.

Having said that, there are some notable differences between the two sciences to point out here. The science of dialectic of the Republic is explicitly ascribed knowledge of ‘Platonic’ Forms as such. The Philebus, by contrast, is rather unclear as to the exact metaphysical/ontological status of the universals which its supreme science comprehends (cf. n. 247). What is more, the Philebus does not explicitly distinguish its epistēmē of dialectic as an epistēmē of the Good as such. Nor, on a related note, is the Good as such openly singled out in the Philebus as the topmost Form or Kind.

This is not to say that there is no evidence in the Philebus pointing to a description of the Good reminiscent of the one in the Republic. Socrates in the Philebus explicitly refers to ‘the idea of the Good itself’ (ἀγαθὸν…ιδέαν αὐτήν, 64a2), broadly distinguishing it from human good and cosmic good (cf. 63d-64a). The Good itself is said to be in a way comprised of ‘beauty, proportion and truth’ (κάλλει καὶ σωμετρίᾳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, 65a2, cf. 65a). Note the parallel with the Republic. There, Socrates says the Good ‘gives truth to the things known’ (τὸ τὴν ἀλήθειαν παρέχον τοῖς γιγνώσκομένοις, 508e1-2), it is the cause of knowledge and truth (things essential to the good life in the Philebus, cf. 65c-66c), whilst being ‘other and more beautiful’ (ἄλλο καὶ κάλλιον, 508e5-6) than they are (cf. Rep. VI, 508e-509b).277 All the same, these remarks hardly serve to confirm once and for all that the Good of the Republic returns as is in the Philebus. Nor, more to the point, do these remarks on the Good as

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277 Gerson (2010) gives a more thorough account of the connection between the Good of the Republic and the Good of the Philebus. However, I do not endorse his Unitarian conclusions.
such in the *Philebus* show us that the Good is the ultimate subject matter for the science of dialectic.

To be clear, the accounts in the *Republic* and *Philebus* regarding their respective supreme science, albeit not the same, are consistent. Both dialogues affirm that at the top of the philosophical hierarchy sits something supra-mathematical; that there exists a science with exclusive access to universals (however they are described dialogue to dialogue) which no subordinate science has access to. Note, for example, the close parallel from talk of the subordinate mathematical sciences to the supreme science of ‘dialectic’ in both dialogues:

‘{Socrates}…don’t you know that all these subjects [sc. mathematical sciences] are merely preludes to the song itself that must also be learned? Surely you don’t think that people who are clever in these matters are dialecticians. [Discussion of the science of dialectic ensues].’ (*Rep.*, 531d7-531e1)

‘{Socrates} Do we maintain that these kinds of sciences [sc. the mathematical sciences discussed] are the most precise? {Protarchus} Certainly. {Soc} But the power of dialectic would repudiate us if we put any science ahead of her. {Pro} What {power} do we mean by that again? {Soc} Clearly everybody would know what {power} I am referring to now!’

Why is there no explicit mention of investigations into the Good as such in the *Philebus*, particularly in light of the fanfare given to it in the *Republic*? One might say that Plato chooses not to emphasize the Good as such in light of the context of the dialogue, for focus therein is expressly on what constitutes the happy life *for mankind*
what assortment (as we ultimately discover) of kinds of knowledge and pleasures make any given person a happy one (*eudaimôn*). Accordingly, detailed discussion on the esoteric theoretical investigations into the Good would take the discussion simply too far off track. Another possible answer is that the *Philebus* discussion itself is meant as an example of what philosophical work is singled out for its supreme science. Indeed, the last lines of the dialogue may be meant to remind us of the unfinished nature of a genuine philosophical discussion (as per the *Phaedrus*, cf. pp. 151-2). The *Philebus* discussion employs division, for sure, but it does a great deal else. It feels as if it takes up the enigma of the *Republic*, the Form of the Good, and tries to say a bit more about what it is. In particular, it hints at what direction the philosophical conversation needs to move beyond the terminus of the *Philebus* discussion in order to fully comprehend the Good as such.

Yet the highlighted differences between the dialogues regarding their respective supreme science cannot be overlooked here. For they could plausibly be taken to suggest that Plato has shifted focus regarding what exactly his topmost science and related topmost philosopher ought to be concerned with post-*Republic*. If the *Republic*’s Good maintained its superior status when Plato wrote the *Philebus*,

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278 Frede (2010) 13-4: ‘If all kinds of knowledge are needed and worthwhile, and all pleasures that harmonize with them are welcome, then such a life is not confined to the philosopher, but it is open to everyone with a modicum of rational capacities. This is, of course, in conformity with the discussion’s overall aim. The audience does not consist of philosophers, but of upper class young Athenians with a penchant for a hedonist life….Socrates’ aim is, then, a “life for everyone” whose mind is not closed against all argument, as was Philebus’ right from the beginning of the discussion.’

279 If we accept Frede’s (1993) lxvii-xi & (2004) claim that Socrates’ employment of division in the *Philebus* falls short of what is expected of a master of the method, then the *Philebus* may very well be indicating that further consideration particularly regarding the Form of the Good requires (i) a more rigorous application of division (ii) undertaken by one or more investigators that are, unlike Protarchus or Philebus, and possibly even Socrates, capable of seriously inquiring into the Form of the Good, not just the sort of good needed for man to be happy.
then why no mention of it? We should naturally expect a few words on what would presumably be the ultimate subject matter for philosophy’s topmost science, especially given the fact that the topmost science of philosophy is singled out as such in the dialogue. Perhaps, then, the *Philebus* indirectly reveals that the *Republic*’s Good is no longer that same superior entity, hence Plato’s silence on it in the *Philebus*. What this implies, on a related note, is a shift in Plato’s metaphysical and epistemological views in general post-Republic.

Now, to argue thoroughly for (or against) the apparent shift in Plato’s metaphysical and epistemological views is an ambitious task, and one that remains outside the scope of this dissertation. My task is to compare and contrast the different sciences called ‘dialectic’ in the *Republic* and certain post-Republic dialogues. In general, I argue that these dialogues’ presentations of their respective supreme science are consistent (even if, admittedly, they pick out different objects), insofar as they assert in common that at the top of the philosophical hierarchy is a supra-mathematical science that is strictly concerned with universals as such. Particularly in this chapter, I have sought to present a positive account of what the science of dialectic is in the *Philebus*, and how in turn this science distinguishes itself as being the topmost philosophical science. We should be mindful of the differences between the accounts of the science of dialectic in Plato, yet any detailed discussion on the related topic regarding the apparent change in Plato’s metaphysical and epistemological views post-Republic must be set aside here.

By the by, even if Plato fails to thoroughly show in his own words just how the science of dialectic differs from every other philosophical science, his concern in the *Philebus* may be-as it certainly is in some other dialogues-to show that various contenders are not the supreme science. Hence rhetoric is not, even after being
rehabilitated in the *Phaedrus*, and abstract mathematics is not, certainly in the *Republic* and *Philebus*, depicted as the pinnacle of philosophy. The idea is that one can get rid of rival contenders for being the topmost science of philosophy by showing how they fall short of the mathematical precision and epistemological and metaphysical prowess that is needed to study Kinds as such.

Something else to consider, if the close of the *Philebus* is any indication (62b to the end), is that Plato believes that a life spent theorizing about Kinds as such comprises just one part of what it means to lead the good life. Why is Plato not content exclusively promoting the life of a pure theoretician? Philosophical knowledge of the sort cannot by itself guarantee man a happy life, especially if it cannot direct him home! (*Phlb.*, 62b) A happy man, then, would need practical, non-philosophical knowledge as well, coupled with the approved pleasures associated with both types of knowledge. We should note that this description of the *Philebus*’ philosopher *par excellence* as not strictly a pure theoretician harmonizes well with the description of the topmost philosopher of the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. The general message of the *Philebus*, then, (as we may infer it is in certain other dialogues) is that, on its own, formal knowledge of Kinds as such will not make man totally happy. Of course, it is safe to say that, without a decent grasp of this knowledge, Plato would be the last person to call any one of us truly happy.

In sum, whilst not the primary task of the dialogue, the *Philebus* nonetheless draws an important contrast particularly internal to philosophy: a hierarchy of sciences, reminiscent of the one in the *Republic*, is alluded to toward the end of the *Philebus*. As I have shown, a science exclusively concerned with universals as such is found at the top of this hierarchy. Whilst there is more to leading a good life than
theorizing about Kinds as such, Plato maintains that the theoretical aspect of the happy life for man is completed by a science called ‘dialectic’.
PHILOSOPHY IN THE *THEAETETUS*

In this chapter I consider the connection between three portraits of the philosopher found in Plato: the expert of the science of dialectic (hereafter ‘*dialektikē*’), Socrates the intellectual midwife of the *Theaetetus*, and the philosopher of Socrates’ digression in the *Theaetetus* (hereafter also called ‘the pre- eminent philosopher’). A particular aim of this chapter is to show how Socrates the intellectual midwife is not to be equated with the philosopher of the digression. This chapter further shows that the philosopher of Socrates’ digression is not straightforwardly identifiable with the expert of *dialektikē*, as the latter is found elsewhere in Plato, particularly the *Republic*. What is Plato’s reason for not presenting a uniform philosopher, a uniform conception of philosophy? In keeping with remarks made in each preceding chapter, philosophy, according to Plato, is not one art or science. Philosophy is not just intellectual midwifery. Nor is it strictly a supra-mathematical science, *dialektikē*. Indeed, the *Theaetetus* shows us that there exist various *philosophoi* corresponding to various branches of *philosophia*, all of which come together under one general aim: betterment of self through intellectual activity. To the end this chapter, I critically assess Sandra Peterson’s reading of the *Theaetetus*. Ultimately, I show that her reading is misguided; that, in particular, we have no good reason to doubt Socrates’ (Plato’s) endorsement of philosophy as it is variously depicted in the dialogue.

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280 So as not to confuse the science of dialectic showcased in the *Republic* with the method of collection and division, the latter openly called ‘*dialektikē*’ in the *Phaedrus* (cf. Ch. IV pp. 148-9), I shall use ‘*dialektikē*’ to refer to the science throughout this chapter.
EXAMINING SOCRATES THE MIDWIFE AND THE PRE-EMINENT PHILOSOPHER

To start, let us briefly go over the depiction of Socrates the intellectual midwife in the *Theaetetus*: he attends to young men; he applies all possible tests in order to determine whether a mind is being delivered of a ‘phantom’ (ἐἴδωλον) or a ‘fertile birth’ (γόνιμων τε καὶ ἀληθές) (cf. 150b7-c4). He delivers offspring in conjunction with divine help (150d9-e1). He can bring on or stop the pangs of labour of those that associate with him; he chants incantations in order to bring forth a belief from the mind of those he supervises in order to see if it is fertile or not (151a7-10, 157d1-2). He also engages in match-making (151b1-7). And yet, he claims to be ‘barren’ (ἄγονός) of wisdom (150c4).

Now, it may be difficult to square Socrates’ disavowal of wisdom with his declared expertise in intellectual midwifery.

‘But I do [have this art of midwifery], believe me. Only don’t give me away to the rest of the world, will you? You see, my friend, it is a secret that I have this art (ταύτην ἔχων τὴν τέχνην). That is not one of the things you hear people saying about me, because they don’t know; but they do say that I am a very odd sort of person, always causing people to get into difficulties. You must have heard that, surely?’ (149a6-10)
To hopefully clarify, Socrates’ disavowal of wisdom or knowledge in the *Theaetetus*, just as in other dialogues (e.g., *Euthyphro, Euthydemos, Charmides*), is a disavowal of positive wisdom regarding specific questions (e.g., whether knowledge is perception). The midwife personally does not know whether knowledge is, or is not, perception. Notwithstanding, [1]: Socrates is capable of refuting a belief. Given [1], Socrates demonstrates that he is proficient in his elenctic art, which is a sort of second order expertise. His art cannot give him any positive certainty on any first order claims, although it can give him negative certainty that certain first order claims are either false or inconsistent with some common belief. Socrates knows that a given thesis, say ‘that $x$ is $F$’, is untenable, for, beyond the original thesis, he has elicited from his interlocutor a set of additional, mutually-held beliefs, say $\{p, q\}$, which entails a counter-thesis to the interlocutor’s original.

Moreover, [2]: Socrates has the capacity to help an individual articulate his beliefs and in turn approve them if they survive the examination. Given [2], his midwifery allows him to give some limited approval to answers that he tries to refute but which stand up to his attempt, which explains how he is capable of praising beliefs that are qualified as ‘true’ without implying that he knows that they are true.

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281 *Sophia* and *epistēmē* are explicitly equated in the *Theaetetus* (145de). On knowledge as such, as discussed in the *Theaetetus*, see, e.g., Fine (1979).

282 ‘Refuting’, with regard to Socratic elenchus in general, can mean proving that A’s $x$ is false, cf. Vlastos (1983a) 27-58, and (1991). Alternatively, it could mean showing that A’s $x$ is inconsistent with his other mutually held beliefs, cf. Benson (2000 & 2011). There is no need to argue for one meaning over the other in this chapter, that we grant that ‘$x$ is $F$’ is at minimum shown to be untenable by Socrates suffices.

283 This rough formula is based on Vlastos’ (1991) 266. Again, whether Socrates proves $x$ to be false, or rather shows $x$ just to be inconsistent with the interlocutor’s other mutually held beliefs, is beside the point here.

284 It is outside the scope of this chapter to thoroughly compare the account of Socrates the midwife, as hereby established by [1] and [2], with any account drawn up of the elenctic Socrates of the Socratic dialogues—for such comparisons, see, e.g., Burnycat (1977); Sedley (2004); Vlastos (1991) 266.
Of course, there is no example in the *Theaetetus* to support [2]; no belief is ultimately considered true, none of Theaetetus’ ‘infants’ survive. Yet the account of Socratic midwifery, I believe, allows us to posit [2] inferentially. Hence, notwithstanding Socrates’ voiced denial of wisdom, the preceding exposition of Socrates’ proficiency in his elenctic art, coupled with the closing remarks of the dialogue (210bd), leave us with little doubt that the intellectual midwife is adept at pointing out that all of Theaetetus’ beliefs regarding knowledge *per se* are at minimum untenable. We leave the *Theaetetus*, then, with the settled depiction of Socrates *qua* expert in the art of intellectual midwifery.

