A Metalogical Approach to the Problem of Reflexivity in Platonic Dialectic

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Contents

I The *Elenchos* and the Good: An Essay on Metalogic as Ethics 7

1 Metalogic of the *Elenchos* 8
- 1.1 Priorities of *Elenchos* . . . 8
- 1.2 Socrates' Two Questions . . . 10
- 1.3 Pattern of *elenchos:* consistency and completeness . . . 15

2 Metalogical Interpretations of Plato 26
- 2.1 Sense and Reference: *Euthyphro* . . . 26
- 2.2 Reasons and Causes: *Ion* . . . 39
- 2.3 Form of *Elenchos* Restated . . . 48

3 Reflexivity: *Charmides* 50
- 3.1 Plato's *Charmides* . . . 50
- 3.2 The Definitions of *Sophrosune* . . . 56
- 3.3 The Dilemma of Reflection (169d—171c) . . . 65
  - 3.3.1 Forms of the Dilemmatic Question . . . 65
  - 3.3.2 The Power of *Sophrosune* as *Episteme Epistemes* . . . 66
  - 3.3.3 Metalogical setting of the dilemma: Structural requirements, completeness, and existential contexts . . . 69
  - 3.3.4 The Dilemma . . . 71
  - 3.3.5 First horn: Triviality . . . 72
  - 3.3.6 Second Horn: Regress . . . 73
  - 3.3.7 Observations on the Dilemma . . . 74

II Philosophical Remarks 77

4 Remarks on Sartre's Pure Reflection 78
- 4.1 Aporias of Reflection . . . 78
- 4.2 Minimal Sartre . . . 81
- 4.3 The Argument for Negative Foundations . . . 83
- 4.4 Pure Reflection and Negative Foundations . . . 83
- 4.5 Was There Ever a Semiotic Triad? From Triadic to Tetradic Dialectic . . . 85
- 4.6 The step back and the step in: the adicity of value . . . 87

5 Remarks on Metamathematical Dialectic **89**
5.1 Socratic *Elenchos* and Diagonalization: Plato/Frege 89
5.2 Diagonalization and Its Doubles: For a Response to Dialetheism and Paradoxico-Criticism 93
5.3 The Arithmetical Hierarchy 98

Preface: Diagonalization and Reflection

It is not the primary purpose of this essay or its supplementary remarks to introduce the formal structure of diagonalization from scratch, in the manner of an intermediate logic seminar. Excellent introductions exist answering to this purpose, as do monographs developing the formal side of the inquiry far beyond where it is needed here. Sometimes these are the same works. Some of those which have been particularly useful to me are Kleene (1952), DeLong (1970), Hunter (1971), Smullyan (1992, 1993), Boolos *et al.* (2007), and Fitting (2007). Rather, my purpose, in the self-selected lineage of Hofstadter (1979, 2006), Badiou (1988), Grim (1991), Priest (1995), Chaitin (2007), Livingston (2012), *et al.* is to extend and integrate the *significance* of this formalism (or rather, quasi-formalism), by bringing it into intimate contact with texts of apparently very different provenance, belonging to ancient and contemporary philosophy. Nevertheless, a brief appearance by "the diagonal itself" (to echo *Republic* 510d) at the head of this reflection on its meaning and use may be helpful to the reader, not as an introductory teaching, but, as Plato says, as a *reminder*.

The best way I know for the philosopher to be reminded of diagonalization at the outset of work is to begin not with general definitions of diagonalization, but with the instance of it which comes first historically and logically, *i.e.*, with Cantor's 1891 version of the proof of his theorem (that is, the "much simpler" formulation involving diagonalization).[1] Accordingly, I begin by letting the form speak for itself, through its discoverer. Cantor begins by proving the familiar special case of the theorem, *i.e.*, that the cardinality of the reals exceeds that of the naturals, using the familiar tabular form of the argument. In this, advantageously, the diagonal subset appears as the literal diagonal of a two-dimensional lattice of signs, but at the price of claiming to present an infinite literal lattice, opening the argument to irrelevant finitist objections. More essentially for us, Cantor then reflects on the proof and extracts its principle in order to ascend to the general case:

> This proof is remarkable not only because of its great simplicity, but more importantly because the principle followed therein can be extended immediately to the general theorem that the powers of well-defined manifolds[2] have no maximum,

[1] Badiou's readings of Cantor's theorem tend to be found toward the beginning of his systematic works, rightly, since, on my view, all of his subsequent philosophy depends on and unpacks these readings. They can be consulted at the session of February 6, 1978 in *Theory of the Subject*, the seventh and twenty-sixth meditations of *Being and Event*, and section 2.1.1 of *Logics of Worlds*. And yet, Badiou interestingly avoids the foregrounding of diagonalization as such, even in *Being and Event*, in favor of related concepts of the generic and forcing.

[2] Note that Cantor's "manifolds", unlike Kant's, are pure multiplicities or sets, not necessarily structured by *continuity* relations. In fact, at each level of the hierarchy, it is the discontinuous multiplicities which

> or, what is the same thing, that for any given manifold L, we can produce a manifold M whose power is greater than that of L.
>
> Let, for instance, L be a linear continuum, say the totality of all real numbers which are ≥ 0 and ≤ 1.
>
> Let M be the totality of all single-valued functions $f(x)$ which take only the values 0 or 1, while x runs through all real values which are ≥ 0 and ≤ 1.
>
> That M does *not* have a *smaller* power than L follows from the fact that subsets of M can be given which have the same power as L — for instance, the subset which consists of all functions of x which have the value 1 for a single value x_0 of x, and for all other values of x have the value 0.
>
> But M does *not* have *the same* power as L: for otherwise the manifold M could be brought into a reciprocal one-to-one correspondence with the variable z, and M could be thought of in the form of a single-valued function of the two variables x and z such that to every value of z there corresponds an element $f(x) = \phi(x, z)$ of M, and, conversely, to every element $f(x)$ of M there corresponds a single determinate value of z such that $f(x) = \phi(x, z)$. But this leads to a contradiction. For if one understands by $g(x)$ the single-valued function of x which takes on only the values 0 and 1 and is different from $\phi(x, x)$ for every value of x, then on the one hand $g(x)$ is an element of M, and on the other hand $g(x)$ cannot arise from any value $z = z_0$ of $\phi(x, z)$, because$\phi(z_0, z_0)$ is different from $g(z_0)$.
>
> But if the power of M is neither smaller than nor equal to that of L, it follows that it is greater than the power of L (see *Crelle's Journal*, Vol. 84, p. 242).[3]

The liberation of diagonalization from a specifically set-theoretical mooring has been performed many times. The first incompleteness theorem is arguably already an instance of this, and poses the perpetual problem of whether such resituations are limitations or expansions or (most likely) both in different senses. Particularly notable is Lawvere's 1969 reformulation

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make up the entire excess, while there are, for example, no more *continuous* functions of a real variable than there are real numbers. Discontinuity opens the quantitative difference which I follow Badiou in identifying with ontological difference. This fact should be borne clearly in mind in assessing all contemporary use of structured sets, categories, topoi, *etc.* in philosophy.

[3] I am grateful to Paul Livingston for recently prompting me to revisit the importance of this final premise; it should be noted that it is only the trichotomy, and not the full well-ordering of the cardinals ("powers") to which Cantor refers in the succeeding lines, that is used here. The implications of the theorem in the absence of well-ordering demand further specification. I am inclined to the view that the guiding principle of interpretation should be to mark the *expressive* limitations corresponding to restrictions of the theorem. That is, we can determine to work in a system in which we cannot make certain assertions about the extensions of concepts, cardinality included, and we can work in systems in which the classical tension of extensions and intensions is generally relinquished, since the question of their relation cannot be raised at all; but this is not to gain additional options of assertion about *that* relation. But a defense of the rigid designation of "the relation of intensions and extensions" by appeal to diagonalization is open to the charge of circularity. The more convincing way is to investigate nonstandard senses of extensionality (that is, to reflect on the intension of "extension"), probably in a category-theoretic or topos-theoretic context, in order to learn more precisely by what measure ontological options are expanded or constricted along this vector of exploration. At the same time, I have not been able to find an ontological variant that fits the case of *number* of central importance to Cantor and Plato.

of a large family of diagonal theorems in a categorical setting. Yanovsky (2003) performs a signal service, on my view, by retranslating this back into a set-theoretic framework, thus attaining a measured degree of generalization in a context in which philosophers can still be sure that intensions and extensions are being given their familiar interpretations. In the Lawvere/Yanovsky reformulation, set-theoretic in its substructure, but presented in the categorical style by means of a commutative diagram, Cantor's diagonalization becomes (with my relabelings):

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S \times S & \xrightarrow{eval} & \Omega \\ {\scriptstyle\Delta}\uparrow & & \downarrow{\scriptstyle !} \\ S & \xrightarrow{\delta} & \Omega \end{array}$$

It is the central contention of my investigations here that this graph, which emerged unexpectedly from formal mathematics' reflection on itself, is also the matheme of reflection, that is, that it exhibits the essential trajectory of the self-application of the concept, whether this be called knowledge of knowledge, thinking of thinking, or something else, placing it in relation to a lack and excess that is at once reflection's limit and its ownmost possibility. The diagram can be read as the disturbing fixation of the true mediating relation, by its ascending and descending arrows, between its two levels, the level of first-order cognition at the bottom and the level of reflection at the top. The emergence of the true mediation is disturbing because the content of reflection's articulated truth is ironically identical to the recognition of its weakness. The specification of reflection's true relation to the prereflective has, as the fruit of its exceptional success, the breaking of the image of a faculty or power of reflection.

The diagram works by producing, as δ or the diagonal function, a first-order witness of the failure of the reflective functions at the top to successfully inventory or index the first-order functions at the bottom. Here, S is any set, of course including infinite ones; Ω is the truth-value object (classically 2, thus my "learning to count to two" below); ! is any "derangement", that is, negation or any other fixed-pointless difference; $eval(x, y)$ returns the result of the function named by its first/second input applied to its second/first input; and Δ is the "diagonal functor" requiring us to consider the application of each function to its own index, for some putative indexing scheme. Though the term "diagonalization" is sometimes used narrowly to indicate only the application of this functor, I reserve it for the construction as a whole, and especially for the *resultant* function $\delta = !(eval(\Delta(s)))$, which is the crux of the diagonal theorems as a whole, the central topic of philosophical interest, and which would otherwise go unnamed. Diagonalization in my sense thus includes as elements both the production of a fixed point through the use of the diagonal functor, and the exclusion of a fixed point from at least some intra-logical operation (that is, some function from the truth-value object to itself). These twin requirements, for the inclusion and exclusion of a fixed point, correspond to the Closure and Transcendence requirements of Priest's Inclosure Schema in *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, a variant way of generalizing the structure of the diagonal theorems. More to my immediate purpose, they correspond to the requirements of the *tinos*-structure of knowledge in tension with the demand for reflexive self-knowledge in the *Charmides*, and to the problem posed to reflection in the face of Sartre's radicalization of the intentionality thesis. This *distribution* of fixed points is the essence of the discovered

mediation between the two levels of reflection which enables us to evaluate reflection's global structure. One way of putting the necessity which the diagonal theorems express is this: if you exclude a fixed point over here, in the definition of negation, say, then you must pay the price of rediscovering it over there, that is, finding that the fixed point of reflection is not a facultative Critian power of knowledge of knowledge, but an exceptional Socratic knowledge of ignorance. The concept stands *in* more relations than it can objectify, that is, more than it can have a second-order concept *of*. This quantitative lack and excess would be, on my reading, the relevant instance of the Platonic Dyad (lack/excess) in contemporary thought, alike from Sartre to Badiou and from Frege to Davidson.

Metaphilosophically, it should be noted that the proposal put forward here to identify diagonalization with the truth of reflection, whether this be called the Idea of the Good with Plato, pure reflection with Sartre, or by any other name, is not disqualified as a category error by its form, namely that of an equation between a quasi-formalism on the one hand and a philosopheme standing in relation to (more-or-less) ordinary language on the other, for this feature is shared by the Church-Turing thesis, of which it is in fact a proposed extension. The Church-Turing thesis, almost universally accepted, identifies a particular intramathematical formalism (actually three which prove to be equivalent) with the informal notion of an effective procedure, algorithm, or simply what it is to follow a *rule*. I am working here in order to contribute to the construction of the dual and perhaps more difficult interpretive bridge which must be built between the uncomputable in life and its form.

The following investigation consists of two parts. Part I is a connected essay which tries to go to first principles in the metalogical rethinking of Socratic-Platonic (elenctic-mathematical) dialectic. The engagement is quite specific, and necessarily so are the scholarly interlocutors. It drives toward the reappearance of diagonalization from out of a reading of the Platonic text. Once this point has been reached, in Part II, I allow myself a more open texture, and engagements with a greater number of properly philosophical voices, including Peirce, Frege and Sartre, in order to make clearer the global structure of the reorganizations that open up from the first engagement.

Part I

The *Elenchos* and the Good: An Essay on Metalogic as Ethics

Chapter 1

Metalogic of the *Elenchos*

These remarks comprise the first part of an *introduction to the metalogical Plato.*[1] Conceptual personae come cheaply, so the only justification for introducing a new one would be if something thought-provoking could be brought to light in this way that it would be difficult or impossible to frame otherwise. This is my claim, and I hope that the interest (or at least puzzlement) provoked by the thesis *metalogic is ethics* motivates a closer look at this hypothetical figure, the metalogical Plato, through engagement with whom I hope to bring out the truth of the thesis.

The sharpest form of this thesis, stated with awareness of its apparent absurdity, brings forward *diagonalization*, the matheme of the death of God, as our best candidate for a *form* of the Good different from the Perfect and entailing its negation. This would suggest that the crux of my encounter with Plato should happen somewhere around *Republic VI*. Yet, I have found it impossible to secure the relevance of anything I want to say at this point without first going back to the method of Plato's Socrates, to the *elenchos*, which comes first in a number of senses, and at the same time of leaping forward to the last word—the "unwritten" (or, rather, obsessively and constantly written) "doctrine of the principles" (the *agrapha dogmata*). In this chapter I will be concerned exclusively with the *elenchos*, but I note that each essential move in my interpretation is finally answerable for the extent to which it succeeds in tying together these three nodal points by collapsing the apparent conceptual distance between them—the *elenchos*, the idea of the Good, the doctrine of the principles.

1.1 Priorities of *Elenchos*

It is worth stating the ways in which the *elenchos* can be said to come first. 1) It is

[1] For reference, and for disputational purposes, the principal theses of the "introduction", isolated from the context of the larger project with which they are intertwined in succeeding chapters, can be stated as follows:

1. The *elenchos*, grounded in the duality of the "*ti esti*" and "*peri tinos*" questions, witnesses a disjunction of consistency and completeness.
2. True general reflexivity is not a power but a relation to potentiality.
3. Our best contemporary candidate for a the form of the good is diagonalization.

first in historical actuality, being generally agreed to be Plato's most direct representation of Socrates' actual practice, in effect since before Plato's birth. 2) It is also first in being the most conspicuous feature of the "early" dialogues, those that Plato probably composed first. These first two senses of firstness are related. It's probable that Plato began by trying to depict faithfully the core of Socratic practice as he observed it and heard about it, though nothing prevents his having reworked the depictions any number of times as his understanding of the structure and stakes of the method deepened (indeed the very consistency of the pattern through the diversity of its applications suggests that this may have been the case); thus no particular instance of *elenchos* can or needs to be definitively classified with respect to the "early" / "middle" / "late" distinction. 3) The *elenchos* is certainly the most prominent feature of those Socratic dialogues which come first in Plato's fictive chronology (excluding the *Parmenides* where Socrates appears as a teenager.) 4) And further, even in later dialogues such as the *Theaetetus*, familiar patterns of *elenchos* come first at least in the sense of kicking off the investigation, though I shall argue that they recur and re-echo in transformed and amplified ways throughout, driving the dialectic.

Related to all of these but more important than any of them, 5) the *elenchos* is that, on my hypothesis, to which Plato's development of dialectic *responds*. In opposition to both "unitarian" and "developmental" readings of the dialogues, which consider the identity or difference of propositions offered in *succession*, I suggest that we need to understand Platonism in relation to a figure of *depth*, a problem of grounding (and ungrounding). I project that we can understand the picture of dialectic given in the dialogues—including and especially the mathematical turn that has seemed so heterogeneous, so specifically Platonic and un-Socratic to many interpreters—as motivated by a desire to understand the ground of what took place in Socrates' discussions, an attempt to answer the question, "How is Socrates possible?" Here, "Socrates" means the operator of the *elenchos*, whose singularity is the more intense for not being confined to any empirical individuality but rather based on something above and beneath personality, a backward-bending unity of the extremes of structure and event. Against Friedländer and others, I do not believe Plato was captivated by Socrates the historical person as by a sort of saint or master, a subject-supposed-to-know.[2] Rather I take it that Plato was intellectually and erotically captured by a Socratic

[2](Friedländer 1964): "Behind every and any question raised there was the final question: How should man live in the service of the city, which requires the virtuous man, and in the service of God, who requires the good man in a well-ordered city? Socrates knew that there was an answer to this question because he was that kind of man; and that knowledge determined the form of his dialogues. In and through his inquiries he turned to where an answer might be found. He asked: What is... Hence there must be something that *is*. But only Plato saw it, and in the *Eidos* he found what Socrates had taught his students to seek and what Socrates himself had lived." (18) One can see the avenue opened for Vlastos' interpretation of Socrates as tacit moral dogmatist. But the humanism and idolatry here are rather thick. The insistence on Socrates' moral self-certainty is linked to not having found the real formal solution to the paradox of knowing that one does not know, *i.e.*, the form of the negative metalogical absolute. Against such Socrates-idolatry, I would emphasize that interpersonal interactions with Socrates are erotically and existentially charged *just because* he is the operator of the *elenchos* properly understood. Socrates' love is to make the transference of being and knowledge to his person (which is the effect of the initial seduction) give way, for the sake of the interlocutor's recollection, which does not mean staying inside oneself, but quite the opposite, coming oneself to be outside oneself in relation to something totally alien, and not to the self-image alienated in the master. Levinas neglects that it is this other, the object of a setting-free, and not "I" or "me" who in the first place *recollects*. When "I" project, Socrates is the transitory master who refuses the transference. How is this feat

phenomenon which was at once a sudden disclosure of possibilities and, just because of that, an event whose own possibility remained mysterious—an opaque fulguration of transparency, an other-illuminating but self-concealing light. If this is correct, then the dialogues should respond to an investigation that approaches them as a reflexive fugue of use and mention of the structures of Socratic method. For this reason it is necessary that my investigation, which aims to elucidate the extreme point of Platonic dialectic, the Idea of the Good, must also put the *elenchos* first.

To explicate my understanding of the *elenchos* is the work of the present chapter. To prepare for it at the level of imagery, allow me to invoke two astronomical metaphors, each an image of an unexpected and transformative two: 1) Sometimes we discover that what we count routinely as one star is actually two solar bodies in close orbit, of each other or (equivalently) of their joint center of mass, in a *binary s*ystem. We do not typically learn of the presence of the companion star from direct observation, but from the pattern of its effects, its work, one might say its *look*, not to the senses, but to our sense of *structure*. This is the most direct way to put the basic interpretive breakthrough I shall argue for in this chapter: that Socrates' famous question is part of a binary system; that the brightest star by which Socratic questioning steers, the *ti esti*, has a companion; and that without accounting properly for this companion's role, the system as such remains fundamentally misunderstood. (Perhaps this other star has a long rotational period (say 2500 years or so) so that it was only subsequent to experiences of Cantor, Gödel, *et al.* that we were able to observe it.) 2) Lacan famously argued (following Koyre and others) that the real conceptual break in modern astronomy was not the replacement of one center by another—geocentrism by heliocentrism—but the replacement of a centered, circular model of the orbit with a decentered, elliptical one. An ellipse by definition has two foci, even and especially if one is necessarily empty. The implied rebuke of Kant's Copernican Revolution is clear, along with the implied task for a future philosophy: if transcendental philosophy, up to and including phenomenology, replaces one center with another, what I want instead is for Plato's Socrates to help us to learn to think the Two, to help philosophy learn to count to Two.

1.2 Socrates' Two Questions

My thesis concerning the *elenchos* can be stated very straightforwardly: the Socratic *elenchos*, I contend, is best understood not at the logical but at the metalogical level, as arising out of, responding to, and ultimately demonstrating the fundamental metalogical duality of consistency and completeness, by means of asking two equally-fundamental questions: *ti esti?* or *what is it?* and *peri tinos?* or *about what?* There is of course another two already in the background, inescapable for anyone working on Plato almost since there was Plato to work on, but it is a two that manages to add up to less than one, that of Aristotle's famous formulation in the first book of the *Metaphysics*: "Socrates concerned himself with ethical matters (τὰ ἠθικὰ) rather than with the whole of nature (τῆς ὅλης φύσεως), *and*

of negation possible? How does Socrates get out of the way of the worshipful-objectifying impulse? I claim it's precisely through the *tinos*-structure, which makes it impossible to enclose knowledge in being. *About what?* One possibility is about oneself, myself, yourself, Socrates'-self, and it doesn't work. Two things are set free at once in Socratic love: the Other from the authoritative image of the subject-supposed-to-know, and the Good from both being and knowledge.

(καὶ) was the first to concentrate on definitions (περὶ ὁρισμῶν)."[3] The mere presence of the conjunction does not compel us to interpret these as two *distinct* things for which Socrates is being separately credited, but familiarity with Aristotle does. To be fair, this is an interesting reading, but in the centuries since he offered it, the observation has been repeated as self-evident. Aristotle's thoughtful and obliquely-polemical remark has accustomed us to leave unexamined the premise that Socrates deserves credit for doing *two* things, one at the level of logical method and the other at the level of substantive content: focusing on definitions and being interested in ethics. As opposed to what? Certainly as opposed to *one* thing whose structure is more complex than it might at first appear, but even as opposed to a *two as such,* a *duality* of (say) logic and ethics that would be internal to dialectical thinking. As will frequently be found in this investigation, the choice between speaking of a complex or twofold unity, on the one hand, and simply of a two, on the other, is largely a matter of preference. But not so the distinction of this two from simple unities on the one hand and externally-related twos, remarked upon from the outside, on the other. That Aristotle's "and" denotes such externality is indicated in the possibility of reapplication of logical method to natural philosophy—Aristotle clearly thinks it is possible to "concentrate on definitions" in just the Socratic fashion while shifting the content (shifting it back, Aristotle would say) to problems of nature. He implies that aspects of the Platonic theory of ideas, as well as the *Metaphysics* itself, can be thought of in this (superior) way.

Now, in the case of Aristotle ("the Reader," Plato reportedly styled him), the form/content externality does not arise from a simple misinterpretation. As readers of the *Metaphysics* come to realize, Aristotle's assessments of his predecessors' contributions are reconstructions in anticipatory relation to the framework of his own theory. Book Alpha is not disguised as an objective report (which would be impossible anyway except as sheer quotation,[4] and Aristotle is not an anthologist). We should rather understand that Aristotle's "and" expresses a deliberately anti-dialectical way of analyzing the Socratic phenomenon, and that his carefully-chosen description of Socratic method is part of his always-ongoing struggle in the *Metaphysics* and elsewhere against Platonic dialectic, its mathematical inspiration, and its centerpiece, the Idea of the Good. Aristotle in effect reaches back behind Plato's own reconstruction of Socrates. Where Plato emphasizes the inseparability, in dialectic, of the poles of a logico-ethical duality, Aristotle recasts his master's master as the operator of a heterogeneous method—logical rigor applied (probably *mis*applied, given the limitations of the subject) to ethical problems.[5] It was Plato's mistake, he implies, to have taken as a real

[3] *Met.* I.6, 987b1-4.

[4] In fact, this is the lesson of the *Ion*; see Chapter 2.

[5] Recall the conversation-stopper that practically begins the *Nicomachean Ethics*: "Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. ... We must be content, then, in speaking of such subjects [as just actions and goods] and with such premisses to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true and with premisses of the same kind to reach conclusions that are no better. In the same spirit, therefore, should each type of statement be received: for it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs." (*EN* I.3, 1094b12-28, trans. W.D. Ross.)

method what lacks a natural unity of form and content.[6] I contend that "logic" and "ethics" so construed (as they so often are even today) are suspect notions, no better founded than Aristotle's observation of Socrates, and suggest that the problem of discovering and articulating the unity of the phenomenon investigated under the names of *elenchos* or "Socratic method" has been obscured and devalued from the outset. Indeed, the most natural result of Aristotle's analysis is that we should lose interest in the *elenchos*, for if the form and content of Socratic method are in truth related only contingently and externally, then *essentially* there is no Socratic method. Conversely, if philosophy's origin in Socrates' questioning (as opposed to, say, his death) is to become philosophically-interesting again, we must show the unity of logical form and ethical content in the *elenchos*.