Now, Plato ultimately writes at length about a ‘pre-eminent’ (*koruphaios*, 173c) philosopher in the *Theaetetus*. And the way he has Socrates speak of this philosopher leads us to believe that the latter is not just an ideal projected by Socrates. He is, instead, a philosopher living in the same world as Socrates and his interlocutors. And when we compare the account of Socrates the intellectual midwife with that of the philosopher of the digression, we are left to ponder what the exact connection is between these two active and, as I shall now argue, distinct types of philosophers. With whom is Socrates now sharing the spotlight? To be clear, the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is still some version of the inquisitor also found in dialogues like the *Euthyphro, Ion* and *Laches*. He is still, essentially, identified by his use of elenchus. What I want to show is just how Socrates’ elenctic philosophy differs from the sort of philosophy described by Socrates during the digression in the *Theaetetus*.

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285 I return to this passage below.

286 Sedley (2004) 34, whilst identifying ten essential features of Socrates the midwife, notes that ‘[refutation, i.e., elenchus] is actually the most important of [Socrates’] maieutic skills (150b9-c3).’
The claim that Socrates and the philosopher of the digression are not identical is not novel. Melissa Lane, for example, observes that the intellectual midwife and philosophical leader are distinct figures based especially on their diverse civic roles:

‘Si l’indifférence du philosophe [sc. the philosopher of the digression] aux soucis ordinaires de la vie publique n’interdit pas en principe quelque espèce de rôle civique alternatif, la teneur de la description de cette indifférence n’invite guère à ce genre de pensée. Socrate, le “taon” d’Athènes, ne cadre pas avec ce modèle, même s’il est également distinct des “hommes pratiques” que la Digression dénigre. Ce portrait du philosophe n’est pas, quoi qu’il puisse être par ailleurs, un portrait de Socrate.’

Nonetheless, I feel that not enough has been done by any commentator to show exactly how Socrates and the philosopher of the digression differ; that, particularly directed at Lane, there is more than a difference in civic duties between the two intellectuals to account for.

Let us accordingly turn to examine the philosopher of the digression. The account of this philosopher runs roughly from 172c-177c. I summarize below the

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287 Lane (2005) 331
288 Lane’s (2005) argument differentiating Socrates and the philosopher of the digression is certainly more nuanced. All the same, she focuses on the different civic roles ascribed to Socrates and the philosopher of the digression. Above I maintain that there are numerous intellectual differences between the two philosophers that we must also bring to the foreground.
289 What follows between 176a-177c is the moral of the whole story: echoing Socrates’ mission in the \textit{Apology}, a man ought to acknowledge that evil is an inescapable feature of this world. Accordingly, he should do his best to engage in virtuous activity and so become as godlike as is humanly possible. Moreover, it is suggested that the unjust man is remotely bettered by elenchus (cf. 177b). It is rather
main aspects of this philosopher: (I) he focuses his energy on theoretical activity (e.g., mathematics, astronomy and morality), where (I*) said activity concerns particularly the nature of things. (I**) Where, most generally, the nature or ‘whole’ of some thing (i.e., some being) refers to the model of something, irrespective of any instantiation. In other words, the nature or whole of something roughly refers to what we may call an abstract universal (e.g., the polyhedron itself, the Just itself, etc.). (II) He rejects deriving most knowledge from what is immediately perceivable (literally, ‘nearby’ (ἐγγύς, 174a2). (III) He seeks to become as godlike as possible, to engage in virtuous activity with knowledge (phronēsis) of the virtues. (IV) His pursuit of knowledge, especially his pursuit of the virtues, is the only sort of ‘genuine wisdom and goodness’ a human can obtain; his profession is the most valuable. (V) Seeking to become most godlike, his accounts of the divine and daemonic aspire to be truthful above all. He has no tolerance for those ignorant of the truth, whose own orations and stories are patently false. Above all, (I)-(V) are supported by (VI) leisure.

This philosopher is notably distinguished from his conventional counterpart, the typical man of the courtroom and political forum, as one who is said to have only difficult to see how the philosopher, as presented between 172c-176a, fits the description of the elenctic agent at 177b. I shall return to this point below.

290 ‘The question he [sc. the philosopher] asks is, What is Man? What actions and passions properly belong to human nature and distinguish it from all other beings?’ (174b)

291 Cf. Rep., VII 525a-531e on the sort of mathematics Plato probably has in mind in the digression of the Theaetetus. See Burnyeat (1990) 37-9 for a general presentation of both the pro and contra reading of Plato’s ‘theory of Forms’ allusion during the digression. At this juncture I do not feel the need to commit myself to one reading or another. For what concerns me most here is not so much understanding the exact nature of these entities, but rather noting that such entities are objects of inquiry that Socrates the intellectual midwife does not investigate primarily for his own intellectual enrichment (see below). That being said, I return to this topic on the nature of these entities up ahead, particularly when I turn to speak on the connection between the pre-eminent philosopher and the expert of dialektikē.
his corporeal self in the city. Far from worrying about presenting orations to his fellow citizens, his mind has departed to deliberate on the nature of things in the abstract. A brief word on this mind/body separation is in order here. For sure, it is explicitly said that that the philosopher as such does not engage in the conventional political affairs of the *polis*. Yet this still allows for the same individual to engage in virtuous (moral) activity. This brings us to Socrates’ enigmatic claim that the pre-eminent philosopher ‘knows not even that he knows not’ (οὐδὲν οὐκ οἶδεν, οἶδεν).

What Socrates is saying at 173e is that the philosopher as such, so indifferent to the affairs and assemblies of mortals, of what is in keeping with a non-divine (and accordingly non-knowledge based) standard, finds all talk on such things frivolous. Nonetheless, I argue that the philosopher as such is committed to morally engage with certain other people; that part of what it means to be the pre-eminent philosopher is to seek to better certain other people.

This brings me back to comment on something Melissa Lane says (already quoted above) on the role of the pre-eminent philosopher in the *polis*.

‘Si l’indifférence du philosophe aux soucis ordinaires de la vie publique n’interdit pas en principe quelque espèce de rôle civique alternatif, la teneur de la description de cette indifférence n’invite guère à ce genre de pensée.’

I agree that the philosopher of the digression is given no typical political role; in an environment that ridicules the philosopher when confronted with the task of speaking

292 Nightingale (1995) 51-2 has a similar interpretation of this passage.
293 Below I suggest that the philosopher as such only seeks to morally better bona fide aspiring philosophers.
before the Assembly or law court this pre-eminent philosopher is not to be identified as any sort of conventional politician. Yet I submit that Plato must recognize a sort of alternative ‘political’ function for this philosopher. ‘Political’ here in the sense described by Socrates in the *Gorgias* (521d-522a): ‘to practice politics’ (πράττειν τὰ πολιτικὰ, *Grg.*, 521d7-8) is to philosophically engage with certain people (see below), ultimately for the sake of morally bettering them.  

What proof is there to support this in the *Theaetetus*? For the moment (more is said below), I point out that the philosopher’s pursuit of wisdom immediately unfolds into the pursuit of knowing, for example, Justice *per se*. Yet the pursuit itself constitutes a virtuous act of being just. As ‘Protagoras’ (via the mouthpiece of Socrates) implies in the *Theaetetus*, proper philosophical argumentation is itself a just act:

‘It is the height of unreasonableness that a person who professes to care for {virtue} (ἀρετῆς φάσκοντα ἐπιμελέσθαι) should be consistently unjust (ἀδικοῦντα) in discussion. I mean by injustice, in this connection, the behavior of a man who does not take care to keep controversy distinct from discussion; a man who forgets that in controversy he may play about and trip up his opponent as often as he can, but that in discussion he must be serious, he must keep on helping his opponent to his feet again, and point out to him only those of his slips which are due to himself or to the intellectual society which he has previously frequented.’ (167e1-168a2)

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294 Note that this activity is called a political art (πολιτικῇ τέχνῃ, 521d7) in the *Gorgias*. It is unclear whether this art would still be called *politikē technē* in later dialogues like the *Theaetetus*, particularly in light of the account of *politikē technē* in the *Statesman*.

295 Neither Socrates nor the use of elenchus is singled out in this passage, cf. 167d-168a. Accordingly, this statement is meant to apply to all proper philosophical argumentation.
Accordingly, in properly engaging in philosophical discussion with someone, the pre-eminent philosopher is performing a virtuous act with a view to bettering that person. All of this will be elaborated on below.

CONTRASTING SOCRATES THE MIDWIFE AND THE PRE-EMINENT PHILOSOPHER

In the interim, I would like to point out that both Socrates the midwife and the philosopher of the digression share in leisure (cf. 172d5-8). The sort of leisure that Socrates has in mind in the *Theaetetus* generally refers to a particular moment in time afforded for the purpose of philosophical inquiry-‘It is so with us now’ (ὡς ήμείς νυν, 172d5-6), just as Socrates says. However, leisure does not equate Socrates and the philosophical leader. As we shall now see, Socrates and the philosopher of the digression use their respective free time in different ways and for different aims, apart from one general overarching aim: betterment of self through intellectual activity.

Let us begin contrasting Socrates and the philosopher of the digression by first noting one extremely important qualification made by Socrates regarding his art of intellectual midwifery:

‘And so, Theaetetus, if ever in the future you should attempt to conceive or should succeed in conceiving other theories, they will be better ones as the result of this inquiry. And if you remain barren, your companions will find you gentler and less tiresome; you will be modest and not think you know what you don’t know. *This is all my art can achieve-nothing more* (τοσοῦτον γὰρ μόνον ἡ ἐμὴ τέχνη δύναται, πλέον δὲ
οὐδὲν). I do not know of any of the things that other men know—the great and inspired men of today and yesterday.’ (210b11-d1)

The limits of Socratic midwifery (and so Socrates) are unequivocally established: as an intellectual midwife, and so ‘barren’ of beliefs to be scrutinized, Socrates can do nothing more than scrutinize another’s belief (or set of beliefs) and in the process temper that individual. When we acknowledge this limitation, we should immediately recognize certain acute differences between the intellectual midwife and the philosopher of the digression.

The philosopher of the digression is said to philosophize ‘throughout the universe, “in the deeps below the earth” and “in the heights above the heaven”; geometrizing upon earth, measuring its surfaces, astronomizing in the heavens; tracking down by every path the entire nature of each whole among the things that are’ (173e5-174a2). In particular, the philosopher is said to inquire into ‘happiness [itself] and misery [itself]’ (διὸς εὐδαιμονίας καὶ ἀθλιότητος, 175c5-6). So, in general the pre-eminent philosopher is seeking a synoptic view (i.e., knowledge) of the cosmos.

Not once does Socrates the intellectual midwife claim to be seeking this synoptic view. How could he? He has been explicitly barred from obtaining such knowledge by claiming to be incapable of ‘procreating’ (150c), i.e., producing new beliefs of his

296 This was already made clear earlier in the dialogue:

‘You are forgetting, my friend. I don’t know anything about this kind of thing myself, and I don’t claim any of it as my own. I am barren of theories; my business is to attend you in your labor.’ (157c7-9).

‘The arguments never come from me; they always come from the person I am talking to. And I do not know anything more than this small thing (ἐγὼ δὲ οὖδὲν ἐπίστημαι πλέον πλὴν βραχέος): how to take an argument from someone else-someone who is wise and give it a fair reception. So, now, I propose to try to get our answer out of Theaetetus, not to make any contribution of my own’ (161b1-6). Levett’s, rev. Burnyeat, translation with minor adjustment on my part.
Again, Socratic midwifery is fixed to take care of other individuals; Socrates cannot practice this art in the abstract and lofty heights of the universal features of nature.

But, the reader may ask, does not Socrates personally engage in theoretical activity? Does he not inquire into the nature or whole of, say, knowledge itself in the dialogue? (cf. (I), (I*), (I**)). Yes, I reply, but only indirectly. The closest Socrates can get to examining knowledge itself is through the beliefs others have regarding knowledge itself. And even then, the most Socrates could do with those beliefs is see if they survive a given elenchus (cf. 161b, quoted at n. 296). Now, if Socrates is barred from (I) [and its qualifications, (I*) and (I**)], then he fails to satisfy (II), for he will always remain personally ignorant (at least knowledge-less) of the nature of any universal. Remember all that Socrates the intellectual midwife claims to proficiency in is his elenctic art of intellectual midwifery.

To be clear, the account of intellectual midwifery in the *Theaetetus* strongly suggests that the art can only psychically (i.e., intellectually, morally) benefit the patient, not the agent. The reader may point to the *Hippias Major*, where Socrates is ultimately shown engaging in a personal elenchus (cf. 298c ff.). This reader may ask whether, in such a situation, Socrates could eventually produce his own beliefs to in turn self-scrutinize. My response is that the Socrates of the *Hippias Major* never explicitly claims to have the same intellectual limitation as the midwife: the former never says that he is incapable of producing new beliefs of his own. Accordingly, I am inclined to say that the Socrates of the *Hippias Major* is not the intellectual midwife of the *Theaetetus*; that the former is an example of a different version of the

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297 Compare with Socrates’ repudiation of cosmological inquiry (for himself) in the *Phaedo* (98a ff.), along with the *Apology* remarks (18ae) about the damage unfairly done to his image by, in particular, Aristophanes in the *Clouds*. 
elenctic Socrates. I am presently only concerned with examining the account of Socrates the expert of intellectual midwifery.