Our philosophical culture has not fully emerged from the long shadow of Aristotle's "and". Absent a living philosophical reception of Socratic method, our understanding of it continues to be vague and rootless. "Socratic method" now functions as a distinguished honorific for any attempt to facilitate learning by question and answer while disclaiming (or feigning to disclaim) central authority.[7] Whatever the interest of such pedagogical appropriations, they fail to do justice to the structural specificity of Socratic questioning.[8] Meanwhile professional attempts to reconstruct a Socratic method with more philosophical relevance have stalled, no longer textually under the sway of the external dualism of Aristotle's dismissive analysis, but still conceptually held in check by it. Ask any philosopher (living or dead): what is Socrates' question? The answer is generally taken to be something known and familiar, something virtually presupposed in the comically pedantic question itself; at the same time the importance of the question may seem inflated, in the accounts of it given to non- or neo-philosophers, relative to its settled unimportance in actual philosophical work. Adulated or disparaged, however, its identity seems not to be in question: Socrates' question is *ti esti?,* most commonly translated as *what is it?* This thoughtlessness is not exclusive to any one philosophical school or tradition, nor to the work of authors pursuing exclusively scholarly rather than philosophical projects. Readers as diverse as Benson, Deleuze, Derrida, Fine, Gadamer, Geach, Hegel, Heidegger, Kahn, Klein, Nietzsche, Riceour, Robinson, and of course Vlastos, to name only a prominent few, are, despite their many and deep differences, all in unanimous agreement on this point.[9] There are a fair number of variants ("what is x?", "what is P?", perhaps ugliest of all "what is F-ness?", among others), and one can find in the variants allusions to certain preferred styles of formalization, particularly in 'analytic' philosophy, but allusions they for the most part remain. Controversy is limited to this

[6]Hegel, despite having the opposite assessment of dialectic to Aristotle's, largely accepts the thrust of Aristotle's critique of both Socrates and Plato. Plato serves as nearly interchangeable with Kant in Hegel's rhetoric, much as Plato does for Husserl in Heidegger's: as the eponym of one-sided overabstraction.

[7]Socrates is not ironic in this sad, modern way. Rather, his questioning flows from a focused and entirely straightforward appreciation of the nonparadoxical possibility and essential value of *knowledge of ignorance.* This will be considered in some detail in Chapter 3.

[8]That is: In a single dialogue, why *these* questions in *this* order? In a group of dialogues, why *this set* of pivotal questions presented in *these possible* orders?

[9]Against this virtual consensus the most common dissent is that Socrates does not have a single identifiable question at all, that it is its ethical content which drives Socrates' questioning and not its logical form; see Brann (2004), Williams (1984), Nussbaum (1986), Lampert (2010), *etc.* Friedländer (1964), somewhat arrestingly, combines these two, seeing the "what is it?" question as the formal guise of the thick ethical-existential question "how should one live?" (to which Socrates was himself the answer).

single act of translation, from the *ti esti* to an implied form of (generally propositional) logic taken as transparent. To ask about the translation of the *what is it* question does enact a first gesture toward understanding the logical grammar of the Socratic question, to be sure, but one that, divorced from a fuller context of formalization, finally makes little philosophical difference. The resulting translation of that one question on its own winds up serving only as a label or inert frame for the analysis of the *elenchos* whose content is drawn from extraformal considerations. Readers of course do not in all respects agree with one another about the particular bad consequences of the Socratic question, and the proffered alternatives and correctives (the other/s of Plato's Socrates) are legion.[10] But minutiae aside there is broad agreement that Socratic method, the *elenchos*, and sometimes Plato's thought as a whole, are fatally self-limiting in their insistence on the single question of the *ti esti*. In the absence of any self-testimony from Plato or his Socrates confirming the *ti esti* as the complete Socratic question, the confidence with which it has been unanimously received as such may strike us as remarkable, but of course only in retrospect, once we have an alternative against which to measure it.

I propose to displace this prejudice, and to reopen the need for a logical investigation of the question as such, in its own complexity, starting from itself, and not from what we imagine to be the jumping-off point of an already-identified "Socratic" conversation. Clearly it is vanishingly unlikely that the positive contents of the view outlined above are entirely mistaken. This would imply, absurdly, that the Socratic dialogues remain effectively unread; such is not my claim. The *ti esti* is, of course, the most prominent of Socrates' questions. It is especially visible in that it frequently opens the elenctic sequence, at least when the issue in view is (apparently) a search for the definition of a virtue.[11] (And perhaps this feeds the impression that it can be solidly associated with the historical Socrates, coming as it does at the openings of conversations which must have been subsequently developed by means of Plato's own philosophical creativity.) I claim only that the consensus view is as wrong as it could plausibly be, namely, half wrong. I deny that the *ti esti* works alone; I deny that, alone, it works at all. Quantitatively, then, the standard view misses fifty-percent of the Socratic question, but functionally, this is to miss the whole structure, if the whole is realized only in the relation of its two parts, logically developed in time. My problem with the consensus view is less that it is incomplete (as every account is) than that it is static; it renders itself and its target incapable of logical motion—it hops in place without being

[10]The philosophical treatment of the *ti esti* question has continually rebounded back on the question "What is philosophy?" For this reason, the question of Socrates' question is simultaneously philosophical and "metaphilosophical". We may observe that significant philosophy is *always* also overtly or tacitly metaphilosophical, *i.e.*, that philosophy is, in clarifying anything, always *also* seeking to clarify itself. This strikes some philosophers as implausible and others as obvious; either response needs to be explained. But this characteristic of philosophy—to be also metaphilosophy to the extent that it is significant—is an immediate consequence of the concept of philosophy I propose: philosophy is the theory of self-reference sustained to the point of the self-reference of theory.

[11]My position is that the *elenchos* drives from the beginning toward the view that there are, ultimately, no virtues, rather relation between the form of the good and other forms, and that when the virtues are finally put aside in the *Republic*, this is only an explicit mention of what we should long have gathered from elenctic practice. But Plato's Socrates is right not to begin with a dogmatic assertion so far removed from ordinary language. Instead, he reflects on a presupposition of this language in order to eliminate it, and set thinking into motion in the space opened up.

able to avail itself dialectically of "the power of two feet". The *ti esti* question (along with its recognized variants) comprises only one node of a polarized structure, the other pole of which is marked by the appearance of the question *peri tinos* (and its recognizable variants[12]), which we can translate provisionally as the "About what?" or "What is it *about*?" question. The presence of this other question[13] has not gone entirely unnoticed in the dialogues, but its systematic role—that of a complement to the *ti esti* without which the *elenchos* does not function—has apparently not been recognized, despite some near misses.[14]

I argue these *two* questions, just as the metalogical concepts (consistency and completeness) which structure the space of Socratic questioning and hence of which these questions are the textual trace, are (1) equally fundamental (*not* subordinated), (2) distinct (*not* identical), but also (3) systematically connected (*not* separable) foci of what has come to be called the Socratic *elenchos*. This point about structure is clearly prior to the other questions that one could pose about the Socratic *elenchos*—whether it is valid, whether it is "constructive", *etc.*—for if the true core operation of the *elenchos* has not been fully identified, much less understood, the contribution of its internal logic to answering the questions one rightly puts to it from a variety of philosophical perspectives cannot be registered. The poverty of formal reflections on the *elenchos* to date is explained not, as is sometimes supposed, by the early state of the "development" of "logic" in the Socratic dialogues, but by our having incompletely grasped Socratic method, such that the relation between its two main parts has not become a productive problem for us. Such is the two-fold task of the present chapter: (1) to make visible this total structure, to bring out the two major parts of the *elenchos*, particularly its poles and points of inflection, and make these intelligible in their relations to one another; and (2) to show that this structure makes deep sense of the *moves*, the repetitions and divergences, rejoinders and transitions, that Socrates[15] makes in elenctic dialogues.

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[12]Various desiderata could lead one to various selections of a canonical form for the other question. For instance desire to maintain parallel structure with the *ti esti,* and to emphasize that it's the meaning of being itself (the *esti*) which is both articulated and insuperably divided by this twofold might motivate the choice of *tinos esti* ("Of what is it?"). I have chosen *peri tinos* as the index of this equivalence class because, among the available choices, it is the most natural bit of ordinary language.

[13]And yet other "other" questions: Deleuze (1967) for example notes, in condemning Platonism for being terminally fascinated with the *ti esti*, the presence of other questions in the Platonic corpus: "But when Platonic dialectic becomes something serious and positive, [the question] takes other forms: who? in the *Republic;* how much? in *Philebus;* where and when? in the *Sophist;* and in which case? in *Parmenides*...The question *What is this?* prematurely judges the Idea as simplicity of the essence; from then on, it is inevitable that the simple essence includes the inessential, and includes it *in essence* and thus contradicts itself." This identification of other questions is obscure and unconvincing (in what sense is *who?* actually the question of the *Republic*?), and the influence of Aristotle is pronounced, if unintended and quickly traversed: the other, better, questions express "spatio-temporal dynamisms" and hence belong to categories other than that of *ousia*. To really succeed in decentering a monoptic *ti esti*, it will not suffice to multiply questions from the oblique categories. It is necessary to find the *ti esti*'s proper dual.

[14]The nearest miss I have come across in the course of my research is Sprague (1976); see Chapter 3.

[15]It is worth noting here at the outset that, despite the historical considerations elucidated above in 1.1, this is not an investigation in search of the historical Socrates. By "Socrates" I mean Plato's most cherished conceptual persona, the figure of his "Socratic" dialogues, particularly the operator of the *elenchos*. One does not have to believe too seriously in the possibility of assigning a chronology to the dialogues, much less Plato's philosophical development, in order to find the designation useful in an obvious, casual way, referring foremost to the nature of the arguments and their topics.

1.3 Pattern of *elenchos:* consistency and completeness

The Socratic or elenctic dialogues might be agreed to include **Alcibiades, Apology, Charmides, *Clitophon, Crito, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, *Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Meno, Protagoras*, and **Theages* (subject to disputes over authenticity in the marked cases), with special status afforded *Meno* as the transitional dialogue *par excellence*.[16] In all prose, a certain arbitrariness of linear order poses a problem to structural comprehension, which prosification itself arguably consists in dissimulating. Getting at the deep structure of the *elenchos* thus requires wrestling with (and at first simply confronting) the variety of linear orders that characterize and falsely appear to govern the dialogues on their manifest surface. *Ion*, for instance, is not a dialogue of definition, but it is clearly a core case of *elenchos*. (In fact I claim that it is a tutorial, overlooked precisely on account of its beautiful simplicity, in the function of the *peri tinos* question, and even a rehearsal for the dilemmatic articulation of this function in the *Charmides*, which will occupy us in a later chapter.) For now we might say that what these dialogues all have in common is that Socrates is in every case concerned with an explicit or implicit claim to ethical knowledge, where each of these—the cognitive side and the ethical side—exerts normative force on the other. This means, for a concept, constraints at the level of form, and not just delimitation at the level of content.[17]

However, it can be useful in a preliminary way to divide instances of *elenchos* into two kinds, depending on their starting points or proximate targets.[18] Most familiarly in classic "Socratic" dialogues, Socrates begins from the ethical side—asking about some traditional virtue or other, named as such—in which case the work lies in finding (and, prior to this, in insisting upon seeking) its epistemic dimension. The examples on this side come immediately to mind: piety in the *Euthyphro*, courage in the *Laches*, *sophrosune* in the *Charmides*, friendship in the *Lysis*, justice in *Republic I*, and of course there is the search for the definition of virtue *per se* in the *Meno*. The Socratic twist, the singular happening that makes this search for the definition of a virtue more demanding than a search for a definition of

[16] To these one might productively add the first book of the *Republic* and the *elenchos* of Agathon leading into the speech of Socrates (including the nested *elenchos* of Socrates and speech of Diotima) in the *Symposium*, and even the elenctic dimension (of course drastically modified and expanded) of *Theaetetus* and *Parmenides*. I will put aside for the present those dialogues in which Socrates is not a central participant, whether as practitioner or subject of *elenchos*. The literary and historical considerations indispensable to a reading of the genre-piece *Menexenus* fall outside the scope of my inquiry. Controversies pertaining to the precising of the canon of the "Socratic" dialogues will have little effect on my argument, as it is not drawn from any of the doubtful cases.

[17] As we shall see, the *about what?* question does not just demand the specification of content but is itself a formal addition of great significance. This is why Shorey's characterization (developed by Kahn (1996)) of many of the most crucial appearances of the *peri tinos* question as instances of a "request for specification" is so misleading. A definition or indeed any concept that can really be about something in the sense that Socrates demands, one in which the relation between sense and reference is nontrivial, is a formal novelty, and this demand is perhaps not ultimately satisfied by any predialectical (first-order) concepts.

[18] This division need pose no problem to a unified treatment of *elenchos*, and indeed we might *expect* there to be more than one way for a method so deeply concerned with a duality to unfold. There are interesting problems here about what a unified concept of a duality or of a multiplicity ought to look like, especially if, as I suspect, there is a dialectically-valid (metamathematically-valid) version of the principle "like knows like", a principle not of the *identity* of concept and object in the absolute, but of their *reversibility*. I will postpone further discussion of this point until later.

mud or square ever need be, is the inclusion of knowledge in the thing being defined: instead of being simply thought about, the object defined turns out to have to think. But it is also possible to begin from the side of a claim to knowledge, someone's claim to possess some art or other, in which case Socrates' work must drive the conversation from the cognitive side toward the ethical side, toward what good such knowledge does for its possessor or what benefit one could expect from learning it, which benefit hinges on the object (or product or output) of the knowledge. The *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* are perhaps the most obvious examples of *elenchoi* starting from the side of knowledge, though as I noted I will claim a special place among these for the *Ion*. Against the sophists (or the rhapsode), that is, those who explicitly claim for themselves some knowledge, it is particularly necessary for Socrates to insist on the criterion (however ill-defined at first) of goodness; against traditionalists, particularly aristocratic defenders of traditional virtues, it is necessary for Socrates to challenge acculturated privilege or presumed know-how to declare its status and limits with respect to knowledge. Put another way, the *elenchos* will work by showing the traditionalists that they cannot remain nobly indifferent to the vicissitudes of reflection, and the sophists that they cannot benefit themselves from their reflective cleverness except by discovering a point at which their distantiating calculation[19] collapses.

Of course there is an odd affinity between traditionalists and sophists, irrespective of how much they seem to despise each other, and some of Socrates' most interesting interlocutors, including Protagoras, Critias, and Ion, are arguably both at the same time. I suggest we should expect to find such figures in Plato: "culture" and "tradition", when they are really effective (that is, in archaic times), do not recognize themselves as such, but posit themselves as natural; but to affirm the cultural, as these three each do in their own ways, is to put oneself in a state of exception relative to it—cynically standing outside what one founds and manipulates for the consumption of the many. (Critias to some extent admits this about sophistical "enlightenment", while Protagoras (possibly due to more earnest ethical commitments, possibly an even deeper cynicism) does not. Ion seems to constitute his professional identity in part by resolutely refusing to acknowledge there is anything to admit.) The ground of this affinity is not personal but metalogical, namely the tendency of ontotheological and constructivist interpretations of diagonalization to require each other. We will have occasion to consider this in what follows.

The primary difference between a virtue- or anti-traditionalist *elenchos* and a knowledge- or anti-sophistical *elenchos* is that, in the latter, Socrates does not have to introduce knowledge into the discussion. It is tempting to say that in this latter case the *elenchos* jumps in halfway, that the sophist does half of Socrates' work for him, but a more apt characterization is that both work toward the same disjunction starting from opposite sides: namely, the necessary disjunction of consistency and completeness in the structure of some knowledge that helps or saves. The sketch of *elenchos* below follows the narrative order of virtue *elenchoi*, since these are more familiar in two senses: (a) the dialogues are themselves marginally more widely read, but also, more importantly, (b) these *elenchoi* start from the side of the question that is (rightly) already recognized as central to Socratic practice, the *ti esti* or

[19] By "distantiating calculation" here I mean the classic sophistical trope of semantic ascent—of replacing belief with "belief" in quotes, virtue with "virtue" in quotes, a way of bracketing or relativizing the values and practices of the society they would manipulate (or teach others to manipulate)—and their complete confidence that they gain something thereby.

"what is it?" question. Anti-sophistical *elenchoi* will be treated in parallel here when fitting; for a more sustained discussion of how *elenchos* works in these cases, see the treatment of *Ion* in the next chapter.

Socratic dialogues (*Meno* being an arguable exception) rarely begin immediately with a recognizably Socratic question; the *elenchos* proper arises from Socrates' attention to (and deployment of) the twofold of *use* and *mention*. In virtue *elenchoi*, sometimes Socrates meets someone he knows by chance somewhere public, and they strike up what is at first a relatively casual conversation (as in *Euthyphro*); sometimes he gets drawn in to a conversation already underway, or is sought out for his counsel (as in *Lysis* and *Laches*). In any case it rarely takes long before Socrates notes that some virtue or other is at issue in the conversation, and suggests they take the time to figure out what that virtue is before proceeding any further. That is to say, the *ti esti* urges Socrates' interlocutors to begin *mentioning* the concept they have been *using*. Knowledge *elenchoi* (*Gorgias*, *Protagoras*) usually begin with Socrates having sought out (either on his own behalf or for a friend) a visiting famous sophist, in order to discover what this sophist claims to know and what benefit he derives from this knowledge. Here, the *peri tinos* asks after the utility (use) of a knowledge that has been explicitly claimed (mentioned).

This twofold of use and mention, their difference and their relation, sheds light on the oft-criticized move in which, upon the attribution of some virtue or other to one of his interlocutors, Socrates gets the person so characterized to agree that if he indeed possesses this virtue, he must be able to say *something* about it; perhaps not (yet) the truth about how it is, but something about how it seems to him to be. This point is not the implausible one that it is often taken to be, the so-called "Socratic fallacy" that to know is to know that one knows, as if for instance every speaker of Greek could be expected to be an expert on Greek grammar. Such a fully accomplished reflection built in at the beginning is indeed a metaphysical myth. Socrates' demand is not that reflection always-already be finished (though indeed Socrates' interlocutors often accuse him of having accomplished such a reflection and cruelly withholding its workings from them), but simply that it is possible to begin, that, if one knows, one does not know *nothing* about knowing, and hence there is *not no way* for inquiry to begin. To use the same example, a speaker of Greek should be able to begin, no doubt very imperfectly, producing a grammar, given sufficient motivation to do so; and the very imperfection of the initial results would serve as motivation to reflect and to learn. Already, then, in this beginning, we have the contrast of, on the one hand, reflection as an accomplished power, a faculty one may possess and deploy at will, as a mastery over both thought and (thereby) life; and, on the other, reflection as minimal, negative with respect to the presence-to-hand of a systematic theory, as initiating an investigation rather than completing it. That is to say, a *dunamis* that relies simply on there being an intersection between thought and life, or between the knowledge that one wants to know about, and the knowledge that one is already using. It is possible to begin mentioning what we have been using; the *ti esti* question may prompt us to begin doing so. It is possible to pose as a problem the use of the concepts we are mentioning; the *peri tinos* may startle us into acknowledgment of this dual problem.

When Socrates asks *ti esti?*, he initializes the search for a definition. But this question is not asked about just anything (not, say, hair or mud); it is asked about a *virtue*, a thing with a very specific sort of logical form. The logical form of a virtue in the sense

examined in the dialogues involves positing a synthesis of consistency and completeness, *i.e.*, a rule that can be effectively formulated and followed which (always) produces good results.[20] Equivalently (the equivalence may not be obvious), this is the kind of ethical knowledge that would be actual if there were really any virtues, which would take the form of an identity of consciousness and self-consciousness, and the power to effect a systematic correspondence between use and mention. That is to say, what is asked for when Socrates asks for the definition of a virtue is an algorithm for behavior that will, in every case, turn out to help, to be beneficial or useful, to be Good. It is paramount to note that there are indeed two parts to this notion of definition, two distinct demands, that will be shown to be incompatible. The demand is not for a definition (as per Aristotle) simply in the sense of a universal, a unified formulable essence, though sometimes Socrates must start with this minimal notion of a one-over-many, or rather, push his interlocutor to start there.[21] Any definition adequate to this logical form must be, on the one hand, a good recipe, *i.e.*, one which can be followed step-by-step starting from zero (or one, in Greek induction), without self-presupposition; and, on the other hand, one which must produce outcomes recognizable as good, useful, beneficial, in every case of its application. Put yet another way, the demand is for a function that is both algorithmic and in this special sense total.

Typically, the first few definitions offered by Socrates' interlocutors are good recipes, but do not guarantee good results in all cases. That is to say, they meet the algorithmic criterion, but fail the other criterion, not of mere correctness within a fixed domain, but of *total* correctness, a form of completeness. Thus, for instance, with Laches (192b-c):

[20] That the synthesis is posited as given and unreflective—the Athenian gentleman wants to be virtuous not by knowing anything about it, but in noble indifference to such reflections—is the main difference between the intuitive totalities presupposed by traditional virtue ethics and the cynically technical totalities of sophistical enlightenment.

[21] *Cf.* the bafflement this minimal demand produces in Meno, in contrast to the facility with which Theaetetus grasps it.

Σωκράτης: πειρῶ δὴ καὶ σύ, ὦ Λάχης, τὴν ἀνδρείαν οὕτως εἰπεῖν τίς οὖσα δύναμις ἡ αὐτὴ ἐν ἡδονῇ καὶ ἐν λύπῃ καὶ ἐν ἅπασιν οἷς νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν αὐτὴν εἶναι, ἔπειτα ἀνδρεία κέκληται.	Socrates: So now try and tell me on your part, Laches, about courage in the same way: what faculty is it, the same whether in pleasure or in pain or in any of the things in which we said just now it was to be found, that has been singled out by the name of courage?
Λάχης: δοκεῖ τοίνυν μοι καρτερία τις εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς, εἰ τό γε διὰ πάντων περὶ ἀνδρείας πεφυκὸς δεῖ εἰπεῖν.	Laches: Well then, I take it to be a certain endurance of the soul, if I am to speak of the natural quality that appears in them all.
Σωκράτης: ἀλλὰ μὴν δεῖ, εἴ γε τὸ ἐρωτώμενον ἀποκρινούμεθα ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς. τοῦτο τοίνυν ἔμοιγε φαίνεται: οὔτι πᾶσά γε, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, καρτερία ἀνδρεία σοι φαίνεται. τεκμαίρομαι δὲ ἐνθένδε: σχεδὸν γάρ τι οἶδα, ὦ Λάχης, ὅτι τῶν πάνυ καλῶν πραγμάτων ἡγῇ σὺ ἀνδρείαν εἶναι.	Socrates: Why, of course we must, if we are each to answer the other's actual question. Now it appears to me that by no means all endurance, as I conceive it, can appear to you to be courage. And my grounds for thinking so are these: I am almost certain, Laches, that you rank courage among the nobler qualities.

Having rejected his prior definition (remaining in place and defending oneself) for failing to account for other behaviors mutually agreed to be courageous, Laches here offers "endurance" as the single essence that accounts for them all. This is not at all absurd or thoughtless, and it is is indeed a good algorithm: it is easy to follow the directive "endure" in any given situation without presupposing a prior understanding of what is to be done. Of course, it is easy to show that to endure is not always the better thing. Since a virtue by its nature must be or produce what is admirable in all cases, Socrates gets Laches to agree, unqualified "endurance" cannot be what is meant by "courage." This exchange crosses the threshold that, for the sake of a metalogical markup of the dialogues, we can call "goodness introduction" (G.I.). The dual operation (goodness elimination, or G.E.) takes place only when, at the end of a virtue elenchos, whether or not the latter passes to the reflective plane with a knowledge introduction (K.I.), goodness is formally distinguished from any first-order property; at this stage (G.E.) we are invited to replace intuitive belief in the virtues with an interaction between forms per se and the good.

The goodness criterion is the first form of completeness we encounter, the one most directly tied to an unlimited scope of application. Of course, for Aristotle and fans of *ceteris paribus* rules this is an "unrealistic" demand. But Plato's point is not simply to pose an unrealistic demand and then show that it cannot be met. Rather, he wants to show that the hybrid and pragmatic reasoning that makes everyday coping possible, *including ceteris paribus* rules themselves, can hide the essentially *split* structure of the situation that they cope with. It can make it appear that we somehow have a handle on one vague thing, rather than not having a handle on something that is divided, something that is two. As such, Socrates' demand for a definition is not a demand for simple consistency, nor

simple consistency plus correctness. Vlastos' (1983) own famous objection to the logical self-sufficiency of Socratic method unsupplemented by dogmatic moral knowledge helps to show why not. Changing the minor premises of an elenctic counterexample, *i.e.,* which token applications of the rule are to be valued as good and bad is certainly possible. (Though it would have to be *done*—the interlocutor has to land somewhere, not finally but for the moment, which is the real significance of Socrates' insistence that his interlocutor "say boldly how it seems to [him]".) But the claim to completeness is a fundamentally different thing, and is an intrinsic part of the concept of a virtue or a claim to sophistical master-knowledge, which will be no better satisfied with the new examples than the old. For the essential problem is not with *which* acts are considered virtuous; the problem is that by the interlocutor's own criteria, whatever they are, the extension and the intension of virtue cannot match up, and the good will lie transversally across each formulable essence. Only a restriction of scope can save the definition of a virtue then—normal in science but intolerable in ethics. A technical tool may have a fixed scope of application, may count as a meaningful piece only in a certain game; but a virtue is supposed to be precisely a touchstone for dealing with the Open that is not structured like a game.