A different question: Does not this account of Socrates the midwife entail that Socrates does not know the virtues and so how to act virtuously? According to this reading, he does not *know* the virtues, so he does not *know* how to act virtuously. But this should not strike the reader as especially contentious. In not a single dialogue does Socrates claim to know any of the virtues. Nonetheless, clarification regarding Socrates’ exact epistemic relation to the virtues may be had by looking to the *Statesman*. There, Plato explicitly distinguishes one who really knows virtue *per se* from one who just has a true opinion of it, or at least of courage and self-control, two parts of virtue *per se* (308e ff.). *Ad hoc*, we can place Socrates in the latter category, as someone who may have true opinion of virtue and so act virtuously in accordance with said opinion. Knowledge of virtue and so knowledge of how to act virtuously is reserved for the genuine statesman of the *Statesman* and the philosopher as dialectician of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* (keeping the two distinct, as argued for in Ch. III).\(^{298}\)

What about the philosophical leader of the *Theaetetus*? Does he *know* the virtues? I hesitate to attribute knowledge of the virtues to this philosopher. This is because throughout the digression he is reported to be *pursuing* said knowledge, he is not explicitly attributed such knowledge already (a point that I shall return to later):

‘The question he asks [sc. the philosopher] is, What is Man? What actions and passions properly belong to human nature and distinguish it from all other beings?

\(^{298}\) *Pace* M. Frede (1996) 135-52, who argues the philosopher and the statesman are one and the same person.
This is what he inquires into and seeks to track down (ζητεῖ τε καὶ πράγματ' ἔχει διερευνώμενος).’ (174b3-6)

Nonetheless, the very fact that he is said to pursue said knowledge separates him from the intellectual midwife; Socrates the midwife at best can only approximate facets (III) and (IV) of the pre-eminent philosopher. Socrates may have already gathered a series of opinions regarding the virtues, but he can never fully (i.e., with full knowledge) act virtuously for, qua intellectual midwife, he will never strictly pursue positive knowledge of the virtues.

To be clear, in denying Socrates the midwife the pursuit of knowledge of virtue per se, I want to rule out the possibility that Socrates can somehow pursue positive knowledge by means of elenchus, that he could indirectly come to know the virtues precisely by examining others’ views about them. This is because, whilst his art may be able to praise an interlocutor’s belief that has withstood examination (cf. aspect [2] of his art), the most that this praising amounts to is tentative confirmation that the belief (i.e., thesis) is tenable. For sure, this thesis has withstood this instance of elenchus, but there is no guarantee that it will be able to withstand the next one; surviving one elenchus surely does not unconditionally confirm that the interlocutor’s thesis on, for example, virtue per se is in fact knowledge of virtue per se. Indeed, the survival of a belief/thesis after a given elenchus only encourages Socrates to further scrutinize that belief/thesis. Problematically, though, there is potentially no limit to the number of elenchoi needed to absolutely confirm that someone has knowledge of virtue per se; Socrates may be able to affirm the tenability of a thesis and in the process rule out a multitude of unsatisfactory counter-theses, but how can he be sure

299 Levett’s (rev. Burnyeat) translations, with minor adjustments on my part.
that he has ruled out all of them? Surely Plato must be aware of this epistemic limitation of elenchus; the pre-eminent philosopher’s ‘astronomizing’ and ‘geometrizing’ (173e-174a), and whatever it is that we may infer qualifies his pursuit of the virtues, cannot rely on elenchus in seeking out knowledge of things in themselves.\textsuperscript{300} Accordingly, Socrates’ art of midwifery cannot be considered the most valuable, because it generally does not, indeed it cannot directly and confidently seek out positive knowledge of things in themselves.

Nor can Socrates be attributed aspect (V) of the pre-eminent philosopher. During the digression it is said that this philosopher has no concern for ‘practical tasks’ (e.g., cooking, orations, etc.). And the practical man who can do such tasks, and further emphasizes said tasks’ purported higher importance, is considered a slave. For he cannot, ‘tune the strings of stories (λόγων) to the fitting praise (ὀρθῶς ὑμνῆσαι) of the life of gods and of the happy among men’ (175e9-a2). To fittingly speak of the gods is to speak truthfully of the gods. It follows that one who knows the truth of the divine should not deceive others via sensational and false accounts.\textsuperscript{301} Granted, the pre-eminent philosopher may not immediately have the requisite knowledge of the divine in order to craft stories that are completely accurate. However, he is constantly pursuing such knowledge. By contrast, Socrates does not pursue such knowledge of the divine, particularly for the sake of crafting stories of the divine. Again, his art is

\footnote{Let us grant that elenchus is still important when used to test the coherency of a philosopher’s thesis. The point here is that more is needed actually to possess knowledge of, say, the virtues. Tangentially, by what method does the pre-eminent philosopher pursue knowledge? We know that the pre-eminent philosopher is familiar with geometry and astronomy (173e-174a). Yet surely we would not expect the methods particularly associated with these sciences to assist him in answering the question ‘What is Man?’, or with coming to know Justice itself (cf. 174b, 175b). It is quite possible that there is no single, universal method that Plato has in mind during the digression. I return to this point below.}

\footnote{This reading is influenced by Socrates’ remarks on storytelling of the divine in the \textit{Republic}. Cf. \textit{Rep.} II, 377b-385c. Note \textit{Rep.}, X 607a, where stories and encomia to the gods, as truthfully broadcasted by the philosopher, are the sole poetic genres allowed to remain in the city.}
limited to supervise the intellectual labours of his mortal patients. Even if a given patient were pregnant with a *logos* (story) concerning the divine, Socrates’ task here would be to determine whether said *logos* is tenable. We would not further expect *Socrates* to supply his own *logos*, claiming it as his own.\(^{302}\)

In sum, apart from sharing in leisure, no other aspect ascribed to the philosopher of the digression can be immediately ascribed to Socrates the intellectual midwife. And as I have just shown, even the sharing in leisure calls for qualification. The pre-eminent philosopher and Socrates use their respective free time for different aims. The former uses his leisure pursuing knowledge or wisdom, inquiring into the nature of unchangeable things. The latter uses his leisure seeking to temper his interlocutor’s soul via scrutinizing his beliefs (be they on the nature of universals or not) in order to see whether or not those beliefs are tenable. The two figures are certainly distinct intellectuals.

Whilst distinct, we should not consider the intellectual midwife and the pre-eminent philosopher to be in conflict. Quite the opposite, so I argue, is what Plato wants to show us. The reference at 177b (quoted below) to the unjust conventional man being subjected to elenchus is noteworthy if only given the fact that in the preceding account of the pre-eminent philosopher (172c-177b) the use of elenchus is not explicitly attributed to him. To be sure, the remarks particularly at 175bd, which speak of the philosopher taking on a conventional man and moving him to abandon inquiries into, say, a just or unjust action, for an examination of the Just and Unjust themselves, do not refer to the use of elenchus. Indeed, the remarks hint that the conventional man is so confused by questions regarding universals that he is incapable of coming up with any belief/thesis that would otherwise be scrutinized via

\(^{302}\) Similarly, look at all that Socrates has to say concerning the thesis that knowledge is perception; Socrates never claims a single line on the matter as his personal view.
elenchus. This suggests that the conventional man is as far below even Socrates’ not very good interlocutors, for even the ones who lose their temper at least understand what Socrates is trying to do, as the pre-eminent philosopher is above the intellectual midwife.

Granted, the general point being made at 175bd is that the pre-eminent philosopher attempts to move the conventional man beyond instances or particulars for an inquiry into the greater whole or paradigm. Surely this is part and parcel of Socratic elenchus, broadly construed:

‘Try to imitate your answer about the powers. There you brought together the many powers within a single form; now I want you in the same way to give one single account of the many branches of knowledge.’ (Tht., 148d4-7)

‘Bear in mind then that I did not bid you tell me one or two of the many pious actions but that form itself that makes all pious actions pious, for you agreed that all impious actions are impious and all pious actions pious through one form, or don’t you remember?’ (Euth., 6d9-e1)

‘The same is true in the case of the virtues. Even if they are many and various, all of them have one and the same form which makes them virtues, and it is right to look to this when one is asked to make clear what virtue is. Or do you not understand what I mean?’ (Men., 72c6-d1)

Nevertheless, the context surrounding the move from the particular to the general in the digression of the Theaetetus discourages calling such a move an instance of
elenchus: the conventional man, prior to being drawn up to higher level, does not have a particular thesis concerning, say, Justice itself, which in turn the philosopher seeks to scrutinize. This is confirmed by noting that even after being drawn up to ponder the Just itself the conventional man still produces no belief on the Just itself, which is subsequently subjected to elenchus.\(^{303}\)

All the same, elenchus is mentioned at the close of the digression. Accordingly, it demands some attention.

‘{Socrates} But there is one accident to which the unjust man is liable. When it comes to giving and taking an account in a private discussion of the things he disparages; when he is willing to stand his ground like a man, for long enough, instead of running away like a coward, then, my friend, an odd thing happens. In the end the things he says do not satisfy even himself; that famous eloquence [alt. ‘rhetoric’ (ἡ ῥητορικὴ ἐκείνη)] of his somehow dries up, and he is left looking nothing more than a child.’ (177b1-7)

I suggest that Plato closes the digression with the implication that elenchus is in the right hands a valuable tool: it tempers, via the purgation of untenable beliefs, or praising of tenable ones, a given individual. Yet there is a hidden proviso here: whilst the text allows us to attribute to the philosopher of the digression the use of elenchus

\(^{303}\) Whilst Socrates struggles at times to get his interlocutor to abandon pointing out instances of, say, piety or virtue \textit{per se}, for a definition of piety itself or virtue itself, he does ultimately elicit a thesis, weak though it usually is, that attempts to define piety or virtue \textit{per se}. This course of events is not hinted at in the description of the interaction between the pre-eminent philosopher and the conventional man.
(though I ultimately doubt this attribution, see below),

elenchus is not what makes him unique. Recall that what makes the pre-eminent philosopher unique is his pursuit, considered divine (cf. 176ae), of genuine wisdom or knowledge of universals. This again brings up the contrast between the pre-eminent philosopher and Socrates the intellectual midwife. The latter does not seek per se to gain or provide genuine wisdom or knowledge of such things. Yes, some god has instructed Socrates to engage only in his sort of midwifery (150cd). But following a divine command is different from pursuing what is divine. Ironically, it is a divine command that prevents Socrates from pursuing what is divine, from philosophizing in the same way that the philosopher of the digression does.

Now, there are especially three points to take away from the presentation of Socrates as intellectual midwife in the \textit{Theaetetus}. Firstly, this presentation announces an acute intellectual limitation of the elenctic Socrates: relegated to expertise in the art of intellectual midwifery, Socrates notably cannot comprehend the things in themselves; he cannot generate his own \textit{logoi} about the nature of ‘those which are’. This immediately, though as I have shown above not solely, differentiates him from the philosopher showcased during the digression. Nevertheless (this is the second point), Plato’s depiction of Socratic midwifery in the \textit{Theaetetus} is not wholly negative. Far from it. Socratic midwifery is needed for the conditioning of the soul for future philosophical studies; the intellectual midwife is the designated expert with the particular capacity to rid an individual of his untenable beliefs so as to leave him at a better investigative starting point in the future. The close of the digression (177bc), as

\footnote{It may be that the pre-eminent philosopher is not whom Plato has specifically in mind here; that Plato is instead thinking of Socrates or some similar elenctic figure. All the same, nothing in the description of the pre-eminent philosopher prohibits us from attributing to him the use of elenchus. I shall return to say more about the pre-eminent philosopher’s relationship with the conventional man.}
we have just seen, openly cites the need (justification) for such an art: before even beginning to think that one can turn to inquire into say the just itself, a man needs to be purged of any lingering untenable beliefs regarding what is just. The beneficial impact of undergoing examination under Socrates is also evidenced with the allusion to Theaetetus’ potential intellectual advancement at the end of the dialogue (210cd). Understanding what is not knowledge *per se*, for example, is the sort of insight obtained via examination under Socrates that betters one’s overall wisdom. Generalized, post examination with the intellectual midwife, one understands what thesis on *x* to avoid pursuing in future investigations of *x*.

Thirdly, the intellectual midwife’s conditioning of the soul for future pursuit of wisdom concurrently provides an ethical benefit in addition to making one more temperate (ἡµερότερος σωφρόνως, 210c3): taking for granted that wisdom *per se* is a virtue (cf. *Rep*. IV)), one is virtuously better off now knowing what investigative paths not to take in the future. So, supervision under the intellectual midwife does not just purge one of untenable beliefs, it also positively adjusts the moral character of the individual by making him both temperate and in some sense wise. To review, the principle aim of Socratic midwifery is to condition the soul of the ‘pregnant’ interlocutor for the future pursuit of knowledge (wisdom) via purging said interlocutor of untenable beliefs. This act concurrently betters the interlocutor’s overall moral character. Plato has saddled Socrates with quite the laudable art.

Can we accordingly surmise a complementary relationship between the pre-eminent philosopher and the intellectual midwife? I suggest that we should see Socrates (or any other expert of intellectual midwifery for that matter) working in

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305 Nothing in the text outright excludes others from becoming intellectual midwives. Compare Socrates’ remarks in the *Phaedo* (78a), where he urges Simmias and Cebes to search for other philosophers like Socrates (i.e., other elenctic experts, removers of unfounded fears (i.e., beliefs)).
conjunction with the pre-eminent philosopher. The former prepares the soul for the sort of inquiries conducted by the latter: the pupil must be cleansed of falsehoods regarding \(x\) before properly understanding what \(x\) is.\(^{306}\) So, Plato wishes to make clear the important role Socrates’ art plays. Yet the intellectual midwife alone could never help us obtain wisdom particularly of the things in themselves (of Justice itself, of Man \textit{per se}, and so on). This too is what Plato wants us to note, hence the showcase of the pre-eminent philosopher of the digression. What is revealed in the \textit{Theaetetus} is that philosophy is minimally composed of two separate but equally important methodological branches.\(^{307}\) On the one hand, philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom and virtuous betterment via elenchus; it purges one of untenable beliefs, discourages one from pursuing untenable beliefs. On the other hand, philosophy is the pursuit of wisdom and virtuous betterment via whatever applicable method, culminating (hopefully) in positive knowledge.

Reflecting on this relationship prompts me to qualify something mentioned in passing earlier: the pre-eminent philosopher is not an educator of the conventional man. Indeed, he has no hope of succeeding unless Socrates or some elenctic figure like him has gone before. This is because there is no good motivation to identify the elenctic figure mentioned at the close of the digression (177b) with the pre-eminent philosopher. Note that the reference to elenchus at 177b comes as a postscript: the contrast between the godlike conception of \textit{eudaimonia} (a good life being one of

\(^{306}\) Interestingly, a similar educative process is suggested during the account of the elenctic expert in the \textit{Sophist}

‘The people who cleanse the soul, my young friend, likewise think the soul, too, won’t get any advantage from any learning that’s offered to it until someone shames it by refuting it, removes the opinions that interfere with learning, and exhibits it cleansed, believing that it knows only those things that it does know, and nothing more’ (230c7-d4, cf. 226a-231b).

\(^{307}\) Below I further promote the idea that, in the \textit{Theaetetus}, ‘philosophy’, far from referring to just one science, is an honorific title encompassing several diverse sciences.
virtue) and its contrary wretchedness culminates at 176e-177b. By contrast, the episode at 175b f. shows the pre-eminent philosopher not kindly trying to educate the convention man, but proving that the conventional man is just as embarrassed when a fish out of water as the pre-eminent philosopher is when a fish out of his water.

Further reflection elicits a related point: the negativity of elenchus reinforces the idea that man is not the measure, something which clearly butts heads with Protagoras’ *homo mensura* (central to discussion leading up to the digression). By itself this negativity could leave us with the archaic notion that man, not being a god, is unable to access true knowledge full stop. But then, the digression emphasizes what is only presupposed in the *Republic*: certain humans *can* have access to the whole truth (i) if initially cleansed of their falsehoods as well as their self-conceit of knowledge, and (ii) if they accept that the same rigour that can be brought to mathematical studies can also be applied to, in particular, ethical universals (viz., knowing the Just itself, Temperance itself, etc.). With (i) and (ii) satisfied, the individual’s ensuing detachment from conventional interests is promoted as the way forward for ethics *after* elenctic therapy (i.e., after Socrates and his ilk have done their job). This is where the pre-eminent philosopher would come in: he may not be capable of helping the conventional man, but that alone does not rule out his task of assisting those amongst men who have satisfied (i) and (ii) to pursue positive knowledge.308

308 In all this there is a clear similarity with the *Republic*, one that bypasses the question whether the digression recognizes ‘Platonic Forms’ as metaphysical entities (cf. n. 291). Indeed, the language of 174a and 175c simply relates a concern with universals regardless of the metaphysics. For sure, the pre-eminent philosopher of the *Theaetetus* is looking for changeless truths, but this underdetermines the metaphysics of ‘Platonic Forms’.
IS THE PRE-EMINENT PHILOSOPHER AN EXPERT OF FORMS?

I now wish to see if the pre-eminent philosopher of the *Theaetetus* is meant to represent the full-fledged expert of *dialektikē*, wherever the latter is found in Plato. I think that there exists a fundamental difference between the two philosophers, which ultimately dissuades one from equating them: unlike the full-fledged expert of *dialektikē*, the pre-eminent philosopher of the *Theaetetus* is shown still in pursuit of knowledge.

‘The question he asks [sc. the philosopher] is, What is Man? What actions and passions properly belong to human nature and distinguish it from all other beings? *This is what he inquires into and seeks to track down (ζητεῖ τε καὶ πράγματ' ἔχει διερευνώμενος).*’ (174b3-6)

This is not to say that the pre-eminent philosopher is completely without some knowledge:

‘[The philosopher] spurns them and pursues its winged way, as Pindar says, throughout the universe, ‘in the deeps beneath the earth’ and geometrizing (γεωμετροῦσα) its surfaces, ‘in the heights above heaven’, astronomizing (ἀστρονομοῦσα) and searching (ἐρευνώμενη)310 by every path the entire nature of

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309 This presupposes a generally consistent (which is not to say identical) picture of this unique science of universals as such, which is what I have been arguing for up to this point.

310 Levett’s translation, my italics, with a minor adjustment on my part. Again, this philosopher does not have the knowledge at present.
each whole among the things that are, never condescending to what lies near at hand.’’

(173e4-174a2)

Surely talk of ‘geometrizing’ and ‘astronomizing’ suggests the exercising of possessed knowledge. However, note what is also said: ‘searching (ἐρευνομένη) by every path the entire nature of each whole among the things that are’. This must indicate seeking a certain type of knowledge that the philosopher does not have already.

What type of knowledge exactly? Surely it is knowledge of a certain set of entities that are, like the mathematical concepts this philosopher already has possession of, universal by nature. As has already been discussed, I hesitate to say anything more about the exact nature of any universal hinted at in the *Theaetetus*. Nevertheless, let us assume for the sake of argument that the ‘whole’ of each thing is one of those special universals, those famous ‘Platonic Forms’. Let us also assume for the sake of argument that Platonic Forms are the ultimate objects of knowledge for the full-fledged philosopher according to Plato. The fact remains that the pre-eminent philosopher does not have knowledge of such entities. To be clear, we may also assume that Platonic Forms are the ultimate objects of knowledge for the expert of *dialektikē*, wherever we find him in Plato. So be it, at least for this argument. Again, the point here is just that the pre-eminent philosopher of the *Theaetetus* is not ascribed this knowledge.

But not matching up with the accomplished expert of *dialektikē* does not mean that the pre-eminent philosopher does not come across as an aspiring dialectician. Indeed, traits (I)-(VI) of the pre-eminent philosopher can practically be ascribed to someone aspiring to master *dialektikē*: the latter implicitly has leisure to
engage in theoretical activity—where said activity concerns the nature of universals (cf. *Sph.*, 253c-254b, *Pol.*, 285d-286b, *Phlb.*, 58a). Further, like pre-eminent philosopher, the expert of *dialektikē* rejects deriving most knowledge from what is immediately at hand, that is subject to change (cf. *Pol.*, 286ab, *Phlb.*, 58e-59a). Accordingly, this aspiring dialectician also seeks to remove himself, as much as he possibly can, from any conventional concerns. Instead, he focuses on what is in essence divine (cf. *Sph.*, 254ab). In doing so, he seeks to become as godlike as possible. Additionally, given his closer approximation to what is divine, in comparison to that of a non-dialectician, it is safe to surmise that the aspiring dialectician’s account of what is divine would be more accurate. In general, then, there is enough evidence in the *Theaetetus* to identify the pre-eminent philosopher as an aspiring expert of *dialektikē*. To be clear, what this roughly means is that the former is in pursuit of a systematic body of knowledge regarding the essences of things.

Interestingly, with no explicit mention of grasping or employing *dialektikē*, this passage in the *Theaetetus* (173e3-174a2) may help in part to explain why Plato refrains from calling the pre-eminent philosopher a ‘*dialektikos*’: whilst laudable, this philosopher still comes up short of the full-fledged dialectician highlighted in certain dialogues. For sure, ‘*dialektikos*’, without further qualification, does not only refer to an expert of *dialektikē*. So perhaps a safer conjecture would be that refraining from using ‘*dialektikos*’ in the digression is meant to dissuade the reader from directly associating the pre-eminent philosopher with any referent of ‘*dialektikos*’ (or

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311 Whilst there is no explicit mention of leisure (*scholē*) in the ensuing citations from the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus* and *Philebus*, the dialectician must have such leisure to engage in the sort of intellectual activity that defines him.

312 Talk of universals need not prove too problematic for our present task; the exact essence of these beings, which the philosopher sets his sight on, can be overlooked.
‘dialektikē’ for that matter) found in Plato. Indeed, opting for the broader term ‘philosophos’ (cf. 173c, 175e) is surely less discriminatory than ‘expert of dialektikē’; ‘philosophos’ certainly connects the pre-eminent philosopher more closely to a vast array of intellectuals (Socrates and Theodorus included, cf. 173bc)-a point I return to below. By contrast, ‘dialektikos’, by itself, does not hit off the pre-eminent philosopher’s interest in, say, astronomy and geometry. All this helps to explain Plato’s preference for ‘philosophos’ in the digression: the pre-eminent philosopher is a generic intellectual, a theoretician who includes or combines mathematics, physics and inquiries into moral truths.

As was just highlighted, the pre-eminent philosopher is still bettering his philosophical ability, still inquiring into a diverse array of entities (Man, King, Happiness, etc., etc.). Interestingly, the clause ‘searching by every path’ (πάντῃ…ἐρευνώμενη) leaves open the possibility that this philosopher may employ division, the method par excellence used especially by the science par excellence (dialektikē), albeit in some limited capacity, for he still does not have knowledge of what he is ultimately looking for. But this is only a conjecture, given that there is no insight in the digression into what precise method, setting aside the mathematical ones used for geometrical and astronomical research, the pre-eminent philosopher employs to obtain knowledge of ‘the nature of every whole among the things that are’.

It should be clear by now that this rough account of the pre-eminent philosopher as at best an aspiring expert of dialektikē does little to explain the silence in the Theaetetus regarding Plato’s supreme science, as it is variously cast. Indeed, we may ask why Plato refrains from identifying some version of dialektikē in the

As we know, Plato is consistently critical, though to be sure not wholly dismissive, of the methods of mathematics. We may safely infer, then, that the pre-eminent philosopher’s ‘geometrizing’ and ‘astronomizing’ does not by itself yield knowledge of the universals he is still searching for.
Theaetetus as the pinnacle of philosophy? My conjecture, already mentioned in passing above, is that by refraining from equating the philosopher of the digression with the expert of dialektikē, and thereby discouraging the interpolation of a supra-mathematical science which can be called ‘dialektikē’ in the course of the dialogue, Plato wishes to focus our attention more generally on the idea that philosophia in the Theaetetus represents any intellectual and ethical endeavour, a spirit so to speak and corresponding activity of truth-seeking; that there are various philosophoi corresponding to types of philosophia.

What further proof is there to show that Plato is endorsing in the Theaetetus this conception of philosophy? Well, apart from promoting the pre-eminent philosopher, Socrates openly calls geometry, amongst other sciences, a type of philosophy:

‘If Cyrene were first in my affections, Theodorus, I should be asking you how things are there, and whether any of your young people are taking up geometry or any other type of philosophy (περὶ γεωμετρίαν ἢ τινα ἄλλην φιλοσοφίαν).’ (143d1-3)

Geometry qua philosophy, or more generally a science used by philosophers, is often cited in Plato. The pre-eminent philosopher of the digression in the Theaetetus is familiar with geometry. The philosopher-king of Kallipolis must know geometry as a prelude to the science of dialectic in the Republic. Timaeus in his eponymous dialogue clearly demonstrates a mastery of geometry. In the Philebus, Socrates speaks of the ‘the geometry and calculations practiced by philosophers’ (κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν γεωμετρίας τε καὶ λογισμὸν καταμελετομένων, 56e8-57a1). Moreover, in the

314 Tr. Levett rev. Burnyeat, with slight adjustment of my part
Epinomis (990c ff.), geometry is recognized as an essential study for philosophically gifted souls slated to comprise the Nocturnal Council.\(^{315}\)

Furthermore, in the Theaetetus we have Socrates consider Theaetetus an aspiring philosopher not because of the latter’s grasp of a specific science, but rather because of his overall intellectual curiosity: \(^{316}\)

‘It seems that Theodorus is not poorly guessing your nature. For this is indeed an experience characteristic of a philosopher (μάλα γάρ φιλοσόφου τούτο τὸ πάθος), wondering: this is the beginning of philosophy, nowhere else.’ (155d1-4, my translation)

There is also the generalized account of proper philosophical argumentation put in the mouth of Protagoras: if Socrates, though surely this applies to anyone using whatever applicable method, avoids the argumentative style of professional controversialists and instead pursues the truth of the matter,

‘…those who associate with you will blame themselves for their confusion and their difficulties, not you. They will seek your company, and think of you as their friend; but they will loathe themselves, and seek refuge from themselves in philosophy (εἰς φιλοσοφίαν) in the hope that they may thereby become different people and be rid forever of the men that they once were.’ (168a2-7, cf. 167d-168a)

\(^{315}\) Even if spurious, this patently ‘Academic’ opus shows the importance of geometry amongst philosophers close to Plato.

\(^{316}\) Thereby confirming Theodorus’ account of Theaetetus’ philosophical character (cf. Tht., 143e-144b). Socrates gives a harmonious account of those with a right philosophical nature in Republic VI, 503b f.
Ultimately, the point I want to stress here is that there is no convincing proof in the *Theaetetus* of equating philosophy solely with either Socratic midwifery, or the science of dialectic, with any distinguished science really. This is roughly the reason why no particular version of *dialektikē* is singled out in the *Theaetetus*: the pinnacle of philosophy takes backseat to the whole of it; genuine philosophical inquiry, broadly speaking, is what Plato wants to highlight in the dialogue. Indeed, the more general notion of philosophy sits well with what most scholars take to be a central aim of the *Theaetetus*: to honour the historical Theaetetus, a revered mathematician. The point here is just that it may well have seemed backhanded of Plato from this point of view to emphasize that what Theaetetus (both the young character in the dialogue and the actual mathematician) concentrated on was, whilst important, only a *propaedeutic* to Plato’s most important science. Instead, Plato may well be dwelling more positively on the affinities between pure mathematics and that science of ‘the nature of the whole among the things that are’. This surely fits well with the picture in the *Philebus* of the harmonizing ‘philosophical’ sciences (56d-57e): any science is a *bona fide* insight into reality when in the hands of a philosopher. That the sciences differ from each other in their respective proximity to reality is beside the point here. Surely Plato need not always pit the sciences against each other. Indeed, the harmonization of ‘philosophies’ is what is more positively evidenced in the

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317 See Knorr (1975) Ch. XIII for an account of the historical Theaetetus’ mathematical work. See as well Pappus’ remarks (in Burnyeat (1978) 507) on the historical Theaetetus. However, cf. Burnyeat (1978) 512 n. 88 for certain critiques of Knorr’s claims, particularly with regard to his treatment of the character Theaetetus in Plato’s *Theaetetus*. In addition, cf. *Suidas*, s.v. Theaetetus: ‘Ἁθηναῖς, ἀστρολόγος, φιλόσοφος’. However, note that what follows next in the entry on Theaetetus in the *Suidas*, μαθητής Σωκράτους (‘pupil of Socrates’), is probably false. Theaetetus would have been between the ages of 17-18 when Socrates died in 399 BC, a period in which Theaetetus was involved (predominantly?) in mathematical studies—something the historical Socrates was not particularly known for. This line in the *Suidas* may simply be based on the dramatic interaction between the young Theaetetus and Socrates in Plato’s *Theaetetus*. 
Theaetetus. The Philebus only lends support to this picture: all genuine sciences subsume under the greater conception of philosophia as a spirited pursuit of wisdom.