Not being able to exclude anything in good conscience for the sake of mere consistency (which is how Prodicus saves a definition), that criterion of completeness which Heraclitus took as a rule of ontology, Plato's Socrates sees as a real dimension of the ethical. And this makes refutation possible, for while the negation of a purely local set of theses wanders unplaceably through the background—we do not know which thesis is false, only that the collection is false—the negation of a global thesis, one making a claim to completeness, can happen locally. Contrast the mathematical and existential cases: If we get the definition of a square right in terms of a strong notion of consistency—something intrinsically selfsame—then, if it turned out that I had been under the illusion that a certain triangle belonged to the extension of the concept, the right thing for me to do is simply to jettison this element of the presumed extension. I say, "I have the correct rule, but this case has turned out to fall outside the scope of that rule." (Aristotle, by taking this to be the procedure of thought in general, surely misses the ethical, makes it a matter of degrees of approximation and endless *ad hoc* adjustment.) Let us call a situation *existential* to the extent that this moderate procedure does not work. A concept is existential when we are dealing with a function whose scope is intrinsically total, when we are not justified in leaving anything out of its scope. The discourse of ethics is always overheated in Luhmann's sense—even the context of utterance is on the table as part of the content. Inclusions do not take the form of new extensions but of acknowledgments of always-already having been there. If cognition works forward, ethics works backward, catching up to a completeness that was never established, an-archic in Levinas' idiom. Einstein can say, however tongue in cheek, that the theory is right, so much the worse for reality; a general in war cannot say, when something goes wrong, that the plan was right but this event fell outside the scope of the plan. This intrinsic totality presumes no *capacity* on the part of any individual—in fact the general is pointedly aware of his inability to anticipate everything that can take place—rather it establishes a norm, a tribunal before which one can be responsible. If there were virtues, they would be like knowledge in their consistency, and like this existential necessity in their completeness: answerable for whatever happens on their watch. The example of war is so paradigmatic here that the appearance of war in the Platonic text is, following Heraclitus,

practically a name for totality, for a canon of reasoning (later picked up by Heidegger) in which preserving consistency by limitation of scope is evidence of *falsity*.

Since the claim to completeness is as intrinsic a part of the concept of a virtue as consistency, Socratic method therefore consists in asking the questions which play these two criteria off against one another. The *ti esti* is posed, a candidate definition elicited, counterexamples produced. After a few rounds, something semi-conscious catches on in the interlocutor and he starts to offer definitions which speak more directly to the demand for completeness, a sort of definition which is guaranteed, by a nonconstructive presupposition, to always produce something good, beneficial, useful, but which, in consequence of this presupposition, is not an algorithm, not a recipe one could follow. It takes only one round to prompt this exchange from *Republic I* (331e-332a):

λέγε δή, εἶπον ἐγώ, σὺ ὁ τοῦ λόγου κληρονόμος, τί φῂς τὸν Σιμωνίδην λέγοντα ὀρθῶς λέγειν περὶ δικαιοσύνης;	"Tell me, then, you the inheritor of the argument, what it is that you affirm that Simonides says and rightly says about justice."
ὅτι, ἦ δ᾽ ὅς, τὸ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα ἑκάστῳ ἀποδιδόναι δίκαιόν ἐστι: τοῦτο λέγων δοκεῖ ἔμοιγε καλῶς λέγειν.	"That it is just," he replied, "to render to each his due. In saying this I think he speaks well."
ἀλλὰ μέντοι, ἦν δ᾽ ἐγώ, Σιμωνίδῃ γε οὐ ῥᾴδιον ἀπιστεῖν—σοφὸς γὰρ καὶ θεῖος ἀνήρ—τοῦτο μέντοι ὅτι ποτὲ λέγει, σὺ μέν, ὦ Πολέμαρχε, ἴσως γιγνώσκεις, ἐγὼ δὲ ἀγνοῶ: δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι οὐ τοῦτο λέγει, ὅπερ ἄρτι ἐλέγομεν, τό τινος παρακαταθεμένου τι ὁτῳοῦν μὴ σωφρόνως ἀπαιτοῦντι ἀποδιδόναι. καίτοι γε ὀφειλόμενόν πού ἐστιν τοῦτο ὃ παρακατέθετο: ἦ γάρ; / ναί.	"I must admit," said I, "that it is not easy to disbelieve Simonides. For he is a wise and inspired man. But just what he may mean by this you, Polemarchus, doubtless know, but I do not. Obviously he does not mean what we were just speaking of, this return of a deposit to anyone whatsoever even if he asks it back when not in his right mind. And yet what the man deposited is due to him in a sense, is it not?" / "Yes."
ἀποδοτέον δέ γε οὐδ᾽ ὁπωστιοῦν τότε ὁπότε τις μὴ σωφρόνως ἀπαιτοῖ; / ἀληθῆ, ἦ δ᾽ ὅς.	"But rendered to him it ought not to be by any manner of means when he demands it not being his right mind." / "True," said he.
ἄλλο δή τι ἢ τὸ τοιοῦτον, ὡς ἔοικεν, λέγει Σιμωνίδης τὸ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα δίκαιον εἶναι ἀποδιδόναι.	"It is then something other than this that Simonides must, as it seems, mean by the saying that it is just to render back what is due."
ἄλλο μέντοι νὴ Δί᾽, ἔφη: τοῖς γὰρ φίλοις οἴεται ὀφείλειν τοὺς φίλους ἀγαθὸν μέν τι δρᾶν, κακὸν δὲ μηδέν.	"Something else in very deed," he replied, "for he believes that friends owe it to friends to do them some good and no evil."

Socrates has produced only one counterexample, one instance in which the algorithmic definition fails to produce good results, but this is enough to push Polemarchus straight to other

pole, building goodness itself into the definition. The essential form of this type is "[Virtue X] means the doing of good things", which Critias literally offers as his definition (διορίζομαι) of *sophrosune* at *Charmides* 163e. This type of definition is of course excellent on the second criterion, guaranteed to be good, but totally circular, and in that sense closed off to human action and cognition. One cannot enter the circle, cannot take the first step; wherever one begins, one is already required to know what the Good is. Plato's Socrates is apt to name the impredicativity of such nonconstructive definitions with the tag "riddle" (*ainigma*), as in the continuation of *Laches* and as applied to the "doing of one's own things" in the *Charmides*. One could compare this second type of definition to a recipe for cake that begins "take a cake..."—good advice if cakes could *reproduce*, but not if one is *to be produced*.[22] (Note that in this connection between impredicativity and reproduction, lack of productive knowledge is linked to Eros and maieutics, just as desired in an interpretation that would make systematic sense of Socrates' multiple claims to ignorance and expertise.) Alternatively, the definition might be helpful if *Dasein* were such as to always-already have a cake. Here the link worth exploring is between completeness and *being-in*. The suggestion that presents itself when we read Plato after Heidegger is that we may need to retrieve a deeper and more direct relation to completeness than is accessible at the level of the hermeneutic circle, its product and symptom, taken in isolation. What is needed is not a decision between consistency and completeness with respect to foundation, but the explication of the form of their duality. Thus we must caution here against the temptation to simply embrace this circularity, as somehow constitutive of the human condition, or in some other way. At minimum, these provide incorrect pragmatist accounts of the relation of form and knowledge to the rest of existence on which they are supposedly founded. Again the problem showing itself here is that of culture as a self-proclaimed total setting for human existence. But the incredible fragility of culture's authority (and culture is always-also the culture of authority) when it is asked to respond to elementary considerations about the knowledge embedded in it is made visible in *elenchos*. As massive as this societal Imaginary is, its closure can be punctured by a single *peri tinos* question.

This bringing to light of the conflicting criteria of consistency and completeness (only the resolution of which could be identified as truth) is the first level or iteration of the *elenchos*. Ultimately, as we will find, everything is already here; the problem at this level is inescapable. But the only way to *learn* this is in the attempt to escape it. Just as Sartre remarks, the motivation for reflection is the recovery of being: conscious of failure at the first level, but unwilling to cede the ideal of wholeness, we play out the conflict at a second, iterated level. In the failure of the second level, we find knowledge itself is not in a position to transcend or to mediate the metalogical duality. Rather, the concept is split by the duality, just as happened at the level of content. But there is a mirror-symmetry to the development, a sort of A-B-B-A from effective to complete criteria at the level of content then from complete to effective demands at the level of the concept. If the pattern is as revealing as I suspect, one lesson would be that consciousness has an easy time seeing consistency, and a harder time seeing completeness at an objective level, while it gives itself credit for completeness and has a hard time seeing its lack of effectiveness at the level of the concept.

[22] Compare Anytus in *Meno* and Protagoras in the eponymous dialogue: any and all noble (Greek) adults are teachers of virtue, as (implied) they are the conduit for the reproduction of culture in the young.

Note also that even in this first iteration of the duality, we already have a picture of the metalogical form that any candidate for the title "Idea of the Good" would have to take. It would be something that told us something *true* about the relation, or lack of relation, between algorithmic recipes that we can cognize and follow on the one side, and on the other side the circular, self-presupposing or impredicative figures related to the language in which we talk about existentially-charged situations, goods and desires, values, and so forth, without being able to find a point of consistency (foundation). It would clarify the relation between straightforward but non-total and therefore existentially neutral recipes on the one hand and on the other ethically charged but ineffective and uncognizable circularities. Recognizing that self-reference, indeed like truth, is not itself the cause of the problem, but its site, that the original contradiction is between consistency and completeness, we can also say that the Idea of the Good must solve the problem of self-knowledge in the following sense: it must respond to the problem of reflexivity or self-reference in the setting of the fundamental metalogical duality, without evading it, or seeking to overcome it by force (as in Aristotelian *nous* or Hegelian *Geist*).

Upon the failure of these two complementary forms of definition on the first level of the *elenchos*—articulable algorithms that fail to guarantee goodness, and circular accounts that preclude any access by the understanding—we arrive at a new critical point, usually motivated by Socrates, when the interlocutor sees a way to escape. It is often Socrates who introduces the word "knowledge" (or "wisdom"), but the interlocutor sees the new avenue open up. Again in *Laches*, after Laches and Socrates have hit a dead end, they summon Nicias to their aid (194c-d):

Νικίας: δοκεῖτε τοίνυν μοι πάλαι οὐ καλῶς, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὁρίζεσθαι τὴν ἀνδρείαν: ὃ γὰρ ἐγὼ σοῦ ἤδη καλῶς λέγοντος ἀκήκοα, τούτῳ οὐ χρῆσθε.	Nicias: Well, for some time I have been thinking, Socrates, that you two are not defining courage in the right way; for you are not acting upon an admirable remark which I have formerly heard you make.
Σωκράτης: ποίῳ δή, ὦ Νικία;	Socrates: What is that, Nicias?
Νικίας: πολλάκις ἀκήκοά σου λέγοντος ὅτι ταῦτα ἀγαθὸς ἕκαστος ἡμῶν ἅπερ σοφός, ἃ δὲ ἀμαθής, ταῦτα δὲ κακός.	Nicias: I have often heard you say that every man is good in that wherein he is wise, and bad in that wherein he is unlearned.
Σωκράτης: ἀληθῆ μέντοι νὴ Δία λέγεις, ὦ Νικία.	Socrates: Well, that is true, Nicias, I must say.
Νικίας: οὐκοῦν εἴπερ ὁ ἀνδρεῖος ἀγαθός, δῆλον ὅτι σοφός ἐστιν.	Nicias: And hence, if the brave man is good, clearly he must be wise.
Σωκράτης: ἤκουσας, ὦ Λάχης;	Socrates: Do you hear him, Laches?
Λάχης: ἔγωγε, καὶ οὐ σφόδρα γε μανθάνω ὃ λέγει.	Laches: I do, without understanding very well what he says.
Σωκράτης: ἀλλ᾽ ἐγὼ δοκῶ μανθάνειν, καί μοι δοκεῖ ἀνὴρ σοφίαν τινὰ τὴν ἀνδρείαν λέγειν.	Socrates: But I think I understand it: our friend appears to me to mean that courage is a kind of wisdom.

Here the *elenchos* pursues its target onto a reflective plane, where knowledge is now built

into the thing we are trying to know. It seems to the consciousness striving to orient itself in *elenchos* that there may be an escape here, on a reflective plane, from the metalogical duality that ruins its attempts at an object-like virtue. Now we consider the virtue itself as a faculty of knowing and not only as something known, no longer just as ethical substance, an unconscious procedure, a recipe that a user might follow, but also as ethical subject, a user itself. The necessity of making a move generally like this is made manifest by the impasse on the first level of the *elenchos*, which has shown that what is being sought cannot be found at a pre-reflexive level. It corresponds to the motivation and driving engine of dialectic in both Hegel and Sartre: to recover at a reflective level what is lost to contingency at the level of existence.