In sum, ‘philosophy’ in the Theaetetus remains an honorific term encompassing various arts or sciences (e.g., dialektikē Ἐ[198x731] (whatever exactly it may be), geometry, astronomy, intellectual midwifery, etc.). Nonetheless, all philosophiai are broadly unified by one general aim: betterment of self via intellectual activity.318 The Theaetetus, in keeping with what Plato affirms elsewhere, shows philosophia as something bigger than any one discipline.

ON PETERSON’S READING OF THE DIGRESSION

Of course, not every scholar would endorse my reading of Plato’s conception of philosophy in the Theaetetus. Sandra Peterson319 argues that philosophy, as described during Socrates’ digression in the Theaetetus, is not what Socrates actually endorses.320 In fact, so argues Peterson, Socrates provides an account of philosophy

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318 Even the activity of geometrizing, if recognized as proper philosophizing, must be considered a virtuous, namely just, activity that hopefully culminates in wisdom, a further virtue.

319 Peterson (2011)

320 Indeed, Peterson (2011) xvi, 233-34 argues that there is insufficient evidence to ascribe to Socrates the vast majority of views that most scholars have ascribed to him in Plato. Peterson goes one step further and denies that Plato endorses any of the doctrines found in his dialogues (e.g., the theory of Forms in the Republic; the arguments for the immortality of the soul in the Phaedo), save the one regarding philosophy that is described by Socrates in the Apology: philosophy is a constant process of (self-)examination, one which denies all claims to knowledge of the greatest matters (cf. (2011) 233-34). To be clear, Peterson accepts that Socrates acts as a sort of mouthpiece for Plato in the dialogues (cf. (2011) 4-5, 15). Though, according to Peterson, Socrates never personally endorses any doctrine found therein (cf. (2011) 233). She adds that Plato ‘disappears into his writing’ (235), for the most part only interested in critically examining the views of others, not promoting his own (cf. (2011) 231-35). In passing, I must point out that Peterson’s project rests on a tenuous assumption: that the account of philosophy in the Apology, as told by the character Socrates and (so argues Peterson) ultimately...
representative of Theodorus’ unexamined convictions. Concurrently, Socrates disassociates himself from said account.

‘…Socrates implies that the statements of the digression addressed to Theodorus come from Theodorus, and do not come from Socrates…What count as your views for the purposes of an examination discussion are not only views adopted formally long ago and proclaimed ever since; your views also include proposals that appeal to you to which you assent when you are first asked about them.’

My aim in this last section is to cast serious doubt on Peterson’s reading particularly on the first part of the digression (roughly, 172c-176a). In addition, I argue against Peterson’s claim that the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is the same as the Socrates of the *Apology*. I also show that her related reading of the close of the *Theaetetus* is misguided. Lastly, I offer an alternative reading of the close of the *Theaetetus*.

Generally put, Peterson’s overarching claim is that Socrates never actually endorses any proposition that arises in discussion in any dialogue (save the *Apology*). In other words, all propositions, be they first uttered by Socrates in the

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321 Peterson (2011) 69

322 I am aware of Taylor’s (2012), Wilburn’s (2011), and Reshotko’s (2012) similarly critical remarks on Peterson’s project. I note, though, that none of these scholars directly and extensively address Peterson’s treatment of the *Theaetetus*.

323 Admittedly, in various places Plato has Socrates explicitly disclaim authorship of views he lays out: cf., e.g., *Phd.*, 108c, *Crat.*, 397d, 399a, 428c, cf. 400a, 407d, *Smp.*, 201de, *Phdr.*, 242d ff., 244a, *Menex.*, 238b ff., and *Th.,* 164e. Accordingly, this puts the onus of proof on anyone claiming that Socrates voices a view only tacitly not endorsed by him. That being said, I find it very odd that Peterson does not reflect on the fact that Socrates disclaims ownership in the passages that I have listed. Surprisingly, Peterson (2011) 246-8 attempts to harmonize Diotima’s speech on Love and philosophy
form of a question or declaration, are ultimately propositions endorsed by the interlocutor and only the interlocutor. Specifically, Peterson distinguishes between two types of examination applied by Socrates in the *Theaetetus*: there is an elenctic, or more generally question-and-answer type of examination (more on this below), prevalent through much of the dialogue. There is also another type of examination: it is a presentation of a set of propositions first uttered by the examiner that is in turn accepted by and accordingly ascribed to the interlocutor, only to be scrutinized (by the examiner) at a later stage. The latter type of examination is, according to Peterson, in evidence during the digression. Both types of examination, so argues Peterson, harmonize with philosophizing as accounted for and endorsed by the Socrates of the *Apology*.

Now, it is one thing to say that Socrates does not openly endorse any thesis put forth in a given elenches; an aporetic terminus to a given elenctic examination casts doubt on any thesis proffered by any speaker during examination. By this I mean that a typical elenctic episode ends by showing that a given thesis is at minimum untenable, that no one present in the discussion ought to hold onto the thesis, at least in its current shape. Accordingly, it is reasonable to maintain, as Peterson does throughout her book, that Socrates does not commit himself to any thesis at play in a typical elenches. For that reason, I shall not question Socrates’ disassociation from theses scrutinized via elenches in the *Theaetetus*. Instead, I shall focus on the other purported type of examination by which Socrates purportedly disavows any sort of philosophical commitment. More precisely, I want to question Peterson’s claim that

with Socrates’ view of philosophy of the *Apology*; as far as I can tell, Peterson never reflects on the point that Socrates explicitly disclaims authorship of the speech in the *Symposium*.

\(^{324}\) Cf. Peterson (2011) 15 et passim

\(^{325}\) Cf. Peterson (2011) 64-70. The parenthetical is important, as I show below. Peterson calls these two types of examination ‘extraction by interrogation’ and ‘extraction by declaration’.
the digression of the *Theaetetus* constitutes an ‘extraction by declaration’ (Peterson’s expression); that Socrates does not endorse the account of the philosopher presented during the digression; that the account of the philosopher is a type of examination of Theodorus’ (*not* Socrates’) conception of the philosopher.\(^{326}\)

To review, Peterson is essentially saying that in the *Theaetetus* Socrates does not commit himself to any thesis found in any part of the dialogue, including the digression. To fairly represent Peterson here, I quote her at length:

> ‘In the digression addressed to Theodorus Socrates does not ask questions and get assents [i.e., he does not engage in elenchus]. Rather, he enunciates declarations that Theodorus praises…The sense in which these declarations do not come from Socrates is that Socrates is not presenting himself’ as endorsing or recommending them, because he has already said that he knows nothing, except how to get a statement from someone else who is wise, and to take its measure. That is to say, Socrates has told us that he merely tests candidate wise statements. He does not offer them as doctrines or teaching, even though he may be the first to utter them.’

I now turn to criticize Peterson’s reading particularly of the first half of the digression.

To start, surely Socrates’ ‘terriblelust’ (cf. *Tht.*, 169bc) for conversation, which Peterson highlights,\(^{327}\) and which in turn she uses to state that Socrates is in

\(^{326}\) Peterson (2011) is not the first scholar to question Socrates’ (Plato’s) endorsement of the account of the philosopher during the digression of the *Theaetetus*. See, e.g., Rue (1993). A critique of Rue’s thesis is found in Lännström (2011).

\(^{327}\) Peterson (2011) 67-8
essence a slave to the investigative course that the argument itself takes,\textsuperscript{328} refers particularly to elenctic exchanges, not conversation \textit{simpliciter}. Indeed, most of Peterson’s ensuing quotations (\textit{Tht}. 150c, 157cd, 161a, 169b, 184e, 190b, 210bc) used in support of her thesis clearly refer either to a particular elenctic exchange, or to the elenctic nature of Socrates’ art of intellectual midwifery. At 150c, Socrates speaks of his way of eliciting from his pregnant patients answers (propositions), which, as we find out, are in turn scrutinized by Socrates to see whether they are ‘wind-eggs’. At 157cd, Socrates is clarifying his role as intellectual midwife, after building up the first thesis on knowledge (cf. 156c-157c), which will ultimately be refuted via elenchus. At 161a, Socrates is explaining to Theodorus how, via elenchus, he (Socrates) is going to proceed in discussion with Theaetetus. At 169bc, context patently details the elenctic exchange in progress between Theodorus and Socrates. So too at 184e, Socrates is obviously in the middle of an elenchus with Theaetetus. And at 190b, Socrates is alluding to any viable answer that may survive the current elenchus. The point I want to make here is this: even if we assume for the sake of argument that Socrates does not commit himself to a particular thesis in a given elenchus, this move does not, \textit{ipso facto}, further entail a habitual disavowal of all theses considered in all forms of philosophical conversation.

Perhaps Peterson could respond here by referring back to what Socrates says at 150c and 161a:

\textsuperscript{328} Peterson (2011) 71: ‘Theodorus thinks that philosophers have their arguments totally under their control, like slaves, and that philosophers are divine. In contrast, Socrates is prepared for the argument to trample and humble him, and he thinks that philosophers are in the first place puzzled.’

In passing, Socrates actually says that philosophers are in the first place in wonder: ‘wonderment: this is the start of philosophy, nowhere else’ (τὸ θαυμάζειν· οὐ γὰρ ἄλλη ἀρχή ἡ ϕιλοσοφίας ἡ αὑτή, 155d3-4). Wonderment is surely different from the sort of puzzlement (\textit{aporia}) that Peterson has in mind.
‘I always ask others, and I myself profess nothing about anything on account of having nothing wise [to say]’ (150c, tr. Peterson (2011) 69)

‘Not one of the arguments comes from me but always from the one that is having the discussion with me. I know nothing more, apart from a tiny bit, enough to be able to get a statement from someone else who is wise, and to take its measure. That’s what I’m going to do now: I’m going to try to get an argument from Theaetetus, not to say anything myself.’ (161a7 ff., tr. Peterson (2011) 68)

Peterson claims that Socrates’ adverb, ‘always’, which extends to every discussion in which he is engaged, particularly ‘implies that he [sc. Socrates] counts even this sequence of declarations [i.e., the digression] as extracted from his interlocutors.’

However, aei need only mean ‘on each occasion’, or suggest some other specification of time, as in the context of elenchus. And that is just what context indicates in these passages: context informs us that Socrates’ statements are closely tied to his elenctic art of midwifery (cf. 150b, 160e-161b). Accordingly, there is no implication at 150c or 161a that Socrates never (i.e, in every discursive situation) says something positive of his own. At most, these passages suggest that he may not proffer a personally held belief when engaged in elenchus. The digression is clearly not an instance of elenchus. Therefore there are no good grounds to extend Socrates’ disavowal of a thesis during a given elenchus to a patently non-elenctic part of the dialogue.

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329 Peterson (2011) 70
330 See LSJ entry
In addition, if by ‘thesis’ we mean a positive view put forward for discussion within some recognized type of investigation, then Socrates’ account of the philosopher of the digression is not, technically speaking, a thesis proper. In fact, one could reasonably argue that the account of the philosopher of the digression is a sort of ‘meta-picture’, that is a picture of what the philosopher is like, not a statement either supporting or criticizing claims such a philosopher makes within any one of his investigations. This brings up a related question: Is Socrates’ disavowal of positive positions (1) completely universal, or (2) is it a refusal to compete (on their level) with thinkers who do put forward positive views? Surely Peterson is forced to admit that Socrates’ disavowal is not completely universal; after all, Peterson argues that in the Apology Socrates endorses what is in essence a positive view of philosophy (viz., that philosophy is X).331

Yet (2) is perfectly compatible with Socrates’ recognizing the existence (or anyway possibility) of a figure like the philosopher of the digression.332 A figure such as the philosopher of the digression will have been more or less familiar from what people (not just the characters in Plato) knew of the Pre-Socratics (e.g., Thales, Parmenides, Anaxagoras). Indeed, even if Plato fabricated the Thales story in the Theaetetus (174ab), he evidently assumes that readers will latch on to a familiar type (cf. Aristophanes’ Clouds, as well as Phaedrus 270a). Is Socrates not allowed, then, in common with others in his culture, to recognize this type (even from afar)? I take it

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331 In Peterson’s (2011) own words, philosophy is believing ‘that it is important to acknowledge that one does not have knowledge of the greatest matters; that the greatest harm one can do to someone else is to offer as knowledge teachings about how to live that are less than genuine knowledge; and that continually subjecting oneself to examination – possibly by examining others – is a requirement of a thoughtful life.’

332 Incidentally, I take it Peterson would say that Socrates is insincere in making statements in which he recognizes the existence of the discussions of mathematics, just because he (Socrates) does not want to put himself forward as a mathematician himself. I find this very odd.
Peterson would dig in her heels and say that Socrates is allowed to recognize this type, without further endorsing it. But then the point raised above about the non-thesis nature of the account of the philosopher of the digression returns: What grounds do we have to think that Socrates is *disavowing* this type during the digression?

Peterson might argue that at 150bc Socrates refers to any number of ‘possible tests’ at his disposal; that Socrates is always at the ready to test someone in someway; that there is nothing in the passage that explicitly says Socrates is only testing someone when he is found employing elenchus:

‘And the most important thing about my art is the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring, to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of a phantom, that is, an error, or a fertile truth.’ (150b9-c3)

Accordingly, Socrates the midwife could be applying some test different from elenchus to Theodorus during the digression.

In reply, first note the reference to a ‘young mind’ (τοῦ νέου). Theodorus is not young. Note as well Theodorus’ plea to get out of an examination with Socrates on account of his old age and Socrates’ reply that the ensuing discussion will only go as far as Theodorus is comfortable taking it (*Tht.*, 168e-169c). Surely this puts into doubt whether Socrates wishes to seriously ‘test’ Theodorus in the *Theaetetus*. Moreover, even if we were to accept the reference to an assortment of tests at Socrates’ disposal at 150bc, Peterson would still have to show *exactly when and how* Socrates actually determines the tenable or untenable nature of the digression, as well as when it becomes clear that the digression expresses only Theodorus’ opinion. As far as I can tell, Socrates never once scrutinizes the content of the digression.
Peterson admits that no actual examination of the account of the philosopher
of the digression occurs in the dialogue. Ultimately, her preferred explanation for
this is that Socrates, by bringing to the fore Theodorus’ ‘self-congratulatory beliefs’,
is urging Theaetetus to be an independent inquirer and accordingly examine his
teacher’s (Theodorus’) views at some later point. Peterson adds to her explanation
by pointing out that ‘Socrates is often interested in the examination of people who act
as guides or teachers to the young. He gives extensive examinations of teachers in
Protagoras, Laches, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Gorgias, and Euthydemus.’

In reply, it is unclear how these references to other dialogues are relevant,
unless the philosopher of the digression is presented as a teacher of the young. The
problem, for Peterson, is that nowhere during the digression is the philosopher cast as
a teacher of the young. What is more, Socrates never questions Theodorus’ capacity
as a mathematics instructor. Indeed, if anything, Socrates is shown approving
Theodorus’ role as a mathematics instructor to Theaetetus and Young Socrates (cf.
*Tht.*, 147d-148b). More substantially, as midwife Socrates’ task is not to simply
bring to the fore an ‘egg’ (proposition, thesis), but to further scrutinize the egg
alongside its progenitor. By simply presenting Theodorus’ account of the philosopher
to Theaetetus, all Socrates would be doing in his capacity as midwife at this point in
the *Theaetetus* is putting into words what Theodorus is thinking; Socrates the midwife
would be acting as nothing more than a reporter. Surely this action falls far short of
what Socrates has claimed about his art earlier in the dialogue. Lastly, whilst I agree

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333 Peterson (2011) 73
334 Peterson (2011) 74
335 Peterson (2011) 74
336 After hearing Theaetetus’ explanation of mathematical ‘powers’ or squares: ‘{Soc} Excellent, my
boys. I don’t think Theodorus is likely to be had up for false witness’ (148b3-4). Peterson (2011) does
not address this remark.
with Peterson on the point that Socrates is often interested in quizzing so-called experts of the young, in the dialogues cited by Peterson Socrates directly examines those teachers via elenchus. Indeed, there is no suggestion in any of the cited dialogues that Socrates simply (re)formulates the respective theses of the likes of Protagoras or Hippias to then abandon the conversation and have someone else (especially a young person) point out their flaws at a later date.

Another piece of evidence that Peterson uses to attribute the depiction of the philosopher of the digression to Theodorus follows:

‘Theodorus makes the limited agreement to answer certain questions as a stand-in for his deceased friend Protagoras (169c6-7), Theodorus serves as formal answerer in two passages. The digression, and nothing else, occurs between those two passages. So Plato has placed the digression exactly within Theodorus’ official contribution to the discussion as answerer.’

Peterson makes a good observation: the placement of the digression must be significant. But not necessarily in the way she supposes. Indeed, since the digression comes between two passages in which Socrates scrutinizes Theodorus, then if the digression does represent Theodorus’ position, all the more strange that Socrates does not criticize it.

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337 Peterson (2011) 73. There is some ambiguity here with ‘within Theodorus’ official contribution’. Does Peterson mean that it is part of Theodorus’ contribution, or inserted into it? I take it she means the former.
In addition, Peterson appears to overlook the very nature of the digression or side-project (πάρεργα, 177b8): it does not constitute an official part of the examination of ‘Protagoras’ position.

‘{Socrates} But we had better leave it there; all this is really a digression; and if we go on, a flood of new subjects will pour in and overwhelm our original argument. So if you don’t mind, we will go back to what we were saying before. {Theodorus} As a matter of fact, Socrates, I like listening to this kind of talk; it is easier for a man of my years to follow. Still, if you like, let us go back {to the argument} (πάλιν ἐπανίωμεν).’ (177b7-c5).

The digression’s relevance to the latter is, at least in part, probably that it taps into a familiar picture of the unworldly theoretician, a picture which portrays him as operating precisely not as if man is the measure of all things (but rather, God is). The picture alone is, of course, not any sort of conclusive argument against Protagoreanism (or any sort of moral relativism, for that matter), but it certainly reminds anyone tempted by such a position that our culture does have room for this opposed intellectual ideal (even if it is somewhat caricatured here in the Theaetetus). Giving this reminder is like adducing, in argument, an (commonly) accepted opinion.

Peterson also claims Socrates’ phrase, ‘whom you call a philosopher’ (175e1), is a ‘concluding signal that Socrates is speaking here as Theodorus speaks.’ Surely this is not the only interpretation of the phrase in question, ‘ὅν δὴ φιλόσοφον καλεῖς’.

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338 I bracket ‘to the argument’ above, for the clause is not explicitly stated. Yet Socrates’ request, ‘ἐπὶ δὲ τῇ ἐξαρεσθεὶν ἱματίᾳ’ (177c1-2), clearly refers to the argument that was interrupted at 172c. Further, see Labriola (2012) for the argument that the position under scrutiny immediately leading up to the digression is not specifically Protagoras’.

339 Peterson (2011) 73
‘dē’, as a particle of emphasis, may indicate that Socrates is approving Theodorus’ appellation of the individual in question as a true philosopher. If the point were what Peterson wants it to be, surely Plato would have simply written ‘su kaleis’ (or even ‘su gē kaleis’). ³⁴⁰

On a separate note, Peterson holds that the Socrates of the Theaetetus, the Socrates that purportedly disassociates himself from any opinion scrutinized in discussion, and thereby particularly disassociates himself from the account of the philosopher of the digression, is exactly that Socrates witnessed in the Euthyphro, Crito and Apology; that the Socrates of the Theaetetus is particularly the same non-doctrinal inquirer of the Apology whose purportedly fixed conception of philosophy involves the sort of constant examination and reproaching alluded to in the Apology. I wish to go right for the jugular here and show that this alleged equation is misguided. ³⁴¹ By dismissing the equation, I hope to cast further doubt on Peterson’s reading of the Theaetetus.

‘Plato could hardly have made it plainer that the Socrates of the Theaetetus and the Socrates of the Euthyphro (and hence of the Apology and Crito) are the same.’ ³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Incidentally, at no point between 172c-177c does Theodorus use any case of ‘philosophos’. ‘Philosopher’ at 173c, which is attributed to Theodorus in the Hackett translation, is an interpolation. All the same, at 175e1 Socrates must be referring back to what is said about the philosopher by the two men between 172c-173b. This may help explain manuscript P, which gives ‘ὁν δὴ φιλόσοφον καλοῦμεν’ at 175e1.

³⁴¹ It is outside the scope of this section to question the purportedly unique to Socrates conception of philosophy in the Apology. To be clear, my aim here is specifically to question the equation drawn by Peterson between, on the one hand, Socrates of the Apology, Crito and Euthyphro and, on the other hand, Socrates of the Theaetetus.

³⁴² Peterson (2011) 63
Peterson rests the ostensibly clear-cut equation between the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* and the Socrates of the *Euthyphro* (*Apology* and *Crito*) particularly on the closing remarks of the *Theaetetus*:

‘And now I must go to the King’s Porch to meet the indictment that Meletus has brought against me; but let us meet here again in the morning, Theodorus.’ (210d1-4)

I grant Peterson this much: the end of the *Theaetetus* prompts recollection of the *Euthyphro*, a dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro dramatically set *en route* to the King Archon’s porch. Indeed, surely it is meant to remind us of the whole sequence: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*. Yet, frankly, I find it rather curious that Peterson is so eager to look *inter* dialogues without first looking *intra* dialogue for a more immediate interpretation of Socrates’ remarks at the close of the *Theaetetus* (something I offer below). I particularly find it surprising that Peterson makes the equation between Socrates of the *Theaetetus* and Socrates of the *Apology* with little more than the closing lines of the *Theaetetus* in favour of such an equation; no considerable time is given in her chapter dedicated to the *Theaetetus* to address what are surely notable differences between the elenctic intellectual midwife and other versions of the elenctic Socrates displayed in other dialogues.343 And whilst Peterson acknowledges in a footnote the argument put forth by Charles Kahn, that the Socrates of the *Apology* could not be equated with the Socrates of the *Euthyphro* on account of the former being incapable of consistently searching out definitions,344 Peterson never attempts to directly refute Kahn’s rival argument.

343 The emphasis here is on the different versions of elenchus and its most famous user, Socrates, as found in various dialogues.
344 Peterson (2011) 63 n. 8, referencing Kahn (1996) 93-5
Above all, Peterson herself acknowledges that the very lines at the end of the dialogue, on which the equation hinges, do not explicitly match the intellectual midwife with the gadfly:

‘The end of the *Theaetetus* (210b11-d) is evocative of statements in the *Apology* though its allusions to midwifery do not occur in the *Apology*.\(^{345}\)

If the midwife does not explicitly match the gadfly, and, taken for the sake of argument, the gadfly is also the Socrates of the *Euthyphro* and *Crito*, then the midwife does not explicitly match the Socrates of the *Euthyphro* and *Crito*. Therefore, there are no strong grounds for supporting the equation claimed by Peterson.

Now, Plato must have expected that those in his audience who *have already read* the *Apology, Euthyphro* and *Crito* (or even just the *Apology*) *will be reminded of these*, hence of the Socrates of those dialogues. However, Peterson needs the much stronger point that the final lines of those dialogues show that the Socrates of those dialogues *is* the Socrates of the *Theaetetus*, and she fails to make it stand up. Here is my alternative reading of the closing remarks of the *Theaetetus*, which makes no attempt to connect the *Theaetetus* and its Socrates with any other dialogue or manifestation of Socrates. I believe that an *intra*-dialogue explanation is the most straightforward and reasonable explanation to endorse. Surely it avoids any number of issues that arise when attempting to link Plato’s dialogues, as well as the presentation

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\(^{345}\) Peterson (2011) 69, my underline
of Socrates in different dialogues. To be clear, I do not deny that the reference to Socrates’ impending trial at the close of the *Theaetetus* is meant to recall the *Apology* (and probably the actual historical event for those very close to it in time). Nevertheless, *contra* Peterson, it does not follow that Socrates in the *Theaetetus* stands only for what Socrates in the *Apology* stands for.

Through the course of the *Theaetetus*, Socrates has taken the time to note his expertise as an intellectual midwife. In particular, he has relayed the positive intellectual benefits had by some of those pregnant individuals placed under his supervision:

> ‘At first some of them may give the impression of being ignorant and stupid; but as time goes on and our association continues, all whom God permits are seen to make progress—a progress which is amazing both to other people and to themselves. And yet it is clear that this is not due to anything they have learned from me; it is that they discover within themselves a multitude of beautiful things, which they bring forth into the light. But it is I, with God’s help, who deliver them of this offspring’ (150d2–e1).

Socrates has a most valuable expertise. It is an art that assists in an individual’s intellectual (this includes virtuous) progress. And yet, it is an expertise that perhaps only a few men truly understand and accordingly value.

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346 To be clear, I accept that there is an unquestionable reference forward to the *Sophist* at the end of the *Theaetetus* (cf. *Tht.*, 210d, *Sph.*, 216a). Whatever the exact connection is between these dialogues, my reading of the close of the *Theaetetus* is not dependent on it.
'And a proof of this may be seen in the many cases where people who did not realize this fact [viz., that Socrates possess and utilizes this divine-granted expertise, cf. 150d2-31 quoted above] took all the credit to themselves and thought that I was no good. They have proceeded to leave me sooner than they should, either of their own accord or through the influence of others...the result [being] that what remained within them has miscarried; while they have neglected the children I helped them to bring forth, and lost then, because they set more value upon lies and phantoms than upon the truth...’ (150e1-9)

This point of generally misinterpreting Socrates’ expertise and corresponding modus operandi is recurrent in the dialogue:

‘But I do [have this art], believe me. Only don’t give me away to the rest of the world, will you? You see, my friend, it is a secret that I have this art. That is not one of the things you hear people saying about me, because they don’t know (ἃτε ὅὐκ εἰδότες); but they do say that I am a very odd sort of person, always causing people to get into difficulties (ὅτι δὲ ἀτοπωτατός εἰμι καὶ ποιῶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπορεῖν).’ (149a6-10)

Ultimately, the misinterpretation of Socrates as a meddlesome and practically useless inquisitor is the topic that reappears at the end of the dialogue: Socrates is apparently worthless by comparison to the ‘great and inspired men’ (ὄσοι μεγάλοι καὶ θαυμάσιοι ἄνδρες, 210c5-6). In truth, so Socrates’ final words in the dialogue imply, it takes someone special, a genuine philosopher, to understand how valuable someone like Socrates really is.
CONCLUSION

The general aim of this dissertation has been to present a coherent account of Plato’s conception of philosophy in certain dialogues. In doing so, it has sought to shed light on, amongst other things, the multi-disciplinary nature of philosophy, and both its positive and negative fashions. This dissertation has also sought to shed light on the general contrast (according to Plato) between philosophy and non-philosophy, the hierarchy of the philosophical sciences, the relation between the various types of philosophers (Socrates included), Plato’s endorsement of the various philosophers on display in the dialogues in question, and Plato’s promotion of the method of collection and division as the universal method *par excellence*. Additionally, a much discussed topic of this dissertation concerned the highest science of philosophy: namely that, in the *Republic* and certain post-*Republic* dialogues, the science *par excellence* is consistently cast as a supra-mathematical science called ‘dialectic’; that the topmost philosopher’s body of knowledge is completed by his mastery of this science. To conclude this dissertation, I would like to reflect a bit more on certain of its findings. My hope is that in doing so I am able to adequately summarize the thesis as a whole, as well as stimulate further discussion in future on Plato’s conception of philosophy.