We think we have won, even if by a cheat: we have built knowledge into the thing we were seeking knowledge of. But Socrates at his most logically decisive will not let the discussion go at this ontotheological asymptote; he demands to know "knowledge of what?" And the same problem repeats, because once intentionality is internalized, the concept proves to be dependent on existence, not just for its existence, but precisely *qua* concept for its truth or falsity.[23] Typically some toy options are rejected, as if to underscore that the invocation of knowledge *simpliciter* is not sufficient—here in *Laches* (194e) Socrates and Nicias quickly concur that courage cannot be knowledge of flute-playing or harping—but even more careful and serious suggestions—that courage is "knowledge of what is to be dreaded or dared, either in war or in anything else"—are also shown to be wanting (195a-196a). These examples suffice to show that the introduction of a faculty of knowledge into the definition of a virtue, rather than providing the blind algorithm with a saving supplement of *phronesis*, simply introduces the completeness, that is, the errancy and fallenness, of actual consciousness back into the logical scene. There is no ideal user[24] whose only function would be to save the rule from its blindness; rather there is only a real user, which means one who is not only conscious of this rule and its context, but of an infinity of others, which keeps losing track of what is crucial in these rules and situations, confusing them. A real user is subject to the duality of rule and context as just another, intra-intentional form of the duality of consistency and completeness. For a real consciousness, the needed rule is never ready to hand, but always lost among a tangle of near-copies, and the problem of finding it again is every bit as hard as that of finding the right bird in the aviary of the *Theaetetus*. On this second level, the object plays the role of spoiler. For each X offered, knowledge of X is not identical to knowledge of the Good, while to answer "of the good" or "of good and bad" to the question "knowledge of what?", as the interlocutor finally must, is again circular.

With this reappearance of circularity the *elenchos* is closed. We were defining what virtue would be. To save the definition from the blindness of its application we introduced knowledge into it, making of it a faculty of knowing. But instead of being able to say of

[23] The tradition (and sometimes even Plato himself, as in the *Laws* and the *Phaedrus*) tends to respond to this reintroduction of contingency with a theological redoubling: if the concept depends on existence, then let it be the existence of God. But of course, God is required to be the same identity of essence and existence that was sought in reflection, so that the non-existence of God is just the third-order name by which we recognize a duality that never stops repeating.

[24] As is hinted in this passage from *Laches*, even first-order omniscience is not enough to make a user ideal in this sense: even the seer, with perfect knowledge of all that will be, cannot say whether it is *better* for the things he sees to come to pass or not. This is taken up more fully in *Charmides*; see Chapter 3.

what this knowledge would be, we are stuck within the impredicative circle—knowledge of the good. The move to the reflective level does not succeed in reconciling consistency and completeness, now in the form of intentionality and reflexivity, any more than the first attempt did. This is the the dilemma Plato recapitulates at *Republic* 505 and which closes the elenctic sequence of the *Charmides*. Its typical terminus lies in distinguishing "knowledge of good and evil" from the badly-formed knowledge *per se*, and in particular in distinction from the totality "knowledge of everything", in which the "Good and useful" is in a way caught, but surely all the more lost among endless near-copies, as a book misshelved in the infinite Library of Babel. The structure of the whole movement gives us, as one way of articulating the total (dual) Socratic problem, "What is the knowledge that helps knowledge *of*?" or "What *part* of knowledge saves?" What part of knowledge is it which has the saving power to relate its own form as consistent algorithm to the complete context of human language and life, either (as the metaphysical interpretation would have it) by overcoming the difference, or, as suggested in this interpretation, by disclosing it (which involves locally and not globally suspending it, a point of intersection of form and life, not a cosmic or noetic-noematic harmony of them)? This experience, of this total question, articulated in the four moments described—consistency and completeness, each twice, first at the level of content and then at that of knowledge—is the pattern and meaning of the experience of refutation that consciousness undergoes in the *elenchos*.

Chapter 2

Metalogical Interpretations of Plato

No doubt the treatment I have just given of the *elenchos* is open to the charge of being too piecemeal or too distant from the dialogues to be decisive. The pattern takes shape only through repeated rereadings of the dialogues, and, once we have it in view, it can be shown very clearly to be at work in many generally recognized cases of *elenchos*. But if my thesis is not only true but philosophically significant, what begins as an exercise in confirmation should not end there. The dialogues should not be read for the sake of the thesis, but in each case, attention to the thesis should make what is singular in the dialogue show itself. What follows is an attempt to do this double work with a relatively close reading of two key cases of *elenchos*, the *Euthyphro* and the *Ion*, leading up to a sustained investigation of the *Charmides* in the next chapter. By "double work" I mean (1) showing that the pattern I have put forward indeed holds in these dialogues, and (2) showing that, reading these dialogues with this pattern in mind, the text opens itself up to us in a way that it would not otherwise.

2.1 Sense and Reference: *Euthyphro*

The *Euthyphro*'s is clearly a virtue *elenchos*, though its affinities with anti-sophistical *elenchoi* are quite close to the surface. The explicit driving question of the dialogue is a *ti esti* question, "what is holiness (τὸ ὅσιον)?" (hence the traditional subtitle), the asking of which (first at 5c-d) and ultimate failure or refusal to answer which (at 15e) respectively begins and ends the elenctic sequence proper. But Euthyphro the mantic is all too eager to identify the nature of his superiority as springing from or comprising a special wisdom or knowledge. This is related to the fact that *peri* constructions appear remarkably early and are woven throughout.[1] In fact Socrates uses a *peri* construction in the first few passes of their exchange, in a sentence which would seem to underline the difference between the *ti esti* and the *peri tinos*, in this case as the difference between the sense and the reference of the *dike* or writ as a signifying document, but Euthyphro misses it entirely. Euthyphro reveals he is there to prosecute a case against "such a man that they think I am insane because I am prosecuting him" (4a-b, emphasis added):

[1] Ironically, it is perhaps this closeness-to-the-surface of the cognitive dimension, in Euthyphro's self-certainty, that makes it so difficult for Socrates to bring the second arc of the *elenchos* to full explicitness, for, as in many anti-sophistical dialogues, knowledge claims are built in basically from the start.

Σωκράτης: τίς οὗτος;	Socrates: Who is he?
Εὐθύφρων: ὁ ἐμὸς πατήρ.	Euthyphro: My father.
Σωκράτης: ὁ σός, ὦ βέλτιστε;	Socrates: Your father, my dear
Εὐθύφρων: πάνυ μὲν οὖν.	man?
Σωκράτης: **ἔστιν δὲ τί τὸ ἔγκλημα καὶ τίνος ἡ δίκη;**	Euthyphro: Certainly.
Εὐθύφρων: **φόνου, ὦ Σώκρατες.**	Socrates*: But what is the charge, and what is the suit about?*
Σωκράτης: Ἡράκλεις. ἦ που, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, ἀγνοεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ὅπῃ ποτὲ ὀρθῶς ἔχει: οὐ γὰρ οἶμαί γε τοῦ ἐπιτυχόντος [4β] ὀρθῶς αὐτὸ πρᾶξαι ἀλλὰ πόρρω που ἤδη σοφίας ἐλαύνοντος.	Euthyphro*: Murder, Socrates.*
Εὐθύφρων: πόρρω μέντοι νὴ Δία, ὦ Σώκρατες.	Socrates: Heracles! Surely, Euthyphro, most people do not know where the right lies; for I fancy it is not everyone who can rightly do what you are doing, but only one who is already very far advanced in wisdom.
	Euthyphro: Very far, indeed, Socrates, by Zeus.

Though it is reasonable to be wary of overinterpreting ordinary colloquial Greek, underinterpreting Socrates' double usage of ordinary expressions is just as great a danger—a way to lose the philosophy, that is, the hinge between ordinary language and theory, and thereby to lose both the Socratic method for capturing ordinary language users for philosophy, and Plato's authorial method for capturing the reader to the same end. In the context of the present investigation it cannot help but strike us that Socrates takes the trouble to ask two questions at this moment, though Euthyphro treats them as one: "But what is the charge, and what is the suit about?" One might notice the difference between "charge" and "suit" here, but this is less important than the belonging together of these two questions relative to a particular prosecution. We see the *ti esti* here in the first phrase: *what is the charge* (ἔγκλημα), the legal complaint; what variety of *crime* do you allege has occurred? That is to say, what is the *sense* of your accusation, under what concept does the action you identify fall? And the *tinos* in the second—about what occurrence do you make this charge, what factual event do you identify as criminal in this way, *i.e.*, what is the *referent*? Neither of these can be understood in isolation from the other. It may well be impossible to say with philological certainty whether the καὶ here indicates supplement or paraphrase; perhaps the "and what it is about" is purely pleonastic. But this does not necessarily deflate the point; rather it is evidence for the naturalness, the embeddedness of the duality in ordinary language at a point of reflexivity, *i.e.*, of asking about language.

But even more than that semantic question of reflexivity, we are already close here to ethical reflexivity, to the question of the good. For Euthyphro's answer here could not be more ethically serious—"Murder, Socrates"—yet at the same time, logically, it may make the reader smile that he so confidently gives this single answer, treats the two question as one, as if his assurance of the transparency of syntax were the index of his moral certitude. Though others' lawsuits may be misguided or even disingenuous, brought with ulterior motives (as perhaps is Meletus' case against Socrates), Euthyphro's charge of murder is obviously (so he would have us believe) about murder—not about his relation to his father, for instance, or

his professional pride. And Socrates' response highlights what would be required to know the difference (or make the difference) between these two. For in a way Euthyphro is merely following a rule, running the prescribed algorithm "what to do when a law has been broken." But, Socrates suggests, "only one who is already very far advanced in wisdom" could do what Euthyphro is doing and be assured it is the right thing; most people, ignorant of the right, could not. There is a danger of blind hubris in what Euthyphro is doing; to fail in such a thing is to risk moral insanity. But Euthyphro's claim to wisdom (which he unabashedly owns) asserts he runs no such risk; he can do this dangerous thing *rightly*.[2]

Euthyphro's confidence is on full display as he narrates the event his suit is about, bookended as it is by criticizing both Socrates and his relatives for failing to see the matter as plainly as he can (4b-e). He calls Socrates "ridiculous" (γελοῖον) for being unable to identify what is relevant in the case and what can be safely ignored, and then, once the core of the matter is thus laid bare, to render a clear judgment about it (4b). Socrates meets this confidence with almost audible incredulity, making more intense and explicit his own doubt in yet another *peri* construction (which, though copied directly from Euthyphro's own speech, he nevertheless utterly fails to register). The former *peri* phrasing underlined that there were at least two terms in play here, the particular event (the killing of the laborer) and the concept under which it supposedly falls (murder). But even this is not enough to secure the justice of Euthyphro's suit. It is not only by knowing the facts of the case, but by having exact knowledge of yet another concept (or system of concepts), of divine law and of holiness, that Euthyphro can proceed unafraid, while we, as readers, participate in Socrates' avowed fear at the point of ethical decision, and recognize its root as none other than the distinction of sense and referent which the social is constituted by anxiously eliding (4e-5a):

Εὐθύφρων: ... κακῶς εἰδότες, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ θεῖον ὡς ἔχει τοῦ ὁσίου τε πέρι καὶ τοῦ ἀνοσίου.	Euthyphro: ... Which shows how little they know what the divine law is in regard to holiness and unholiness.
Σωκράτης: σὺ δὲ δὴ πρὸς Διός, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, οὑτωσὶ **ἀκριβῶς** οἴει ἐπίστασθαι **περὶ τῶν θείων ὅπῃ ἔχει, καὶ τῶν ὁσίων τε καὶ ἀνοσίων**, ὥστε τούτων οὕτω πραχθέντων ὡς σὺ λέγεις, οὐ φοβῇ δικαζόμενος τῷ πατρὶ ὅπως μὴ αὖ σὺ ἀνόσιον πρᾶγμα τυγχάνῃς πράττων;	Socrates: But, in the name of Zeus, Euthyphro, do you think your knowledge *about divine laws and holiness and unholiness* is so *exact* that, when the facts are as you say, you are not afraid of doing something unholy yourself in prosecuting your father for murder?
Εὐθύφρων: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄν μου ὄφελος εἴη, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐδέ τῳ ἂν διαφέροι Εὐθύφρων τῶν πολλῶν ἀνθρώπων, **εἰ μὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα ἀκριβῶς εἰδείην**.	Euthyphro: I should be of no use, Socrates, and Euthyphro would be in no way different from other men, *if I did not have exact knowledge about all such things.*

'Are you not afraid?', Socrates asks, with the clear implication 'you should be afraid! You lament their ignorance, but what do you really know about these things?' Euthyphro answers