There are particularly three topics discussed in this dissertation that require some additional clarification. (1) The relation between dialectic *qua* supreme science and dialectic *qua* the method of collection and division. (2) The relation of elenchus to the philosopher’s acquisition of knowledge. (3) The criterion (or set thereof), according to Plato, between what is philosophy generally speaking and what is non-philosophy generally speaking. After discussing these three topics, I shall turn to
reflect on whether or not my account of philosophy provides good evidence for a Developmentalist reading of Plato.

On (1): What is the relation between dialectic *qua* supreme science and dialectic *qua* the method of division, including in the *Sophist* the relation between dialectic and division with regard to the five greatest Kinds? This question actually unfolds into three related ones: What is the relation, in general, between dialectic as a supreme science and dialectic as a particular method? What is the status, in terms of the contrast between science and method, of dialectic in the *Sophist*? What is the status, in light of the distinctions highlighted in the *Sophist*, of collection and division?

The science of dialectic in Plato is distinguished by way of its special subject matter, that is, its unique scientific understanding of either (i) the Good as such of *Republic* VI-VII, or (ii) the ‘greatest’ Kinds in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Otherwise, this special science is cast more broadly (iii) as a science of formal ontology in the *Philebus*. It is a science, I surmise, that has exclusive access to an unspecified set of distinguished Kinds understood *qua* Kinds (cf. Ch. IV p. 173-4).

To be clear, Plato postulates different *sciences* of dialectic in the dialogues highlighted in this dissertation; he does not have a fixed referent for the super science he calls ‘dialectic’. The *Sophist*’s topmost science, for example, is not identical to the supreme science of the *Republic*: the Good as such is noticeably missing from the class of *megista genē*, which constitute the exclusive subject matter of the *Sophist*’s supreme science. Moreover, in the *Republic*, the science of dialectic is not shown as being concerned with the sort of formal questions that dialectic *qua* science is expressly concerned with in the *Sophist* (and *Philebus* too): e.g., ‘what does it mean to be a Kind?’ ‘How can Kinds be both one and many?’ How is it possible for Kind A to
combine and separate with Kinds B, C, D, etc.? All the same, there are, as I have argued in this dissertation, strong echoes between the *Sophist* and *Republic* (amongst other dialogues) regarding what Plato construes as a supreme science for mankind. The ‘science of dialectic’ is regularly presented as a science inquiring into some kind of abstract subject matter (be it (i), (ii) or (iii) above), such that no other science has direct access to. It is, accordingly, considered the top philosophical science. The main point is that there are different candidates in Plato for the philosopher’s topmost science. Whilst these candidates are not identical, they all share a common feature: each is cast in its respective dialogue(s) as the topmost supra-mathematical science of philosophy.

This brief recapitulation of the science(s) of dialectic should help us see more clearly the relation between dialectic as a science and dialectic as a method. In the *Sophist, Statesman, Phaedrus* and *Philebus*, the dialectical method *par excellence* is unquestionably taxonomic division. Yet the *Phaedrus* and *Philebus* tell us that this type of dialectic is applicable to just about any subject matter; that division is used, with varying degrees of awareness of the metaphysical and epistemological implications, by any genuine craft or science (e.g., Medicine, the proper Rhetoric of the *Phaedrus*, etc.) in its specific field. What, then, is the precise connection between this universal method and the supreme science, as the latter is variously presented in these post-*Republic* dialogues? What distinguishes the science of dialectic’s use of division from all other disciplines’ use of it?

In these post-*Republic* dialogues a central point is maintained: the science of dialectic, whatever else distinguishes it in a given dialogue, is not as such taxonomic division, but a grasp of this science underlies any precise definition of any particular Kind (e.g., Sophist, Weaving), understood *qua* Kind, which is obtained via taxonomic
division. In other words, the rigour of dialectic *qua* the method of division is needed in order to pin down the definition of a particular Kind. Yet (as I am about to explain) only a prior understanding of certain Kinds as such, the exclusive subject matter of dialectic *qua* science, will allow the philosopher to use division to its fullest, to arrive at a thorough account of that particular Kind.

What immediately follows expounds the relation between the two dialectics in the *Sophist*.

‘{EV} [P] Aren’t we going to say that it takes expertise in dialectic to divide things by kinds and not to think that the same form is a different one or that a different form is the same? {Tht} Yes. {EV} So if a person can do that, [T1] he’ll be capable of adequately discriminating a single form spread out all through a lot of other things, each which stands separate from the others. In addition, [T2] he can discriminate forms that are different from each other but are included within a single form that’s outside them, [T3] or a single form that’s connected as a unit throughout many wholes, [T4] or many forms that are completely separate from others. [E] That’s what it is to know how to discriminate by kinds how things can associate and how they can’t. {Tht} Absolutely.’ (*Sph*. 253d1-e3)347

The highlighted passage details the connection between dialectic *qua* method and dialectic *qua* science. Dialectic *qua* science has its own special subject matter, namely the formal concepts of Being as such, Not-Being (sc. Difference) as such, and Sameness as such, that are presupposed in all uses of dialectic *qua* method of division.

347 For the various interpretations of this passage see Notomi (1999) 235 and literature therein. I adopt Notomi’s (1999) 235 numbering of this passage, which is basically Gómez-Lobo’s (1977) 30. My interpretation of this passage largely follows that of Gómez-Lobo and Notomi.
The general point being made in the highlighted passage is that, if the connections between these Kinds are incoherent, or if the nature of one Kind is in particular incoherent (e.g., Non-Being as such), then dialectic as the method of division is not fully grasped, and so it is not properly employed. What follows from this is actually something stronger: namely that when division is employed by someone who does not have the requisite knowledge of greatest Kinds (understood *qua* Kinds), then it cannot be relied on to lead us to the whole truth (regarding any Kind). The major implication in this passage, then, is that the precise use of division *presupposes* knowledge of the greatest Kinds as such. And this knowledge is ascribed to none other than the science of dialectic.

To elaborate, in the passage quoted the first sentence, [P], is straightforwardly a reference to division. Indeed, ‘to divide things by kinds’ is, as it were, a catch-phrase in Plato for the use of division (cf. *Phdr.*, 265e1-266b1, *Pol.*, 262d7, e3-4, 287c3-5). In general, the overarching aim of division is to understand the sameness and difference between kinds; how a given Kind stands in relation to other (closely related) Kinds (*Sph.* 253d1-4, cf. *Phdr.* 265e-266c). In the *Sophist*, the reference to division in this passage explicitly connects to the overarching aim of the dialogue: to hunt down the Kind Sophist by means of division; to show how Sophistry is both similar to and different from other *technai*. Yet [P] is not the only thing in this passage that falls within the domain of the science of dialectic. [T1]-[T4] roughly explain the combination and separation of Kinds through certain pervasive Kinds, particularly Being as such and Non-Being (sc. Difference) as such—we may surmise of the greatest Kinds in general. It is principally the understanding of said combination

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348 ‘*Diaireisthai*, ‘*diairesis*’ and cognates are frequently used in the *Sophist* to refer to the method. Cf. 219e7, 220b10, 221e2, 223d2, 229d6, 235b8, 264e1-2, c4, 265a5, 266a8, 11, 267b8. The list is not exhaustive.
and separation of these special Kinds that constitutes knowledge of the science of dialectic. Indeed, to perform [P] in order to arrive at a thorough account of any given Kind, one must already possess knowledge of how the greatest Kinds separate and combine both with each other and with inferior Kinds. *A fortiori*, one must possess prior knowledge of the very nature of the greatest Kinds individually.\(^{349}\)

To review, we have discussed the relation between dialectic as a science and dialectic as the method of division, as said relation is found in certain post-*Republic* dialogues. The science’s unique subject matter is presupposed when employing the method of dialectic in investigations into the nature of Kinds as such. The *Sophist*, in particular, casts the science of dialectic as principally a science of the greatest Kinds; the rigour of division is fully achieved only by this science in light of its prior grasp of the nature of greatest Kinds. With regard to the status of division as such, in light of the distinctions highlighted in the *Sophist*, the central message in the dialogue is that philosophically confident division is the sole possession of the topmost philosopher; that the full extent to which division reveals the nature of its intended target is dependent on its user’s prior knowledge of certain Kinds as such. For sure, the *Phaedrus* and *Philebus* strongly suggest division’s universal application; there is one method used by various disciplines for a multiplicity of subject matter. All the same, the *Sophist* reveals (and so too the *Statesman*, albeit circuitously, with its mention of the dialectician hunting down the nature of ‘all things’) that only the expert of the science of dialectic applies division with the result of achieving the most informed and thorough insights into reality.

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\(^{349}\) A convincing case for this is made by Gómez-Lobo (1977) 36-47. See also Notomi (1999) 236-7. Cf. my Ch. III p. 111-12: to properly understand the relation between Kinds presupposes knowledge of those Kinds individually, which itself is possible only with a prior grasp of the greatest Kinds.
On (2): I wish to focus on a passage in Republic VII for the sake of elucidating the relation between elenchus and the acquisition of knowledge (where this means ‘positive scientific knowledge’). I concentrate on this passage because it is perhaps the strongest evidence in all of Plato for the view that elenchus as such helps to acquire positive scientific knowledge. In what follows, I dismiss this evidence. I show that elenchus as such does not help the philosopher acquire positive scientific knowledge; that elenchus remains at its core a negative way of doing philosophy.

In Republic VII (534b8-d1), elenchus plays an important part in the philosopher’s arrival at, above all, the Good as such. Indeed, the reader may hold that elenchus plays a crucial last step in acquiring such knowledge; that elenchus does more than just verify or confirm the knowledge that the philosopher has already obtained (cf. Ch. II pp. 87-8). If this is so, then the straightforward distinction between a ‘positive’ fashion of philosophy and a ‘negative’ one, which I have suggested in this dissertation, is in fact not so straightforward. This would be because elenctic philosophy, particularly given the remarks in Republic VII, is not simply ‘negative’; it does not simply remove false beliefs and conceit, or otherwise highlight the faults of one’s thesis. It is, instead, the last step toward obtaining the highest knowledge.

A final review of the Republic passage in question only confirms what I have been arguing throughout this dissertation concerning the nature of Socratic elenchus: this philosophical method is limited to scrutinizing the account already formulated; elenchus at most tentatively confirms the tenable nature of an already put together thesis, it does not add to any thesis already formulated. Note, for one, that the philosopher in possession of an account of the Good as such is expected to ‘come through’ or ‘survive’ (διεξιών, 534c2) all refutations or elenchoi; that, more
importantly, only after coming through ‘all this with his account still intact’ (ἐν πᾶσι τούτοις ἀπτῶσι τῷ λόγῳ, 534c3) will he be said to have an unquestionable grasp of the Good as such. For sure, elenchus plays an important role in the philosopher’s grasp of the Good as such: it is the last test (or series thereof) before confirmation of the highest knowledge. But it would be misleading to call the elenctic experience the last crucial step in acquiring positive knowledge of the Good as such. Again, the passage explicitly states that, were the philosopher to have survived elenctic quizzing, his account of the Good as such would remain ‘intact’ (aptōs). This implies that elenchus does not add to the account put under scrutiny, but rather confirms its already crafted tenable nature. Accordingly, the closest elenchus comes to being ‘positive’ is in verifying that a certain thesis is tenable.

To review, then, elenchus as such (i) does not help initially form an account. (ii) Nor does it add to said account during examination of it. Elenchus as such cannot do (ii). It may point out where a thesis needs correcting, but it does not take the extra step and provide the precise material needed to make the correction. Thus elenchus is still at its core ‘negative’, just insofar as it is principally used see whether a thesis is faulty, and so underline, if necessary, what the possessor of said thesis does not know about the topic at hand.

On (3): Given the distinction between philosophy at its highest being the supreme science of dialectic and philosophy more generally being a set of various disciplines, what criterion (or set thereof) brings together all these otherwise independent disciplines under the heading of ‘philosophy’? What identifies various experts as philosophers? Are there subjects that count as philosophical and ones that do not? Alternatively, does the general distinction between philosophy and non-philosophy amount to a philosophical and a non-philosophical way of doing any given
subject? Furthermore, what exactly are the implications of the claim that philosophy is not identifiable with one exclusive discipline?

What identifies various experts as ‘philosophers’? The broad answer is the committed search for the truth. This aim at once distinguishes those that ‘play fair’ in a given investigation in order to arrive at the truth of the matter from those that just want to win the argument at all costs. The distinction between truth seekers or ‘philosophers’ and lovers of victory is best exemplified in the Euthydemus, although we are certainly not at a loss to find additional examples elsewhere in Plato (see, especially, Theaetetus 164c4-d2, cf. 167d-168a). In fact, this distinction immediately precludes certain so-called intellectual activities (e.g., the brothers’ sophistic display in the Euthydemus) from being labelled ‘philosophical’.

However, as is, this distinction between truth seekers and lovers of victory is too broad. Does the carpenter’s serious pursuit of knowledge regarding his subject matter qualify him as a philosopher for Plato? No. According to Plato all craftsmen are practically unaware of the epistemological and metaphysical implications of their connection to abstract paradigms in their line of work. The typical carpenter, whilst indirectly looking to an abstract paradigm in his craft (cf. Rep. X 597a ff., Tim. 28ab), is just about completely ignorant of what it means to look at such a paradigm, of what follows from holding that there exists a perfect, abstract model which all perceivable instantiations at best approximate. Hence his art is not part of philosophy, because it does not reflect on (or otherwise specifically search for) the very essence of the intelligible paradigm, of what it means to be such an abstract entity.

But even if we put all manual or crafts-related disciplines to one side, and restricted ourselves to the broad class of disciplines which we might label ‘intellectual’ (e.g., astronomy, geometry), we would still be left with the task of explaining what
makes some of these intellectual disciplines philosophical and others not philosophical. Generally put, there is (i) a way in which an intellectual discipline is used (ii) in relation to abstract subject matter (iii) that is understood as abstract subject matter by that discipline: (i)-(iii) identify that discipline as a part of philosophy.

For example, there is a practically-oriented use of calculation and arithmetic, say in trading, which is contrasted with a philosophically-oriented use: ‘the study of the natures of the numbers by means of understanding itself’ (Rep. VII 525c2-3). There is, to use another example from the Republic (cf. VII 525b-531e), a use of astronomy that traces out the observable motions in the sky, which is contrasted with and ultimately subordinate to the philosopher’s astronomy that studies ‘motions that are really fast or slow as measured in true numbers, the true geometrical figures, that are all in relation to one another, and that are the true motions of the things carried along in them’ (529d2-4). The Philebus echoes the Republic’s distinction between a philosophical and non-philosophical discipline. The philosophers’ arts and sciences are distinguished by way of their ‘precision’, that is their application of abstract mathematics, for the sake of obtaining theoretical insights into the natures of shapes and numbers as such. The main idea is that these highlighted disciplines are not propaedeutical to philosophy as such. They are, instead, part of philosophy proper (cf. Rep. VII 521c, Philb. 56be).

This brings us to reflect on a related point: the differences internal to philosophy. Abstract mathematics, broadly construed, looks to that which is eternal and always the same. What is more, it is conscious of its inquiries into these universals qua universals (cf. Rep. VII, 527b ff.). However, abstract mathematics’ grasp of the metaphysical and epistemological implications of the nature of its intelligibles is limited. This is a point that Plato stresses explicitly in both the
Republic and Philebus. And this limitation serves as a convenient reminder of what is consistently identified in certain dialogues as the supra-mathematical zenith of philosophy: ‘the science of dialectic’. In the Republic this supra-mathematical science is cast as the science of the Good as such. In the Sophist, Statesman and Philebus, the science is presented as (what we would call) a science of formal ontology. Accordingly, as much as Plato lauds a variety of intellectual disciplines for their inherent philosophical nature, he does not consider all of them equal in value and importance.

But we should not overlook the fact that the science of dialectic never serves as the only true philosophical discipline for Plato. What are the implications of the claim that philosophy is not identifiable with one exclusive discipline? I believe the best way to grasp the relation amongst the various disciplines that identify as philosophy in selected dialogues is to see each discipline as manifesting one necessary element of philosophy in general. Plato thinks that the topmost philosopher is a polymath whose view of reality is framed by his special understanding of universals as such. What Plato also thinks is that there is a particular order, a way of going about becoming a polymath, that requires the individual to commit himself to a lifetime of regimented study. As I pointed out in Ch. II, the subjects that comprise the educative programme of Kallipolis are not exclusive to Kallipolis; Plato believes that those studies, which ought to end at some supra-mathematical peak, can be pursued outside an ideal environment. We have echoes of this series of studies in the Philebus, a dialogue that does not speak of nor presuppose some ideal city-state: the philosophical arts and sciences, particularly abstract mathematics, are to be praised.

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350 See Burnyeat’s (2000) 37-8 succinct explanation of the metaphysical limitations of mathematics as such, as mathematics is described in the Republic.
for their distinguished insights into reality, even if they are subordinate to the science of dialectic’s grasp of reality.

What is more, the multiple references in Republic VII to the soul being turned around or adjusted, especially by certain mathematical disciplines, also tell us that each philosophical discipline conditions the soul in preparation for the ontological and metaphysical studies exclusive to the science of dialectic. The idea is that without this psychical conditioning, no one would be fit to embark on the supra-mathematical investigations envisioned by Plato. Each discipline, then, contributes not only to the philosopher’s comprehensive body of knowledge, but also to the fine-tuning of the philosopher’s soul, to the way in which the philosopher perceives reality and accordingly treats his subject matter.

Incidentally, where does division figure in all this? More pressingly, how do we know following the method of division that we have carved out something real, so that indeed all the various disciplines aforementioned can be called philosophy? How do we know, in other words, that we have not gone wrong with our division in the pursuit of the Kind Philosophy? As I suggested in Ch. III, the Sophist and Statesman indicate that the philosopher par excellence is, unlike the sophist and genuine statesman, not tied down to a specific sub-branch of knowledge; that ‘philosopher’ picks out any one of a variety of experts found across a number of sub-branches of knowledge. Accordingly, one of the tasks of the topmost philosopher as kritikos would be to show via division the precise connection between these branches of philosophy, to show just how the philosopher can be found across different sub-branches of knowledge. Via division, this kritikos would show, moreover, the precise relation between the Kind Philosophy and other sub-branches of Knowledge as such. All this is possible on account of the philosopher having the requisite knowledge of
greatest Kinds, in order to perform the pertinent divisions. Accordingly, the philosopher as kritikos would know that his divisions have carved out something real, because his divisions are informed by his prior knowledge of especially the greatest Kinds. Indeed, only the topmost kritikos would be able to explain, just like the EV does in the Sophist and Statesman, when and where exactly to make the right cuts.

Switching direction, I would like to briefly highlight certain parts of this dissertation that relate to the Developmentalist v. Unitarian debate on Plato. I argued that ‘the science of dialectic’ does not refer to the exact same science in every dialogue wherein a ‘science of dialectic’ features. A Developmentalist may welcome my findings: whilst consistent, the various sciences of dialectic found in selected dialogues evidence a change in Plato’s thought regarding what exactly the topmost philosopher ought to master. This, in tandem with the complete silence regarding a supra-mathematical zenith of philosophy in the early/Socratic dialogues, further allows us to posit that the hierarchy of the philosophical sciences on prominent display in middle and later dialogues reflects a development in Plato’s conception of philosophy.

Perhaps a Unitarian (other than Charles Kahn) could counter: all that the showcase of the science of dialectic in the Republic and its repeated occurrence in certain post-Republic dialogues shows is that Plato chose to divulge to his readers his science par excellence only in parts or aspects and only in a certain number of dialogues. In other words, the Unitarian may argue, so long as the remarks on philosophy in the early/Socratic dialogues and the Republic and post-Republic dialogues are shown to be harmonious, then there are no good grounds to reject a Unitarian reading of Plato in favour of a Developmentalist one.
Here I must register my inclination toward the Developmentalist reading of Plato. The Unitarian would be hard pressed to show, for example, that the science of the Good as such of the Republic is the very same science of greatest Kinds in the Sophist. Indeed, a central part of this dissertation has indirectly argued against that line of thought: whilst Plato may consistently identify a supra-mathematical science as the height of philosophy, the selected dialogues evidence a different science in each dialogue that identifies as such. If the subject matter of the supreme science is the same in both the Republic and Sophist, why is there no discussion on the method of division in the Republic? Why is there complete silence on the Good as such in the Sophist when the EV speaks of the ‘philosopher’s science’ therein? These inconsistencies between the dialogues appear to suggest a development or shift in what Plato thinks is the most important task and subject matter to master for his topmost philosopher.

On a related note, the middle books of the Republic display a serious concern with making distinctions amongst the philosophical sciences, with explaining why certain sciences are superior to others with regard to their epistemic proximity to reality. Yet (as we saw particularly in Ch. III and IV) the post-Republic dialogues perused in this dissertation do not seem so exclusively concerned with reflecting on a hierarchy of the sciences. Indeed, Plato appears more concerned with clarifying the ubiquity and importance of division in all the arts and sciences than with accounting for the differences amongst the philosophical sciences.

Granted, any suggested shift of interest from topic A to topic B need not entail an abandonment or (substantial) revision of A. Indeed, there is no evidence in the post-Republic dialogues that Plato questions the validity of a hierarchy of the sciences as such. As was shown in Ch. IV, the Philebus affirms a central message of Republic
VI-VII: not all philosophical sciences are of equal value. All the same, the post-
*Republic* dialogues do evidence the aforementioned shift. And this shift suggests a
move away from reflecting as much on the nature of the objects studied by the various
sciences to reflecting more on exactly how (i.e., by what means) knowledge of these
objects is to be obtained. The main idea is that, in the later stages of his life, Plato was
more concerned with discussing in his dialogues how to arrive at knowledge of
universals (Forms, Kinds), than with discussing the precise ontological status of those
universals. This conjecture is supported by the sheer amount of attention given to both
the demonstration of the method and reflection on the method as such in the post-
*Republic* dialogues and only the post-*Republic* dialogues.

Moving on, in *Ch. II* I argued that being an expert in the science of the Good
as such satisfies just half of what Plato, at least when writing the *Republic*, thinks is
the complete life for the philosopher: a unique combination of the theoretical and
political life; the practical application, in the form of ruling, of one’s knowledge of
Forms as such. Yet in *Ch. III*, an analysis of the philosopher in the *Sophist-Statesman*
revealed that the philosopher *par excellence* was no longer saddled with any ruling
duties. How do we square the two readings?

My view, which I only roughly develop here, is that Plato is mindful of
adjusting the practical/political duties of his philosopher *par excellence* depending on
the environmental circumstances in which he places his philosopher. Hence, in an
ideal environment like *Kallipolis*, where contemplative activity is emphatically
promoted, the master of the science of dialectic is the natural choice for the ruler. In
fact (as I argued in *Ch. II*), Plato believes, at least in the *Republic*, that the topmost
philosopher is not fully developed *qua* philosopher *until* he applies his knowledge of
Forms in the political arena. By contrast, in the *Statesman’s polis*, which has a
decidedly more ‘down-to-earth’ nature about it, there is no indication that the philosopher *par excellence* is fully developed *qua* philosopher only after undertaking the role of ruler.

This does not mean, though, that the philosopher is fully removed from the political sphere outside a *Kallipolis*-like environment. As argued in Ch. III, the *Statesman* leaves room to see the philosopher *par excellence* performing the epitactic role of advisor to a statesman. An interesting thought to consider, then, is that the *Statesman*’s subtle projection of the philosopher as *epitaktikos* suggests that the philosopher’s political expectations in the *Republic*, which are intimately tied to the philosopher’s development *qua* philosopher, are not completely out of the picture in the *Statesman*; that the philosopher’s epitactic role as advisor to a statesman alludes to the need for the philosopher *par excellence* to maintain some sort of political function for the sake of developing himself *qua* philosopher. This still establishes a difference between the *Republic* and *Statesman* concerning the political duties the philosopher is saddled with: in the former he is expected to rule, in the latter he is expected to advise the ruler. All the same, it also suggests continuity between the two dialogues of a more general claim: that no philosopher is fully developed *qua* philosopher until he applies his knowledge to the political sphere (be it as ruler, advisor to the ruler, or what have you). Of course, I should note that any thorough analysis of politics, political theory, and the philosopher’s relation to the two in Plato (something that was not undertaken in this dissertation) would undoubtedly require an examination of the *Laws* (and perhaps the *Epinomis*) as well.

The last topic I wish to reflect on is the depiction of the character Socrates in Plato. What I hope to have shown is that Socrates, particularly the elenctic persona, whilst not the philosopher *par excellence* for Plato, is still most definitely a bona fide
philosopher. All the same, the reader may certainly ask why Plato chose to replace Socrates, so to speak, with another philosopher? Why did Plato choose to put someone else at the top of the philosophical ladder? There are numerous, equally reasonable and equally dividing, explanations. All I can do here is slightly add to what I first suggested in Ch. II.

With regard to the elenctic Socrates, it must have something to do with what Plato seriously sets down as that Socrates’ *raison d’être* (a *raison d’être* probably inspired by the historical Socrates): to philosophize, and in the process better others, by way of *quizzing* men on what they claim to know. With this in mind, coupled with Plato’s belief that positive scientific knowledge regarding Forms/Kinds is possible, the elenctic philosopher would intuitively have to come runner-up to the knower of Kinds as such. Of course, from *Republic* Book II onwards Socrates is not simply elenctic; there is no question that in the middle books of the *Republic* he subscribes to the heavy-duty metaphysics of Platonic Forms. Likewise, the *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus* and *Philebus* evidence a Socrates with a grasp of a more loaded metaphysics and epistemology than that seen in the Socratic dialogues. But we must not forget that this same man is never once projected as knowing, amongst other things, the nature of specific Forms. To recall just one example, in the *Republic*, Socrates notoriously cannot explain in detail what the Good as such is, and how it is related to the other Forms, except via analogy and metaphor.

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351 One could, of course, balk at the claim that Socrates was ‘replaced’. Peterson (2011) comes to mind. In the discussion above I take for granted that Socrates was replaced. By the by, I have not considered the possibility that Plato ultimately came to see (the elenctic) Socrates as more sophistic than philosophical. C.C.W. Taylor (2006) puts forward this thesis. The similarities (whether accurate or not) between the elenctic Socrates and the sophists have been well discussed in the literature. Apart from Taylor, see, e.g., Nehamas (1999).

352 As we saw in Ch. V, this *raison d’être* is prominently featured in the *Theaetetus*. 
But speaking in broad strokes about a theory of Forms and corresponding
metaphysics and epistemology, about a philosopher-king, the expert user of division,
and so on, may be just what this Socrates is intended to do by Plato: this Socrates
serves as a sort of herald, as someone who is meant to entice the reader of Plato’s
dialogues to the more positive sort of philosophizing that awaits, to the sort of
philosophizing that Plato, certainly by the time of writing the dialogues examined in
detail in this dissertation, thinks can bring one to understand and make use of, both in
and outside of the political sphere, the nature of reality.
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