[2]The closer one looks at this exchange, the more prominent the little interrogative pronouns become. This is not simply a "who what when where why" grilling; it's a logical turning of the matter about, a loading of the full phenomenon (including not just the *what* but also the *about what*) into presence. This is logical work embedded in what is usually considered merely the "dramatic context" of the dialogue; indeed many themes taken up explicitly in the course of the *elenchos* are telegraphed here.

proudly that Euthyphro (third person) would be of no use and no different from other men if he did not 'know all these things exactly' (τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα ἀκριβῶς εἰδείην), an accusative construction, as though knowing had the same form as holding, taking, striking. Socrates' insistent repetition of Euthyphro's own *peri* construction is an index of Socrates' externalism: whether one is right depends not just on some property or power one holds, but on the irreducible relation between what one says and how it stands with something. This is not just a thesis of logical grammar but a form of contingency that reaches inward to the being of the agent: this is risk, moral risk, and teaching Euthyphro to appreciate this risk, *to be afraid*, is the point of the gradual but mounting insistence on aboutness. When *peri* gets translated out (as can easily seem best without guidance by an explicit identification of its function[3]), the contrast between Euthyphro's self-certainty and the Socratic relation to truth, *i.e.*, self-doubt, becomes a mere psychological difference and not a logical one. At 5b-c, as if to underline that the work of this construction has been missed, Euthyphro picks it up again but grafts it directly onto the boasting proper to courtroom agonistics: "By Zeus, Socrates, if [Meletus] should undertake to indict me, I fancy I should find his weak spot, and it would be much more a question about him (περὶ ἐκείνου) in court than about me (περὶ ἐμοῦ)." Where Socrates would have the *peri* draw us out beyond speech to speech's object, here Euthyphro instead has it point backward, toward the speaker, and even then not as a speaking (which is to say thinking) being, but as a bearer (bringer or sufferer) of *force*.[4]

Now everything is in place for the first arc of the *elenchos*, the *ti esti* arc, to begin. For we have established that, in order for Euthyphro to be proceeding as he is, he must possess something of the form we identified previously to be that of a virtue: an algorithm that is guaranteed to produce good results. That is, he must have an effective procedure whereby he can evaluate any given situation and decide the proper (pious, holy, just, good) response. The dramatic frame makes clear that Euthyphro claims to possess just this, though he does not yet understand the true form and significance of what he is claiming. The work of the *elenchos* here is thus (1) to make clear this form as the form of Euthyphro's self-professed wisdom, and (2) to demonstrate that knowledge of this form is impossible, because the two things which must be positively synthesized in it (algorithmicity and goodness) are fundamentally in conflict with one another. This will be done through exploring the closely related problem of the gap between intension and extension, or between sense and reference, and showing that this gap is ineliminable.

The *ti esti* with which Socrates begins the explicit elenctic sequence (*i.e.*, the search for a definition) simultaneously acknowledges and brackets the *peri* construction: "What do you say is the nature of piety and impiety, both in relation to murder and to other things (καὶ περὶ φόνου καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων)?" (5c-d) The *peri* is and must be bracketed at this point because (as has become evident) Euthyphro has not yet learned its function. Socrates realizes he must proceed slowly, must not leap directly to the *peri* (whose aboutness is always-also directed toward the Good), but must first make it a simple question of essence, a simple one over

[3]The insensitivity to the other question is evident in Fowler's translation (used throughout this commentary), obscuring many subtle distinctions and transformations in the dialogue's vocabulary and grammar. This leads us to suggest an imperative of translation: do not translate away the grammar of the other question!

[4]Force, for Plato's Socrates, is about as close to the exact opposite of intentionality as it is possible to get. See *Ion*.

many: "Is not holiness always the same with itself in every action and, on the other hand, is not unholiness the opposite of all holiness, always the same with itself and whatever is to be unholy possessing some one characteristic quality?" (5d) Euthyphro's response shows he has picked up on the criterion of completeness latent in the *peri* construction, though in a distorted sense, and without seeing its tension with the unity of the concept Socrates is pushing toward in the *ti esti*. For he replies not with a one but with an all, not with an identifying concept but with resolve to leave no wrongdoer unpunished—a willful act that reaches, he supposes, all possible objects. Holiness is "doing as I am doing now," he says, "prosecuting (ἐπεξιέναι) the wrongdoer (ἀδικοῦντι)", whether "in murder (περὶ φόνους) or stealing from the temples (περὶ ἱερῶν κλοπὰς)" or any other crime, whoever the wrongdoer may be (5d-e). It is as if Euthyphro takes the *peri* in its locative function to threaten to delimit the places his righteous wrath might pursue the wrongdoer. He defends himself by analogy to Zeus, who also punishes his father yet is regarded as superlatively just (5e), and winds up his declamation (a single, remarkably long, multiphrased sentence whose rhetorical style is probably in contrast with its logical paucity) by convicting humans generally of speaking inconsistently ("saying contrary things", τὰ ἐναντία λέγουσι) "about the gods and about me" (περί τε τῶν θεῶν καὶ περὶ ἐμοῦ) (6a). Euthyphro again parrots the *peri* phrases Socrates has underlined, but only by taking them in a formally very different sense than Socrates posed them.

Socrates does not here push the syntactic point, but reinitiates at the level of content, using one of Euthyphro's own *peri* phrases as the transition: "Is not this, Euthyphro, the reason why I am being prosecuted, because when people tell such stories about the gods (περὶ τῶν θεῶν) I find it hard to accept them?" (6a) Socrates says he will defer to Euthyphro in these matters, as he knows nothing about them, and so asks Euthyphro if he indeed believes the stories told about the gods, such as Zeus punishing his own father, tell things that really happened (6b).[5] When Euthyphro responds affirmatively, Socrates pushes harder, invoking his own paradigm of completeness, war (πόλεμον): "And so you believe that there was really war between the gods, and fearful enmities and battles and other things of the sort, such as are told of by the poets and represented in varied designs by the great artists in our sacred places[?]" (6b) War and hatred ("fearful enmities", ἔχθρας) among the gods are represented in many ways—the multiplicity is, Socrates implies, essential to the confusion of myth—by the poets and by the great artists (ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγαθῶν γραφέων). And remember that Socrates, as he has just reminded us (at 2a), is here because of a *graphē* (a writ, an indictment). He goes out of his way to mention the (graphic) artists notbecause he is as concerned about them as about the poets, but because a conceptual reorganization and a nascent argument are crystallizing around the repetition of this term *graphe*. The repetition invites us to see that it is because of a dysfunction in representation, the very dysfunction which the *elenchos* discloses, as a sort of autoimmune response against that disclosure, that Socrates is condemned. The closure and self-sufficiency of this archaic form of ideology, the mythic imaginary, rests on not allowing very basic questions about aboutness to be raised. (The modern form perhaps differs primarily in allowing them to be raised and then ignoring or denying their significance.) Mythic authority, the myth of authority, rests on declaring

[5]Note that the question of fictional entities is another way of underlining the difference of sense and reference.

itself knowledge, but allowing no questions about knowledge—questions about aboutness—to be raised. Euthyphro is eager to converse in this vein—this is what he knows, his higher mysteries, these and "many other things about the gods, which I am sure will amaze you" (6c)—but Socrates, sensing his eagerness (and its potential to derail the conversation almost before it has started), asks that such stories be set aside for another time[6] and pushes again toward the unity (consistency) of the concept (6d-e):

Σωκράτης: μέμνησαι οὖν ὅτι οὐ τοῦτό σοι διεκελευόμην, ἕν τι ἢ δύο με διδάξαι τῶν πολλῶν ὁσίων, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖνο αὐτὸ τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὅσια ὅσιά ἐστιν; ἔφησθα γάρ που μιᾷ ἰδέᾳ τά τε ἀνόσια ἀνόσια εἶναι καὶ τὰ ὅσια ὅσια: ἢ οὐ μνημονεύεις;	Socrates: Now call to mind that this is not what I asked you, to tell me one or two of the many holy acts, but to tell the essential aspect, by which all holy acts are holy; for you said that all unholy acts were unholy and all holy ones holy by one aspect. Or don't you remember?
Εὐθύφρων: ἔγωγε.	Euthyphro: I remember.
Σωκράτης: ταύτην τοίνυν με αὐτὴν δίδαξον τὴν ἰδέαν τίς ποτέ ἐστιν, ἵνα εἰς ἐκείνην ἀποβλέπων καὶ χρώμενος αὐτῇ παραδείγματι, ὃ μὲν ἂν τοιοῦτον ᾖ ὧν ἂν ἢ σὺ ἢ ἄλλος τις πράττῃ φῶ ὅσιον εἶναι, ὃ δ᾽ ἂν μὴ τοιοῦτον, μὴ φῶ.	Socrates: Tell me then what this aspect is, that I may keep my eye fixed upon it and employ it as a model and, if anything you or anyone else does agrees with it, may say that the act is holy, and if not, that it is unholy.

Here we have a clear formulation of what Socrates expects in a definition: a unified, criterial, decidable account. This is what would make for a proper definition of a concept (such as square, or human, or even mud), is indeed what ethical knowledge would have to be like, if there were such a thing; it would have to include all and only those acts which are holy, and whereby one could judge, of any given act, whether it is holy or not. Of course this is not *sufficient* to define a virtue or anything that shares virtue's logical form, but one must pass through the unity of the concept before being able to see why. Prompted in this way, Euthyphro gives a unified definition, a proper one over many, though of course it will turn out to be problematic in other ways: "Well then, what is dear (προσφιλές) to the gods is holy, and what is not dear to them is unholy." (6e-7a) Now what must be tracked is not the flight of the accused (as in Euthyphro's initial answer) but the extent to which the accusation agrees (or fails to agree) with the paradigm given; it is not humans but *logoi* which must be chased down and prevented from wandering. Hence the Socratic work of "examining our words" (ἐπισκεψώμεθα τί λέγομεν) to see whether they are true (or even coherent), the work of the elenchos, can appear in its clearest metalogical form.

It is by means of a *peri tinos* question that the problems with this definition begin to become apparent. Socrates reminds Euthyphro that he agreed just moments before that the gods quarrel bitterly with one another. "But," Socrates asks, "what things is the disagreement about (περὶ τίνων διαφορὰ), which causes enmity and anger?" (7b) For not all disagreements lead to war. If we disagree about number (περὶ ἀριθμοῦ), he says, we calculate; if we disagree about sizes and weights, we measure in the appropriate ways (7b-c). Socrates' restatement of the question after the contrasting mathematical examples is striking; the *peri tinos* leads, its power now unveiled:

[6] Compare *Ion*, in which Socrates asks for a demonstration of Ion's talent, but only after Ion has talked with him about the nature of that talent.

Σωκράτης: περὶ τίνος δὲ δὴ διενεχθέντες καὶ ἐπὶ τίνα κρίσιν οὐ δυνάμενοι ἀφικέσθαι ἐχθροί γε ἂν ἀλλήλοις εἴμεν καὶ ὀργιζοίμεθα;	Socrates: But about what would a disagreement be, which we could not settle and which would cause us to be enemies and be angry with each other?

It is worth pausing here to dwell on what Socrates has done in just the space of a few lines, *i.e.*, given a remarkably brief and cogent logical characterization of ethical problems. The ethical is defined here in immanent contrast to the mathematical by the nonavailability of an algorithm of decision. This is the formal cause of being enemies (ἐχθροί). Enemies are those whose disagreements—διενεχθέντες, the aorist passive participle of διαφέρω, generally meaning 'to differ' but literally 'to carry over' or 'to carry apart'—are governed by an algorithm which cannot terminate in a measurement, *i.e.*, which cannot result in a judgment—κρίσιν, one word for the judgment of a court, from the verb κρίνω, to separate or to distinguish (one thing from another). To decide is to discriminate, to make a cut (referring us already to the paradigm of division); because we cannot make a cut in the object (the matter of dispute, the good), we subjects are divided and become enemies. This lack of *krisis* is our crisis: when we fail to divide it, it divides us. We are carried apart from each other because first we are carried away from the object, divided by an interminable difference from the founding object whose withdrawal keeps assimilating every mediation. Lyotard, Luhmann, and Ranciere (no doubt among others) have noticed something about the form of these intractable disagreements, be they lovers' quarrels about nothing or about the most serious political wrongs: we can understand their intractability as arising from their self-reference, *i.e.*, from the fact that the terms we would use to resolve them are themselves on the table in these disagreements. The good is a matter of dispute not because it is a special object yet to be properly grasped or measured, not because the ethical is not amenable to formal understanding, as Aristotle would have it; rather this non-wellfoundedness *is* precisely its form, at least in the negative case (of endless suffering and strife), and, in a different way, in the good itself. What makes problems about the good intractable is that the good involves, essentially, not just being but being *about*, not just being but *knowledge*, and, by development, not just knowledge but *self-knowledge*. The good is intractable because it is about aboutness. "Good and evil" is at first simply the name we put on this fearful power of division. If it could be turned into a means of reconciliation, it would only be by grasping the irreconcilable as such. It is only a new relation, which is not simple being-in but a partial objectification of the situation (or rather, abyss) of irreconcilability, which can save us.[7]

Note that this is simultaneously an ethical description and a description of incommensurability. I try to highlight in the repetition the negative appearance of the lexicon of measurement in Plato's discussion of conflict.

Of course, it will turn out that not even complete agreement, among men or among the gods, is enough to secure the good as such—this is one lesson of the classic Euthyphro dilemma—for aboutness is not eliminated in agreement; whether we agree or disagree, we do so *about* something. It is about "right and wrong, and noble and disgraceful, and good and bad" (7d), Socrates suggests and Euthyphro agrees, where disagreement can create enemies, not only among humans but among the gods as well (7d-e). Since Euthyphro affirmed just

[7] This latter would only obtain if the terminating and the nonterminating—effective knowledge and endless strife—were hybridized in an unforeseen way.

moments ago that the gods do quarrel, he must admit that they quarrel in precisely this way: "some of the gods too think some things are right or wrong and noble or disgraceful, and good or bad, and others disagree" (7e). Since "the gods in each group love the things which they consider good and right and hate the opposites of those things" (7e), the very same things turn out to be both beloved of the gods and hateful to them, meaning, by Euthyphro's admission, "the very same things would be both holy and unholy" (8a). Again raising the specter of moral risk, Socrates states that, by this argument, Euthyphro's prosecution of his father could be dear (προσφιλὲς) to Zeus but hateful (ἐχθρόν) to Cronus and Uranus, or likewise among the other gods, but Euthyphro holds his ground, insisting that *this* is not a matter about which the gods would disagree, for none "holds that he who kills anyone wrongfully ought not to pay the penalty." (8b) Socrates asks if Euthyphro has ever heard anyone argue this point—if anyone disputes the truth of the conditional "if a man has done wrong, he ought to pay the penalty"—as such, or if rather the argument is over whether a crime has been committed at all, *i.e.*, whether the antecedent of the conditional indeed obtains in a particular case (8b-d). Euthyphro concedes that the latter is more true than the former, that, as Socrates restates it, "When they [gods or men] differ with one another about any act, some say it was right and others that it was wrong (πράξεώς τινος πέρι διαφερόμενοι οἱ μὲν δικαίως φασὶν αὐτὴν πεπρᾶχθαι, οἱ δὲ ἀδίκως)" (8e). Socrates then asks Euthyphro what "proof" (τεκμήριον) he has that the gods all agree with one another that the particular act about which he brings his suit was indeed unjust and that his own action is therefore just (9a). Euthyphro assures Socrates that he could indeed provide this proof, though it would be difficult; but Socrates cuts in to insist that even if he could show clearly that this particular act is beloved of all the gods, this would still not suffice to illuminate the nature of holiness (9b-d). Even restricting the scope of holiness to be only that which all the gods together hold dear, it still leaves open the question of *why* this identity holds (9d-e). Thus we arrive at the classic dilemma: "Is that which is holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods (ἆρα τὸ ὅσιον ὅτι ὅσιόν ἐστιν φιλεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν, ἢ ὅτι φιλεῖται ὅσιόν ἐστιν)?" (10a)

Euthyphro's first step toward addressing the problem is to simply remove what is contentious. The gods may disagree with one another, he grants, but not about *this*, *i.e.*, that wrongdoers should be punished—unlike the men who frequent the law courts, who "do very many wrong things; and then there is nothing they will not do or say, in defending themselves, to avoid the penalty." (8c) Socrates' response is to point out that "there is *something* that they do not do and say. For they do not, I fancy, dare to say and argue that, if they have really done wrong, they ought not to pay the penalty; but, I think, they say that they have not done wrong" (8c-d). Again what is at stake here is the gap between sense and reference, and getting Euthyphro to acknowledge (however grudgingly) that the problems this gap creates are, in both an ordinary and a technical sense, *nontrivial*. In the system that is the law, the issue of whether "wrongdoers" as such ought to be punished is *trivial*, is tantamount to a question of syntax: the answer can be read directly off the string of signs used to pose the question. But judgment as it is at issue here is always of whether a particular object does or does not fall under a particular concept. Thus Socrates' insistence on the function of the object, indexed, as we might expect, by a *peri* construction: "I think, Euthyphro, those who dispute, both men and gods ... When they differ with one another about any act (πράξεώς τινος πέρι), some say it was right and others that it was wrong."

(8e) Thus, when Socrates asks for a τεκμήριον (a sign, assurance, evidence, a witness, *proof*), he does not ask Euthyphro to prove that the gods believe injustice ought to be punished *in general*, but rather that they regard *this act*, Euthyphro's prosecution of his father, as just (9a).[8] Further, we might observe, at a metaethical level, *this* concept, that of the good, uniquely stretches out toward the referent in judgment, because, if it does not do so, it is of no use. In this concept uniquely, the problem of the referent (*peri tinos*) belongs to its sense.

Hence in the lines immediately preceding the dilemma (and again once the dilemma has been fully fleshed out), Socrates presses the problem of the embedded proposition: "If Euthyphro should prove to me no matter how clearly that all the gods think such a death is wrongful, what have I learned from Euthyphro about the question, what is holiness and what is unholiness?" (9c) [9] Even if Euthyphro is entirely correct in his assessment of what the gods love and hate, the question of *why* they love or hate what they do, of what makes some acts worthy of love and others of hate, remains unanswered. Thus the dilemma: do the gods look to some notion of holiness (or justice or goodness) and judge each act accordingly, choosing by some criterion which acts to love and which to hate? Or do they merely love where they love, and by dint of our belief in them—or perhaps, our dependence on them—we must accept these things as holy for no reason other than the gods' love for them? Though it does not become apparent until this point, Euthyphro has from the first tried to plug the hole opened in understanding by the *about what* question—love of what? desire of what?—by just reversing the formulation: the good is the desired as such. In this case, it happens to be desired by the gods, but the same claim could be (and has been) made about humans—that there is no problem about the good, no problem about what we desire. Rather the good just means the desired in the factical sense of whatever we desire. This foreclosing of the *about what* question (in equating the good with the desired) is, strictly speaking, a formally acceptable answer to the *what is it* question, as Socrates acknowledges when Euthyphro first puts it forward (7a).[10] By substituting a pure variable of preference for the disputed object of holiness or justice, the explicit demands of Socrates' *ti esti* are met, but all *dunamis* is subtracted in advance from the question about desire, about the aboutness of desire: Is a fact about desire possible if desire itself contains a riddle, if it is itself a problem to be solved, if it is itself *about* something?[11]

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[8]The problem of the Good always involves indexicality—it is always a matter of establishing not just *what is* P, but that *this is* a P—and thus all the problems of judgment, including the familiar Kantian sense, though also going beyond it.

[9]As is frequently noted in the recent literature on the *Euthyphro*, Socrates will insist on an intensional criterion (or, rather, a non-extensional one) to define holiness. What is not frequently enough noted is that this is part of a larger dilemma—for intensional criteria will also be rejected, as failing to get a hold on or in reality. Neither is simply an addition to the other. They are two sides which do not correspond. This non-extensionalism and non-intensionalism is not simply perverse. Rather the truth is that there is no such correspondence, starting from either side.

[10]Compare *Meno*, where Socrates tells Meno he will accept an answer about virtue of the form he has just given about color, "that it is that alone which always follows shape." Though such an answer would yield no insight, and preclude the raising of the intentionality of virtue characteristic of the *elenchos*, it is a sufficiently coherent and unified definition to answer the explicit demands of the *ti esti*.

[11]A full treatment of desire is well beyond the scope of the present investigation, but the crucial thing is to see how the whole existential or ethical function of the good can hinge on small formal changes. By insisting on the unity of the acceptable answer to each question—one form over many to the *ti esti* question,

What do we talk about when we talk about the gods? Or, more specifically, about the gods' love, the gods' judgment? With only a slight adjustment of perspective, we can now see the problem as isomorphic to Ion's: what is it to know Homer, when Homer claims to know that P? The same question applies to the gods, but from the other side. Euthyphro claims to know that P, from knowing that the gods claim P. Thus we have in Euthyphro and Ion the maximal and minimal uses of authority respectively. In Ion's case, the minimal case, nothing is transferred but authority itself—the authority of Homer serves to make Ion an authority *on Homer*, which is really all he wants, and where he prefers to remain, although he wants this to be recognized as a great thing. Euthyphro, on the other hand, is a sort of mirror-image of Ion, like an Ion who actually attempted to charioteer and general and all the rest, using Homer as his manual. Ion is ultimately an ironist when forced to choose, but Euthyphro is a true believer—he attempts to bring authority to the level of the object, that is, to life, to cases, to judgment. Thus, for Euthyphro, the problem of the embedded proposition is unavoidable. Grant that the gods believe "P"; does that help *me* to learn *P*? Only if I can remove the embedded proposition from its opaque context, if I can remove the quotes. This would be possible if I knew that the gods believe what is true; but on what basis could I claim to know that? Belief in the gods of course, now revealed to be tantamount to belief in an entire schema of indexing and disquotation, such that from "The gods believe P", we can deduce P.[12] Alternatively, I can refuse this move to disquotation, but then there is a different relation between the gods and me, an opaque context, not truth-functional; the gods and all pertaining to them remain, not accidentally but essentially, mysterious, beyond understanding and thus beyond judgment.

This is the real weight behind the conclusion that effectively ends the first arc of the elenctic sequence, the crux of the Euthyphro dilemma: "It is loved because it is holy, not holy because it is loved." (10d) Euthyphro would have the gods' stance with regard to something be not just the guide but the ground for his own judgment concerning it; he believes in the gods, which entails believing what the gods believe. Now belief is at least a dyadic relation: A believes P, where A is some agent and P some proposition. But if we open up the proposition in question in this case, we find it is in fact at least triadic, even tetratic: Euthyphro is confident that the gods believe that his father's act was indeed wrongful, or A believes that B takes C to be D. When Euthyphro assents to this last formulation (that the holy is godloved *because* it is holy), though he of course does not realize it (nor does Socrates point it out quite this explicitly), he is admitting that the gods' love is directed by or toward something other than itself; it is no mere blind preference but looks to something other, derives from or is dependent on some concept or paradigm. What was concealed when Euthyphro first offers his definition (of holiness as the god-loved) is now revealed: even the

but also one object of desire to the *peri tinos* question—Socratic questioning makes palpable the tension or duality involved between them: the conditions that allow for unity on one side seem to require either nothing or everything on the other side. Thus, in the *Charmides* or *Euthydemus*, when we try to give a logically acceptable account of the master knowledge, it tends to become of nothing or of everything, while keeping the Good tends to leave us without a concept of it.

[12]Socrates demands proof ὡς πάντες θεοὶ ἡγοῦνται ἐκεῖνον ἀδίκως, that all the gods believe this thing unjustly done. The verb for "believe" here is ἡγέομαι , meaning "lead the way; be commander; rule (+ gen)" but also "believe", whence hegemon, hegemony, *etc. Lidell & Scott* cites the *Apology* (among other works) to show that the term is used especially of belief in the gods, *i.e.*, holding there to be gods. So the grammar adumbrates a reversal of the intentional standpoint: what the gods believe [X] what I believe about the gods.

gods must judge. For if God does not think, he is not God, but at best prime matter; not a divine ruling mind but a blind force of pure necessity. On the other hand, if God thinks, he is not God, because truth and falsity are irreducibly relational, external to thought. (The isomorphism to Sartre's objection—the in-itself-for-itself is a contradiction—is striking; more on this connection in Chapter 4.) Euthyphro's notion of God, as a mind to whose judgment we could appeal for the final word on truth, depends on the possibility of unifying sense and reference, without slippage, without remainder. For Euthyphro, as for religion generally, everything depends on removing the relation (as the medievals were aware), internalizing and making monadic what is here dyadic (or more); on crossing, by force, the rift separating intensions and extensions, certainty (or demonstrability to a mind) and truth.

The second elenctic sequence begins, characteristically, with Socrates asking Euthyphro to "begin over again and tell me" (πάλιν εἰπὲ ἐξ ἀρχῆς) what holiness is (11b). Euthyphro complains that he is unable to say what he means, for, whatever he says, Socrates makes it "move about" (περιέρχεται) and hence resist understanding (11b-d). After a brief exchange about Socrates' relation to Daedalus (perhaps friendly, perhaps in thinly veiled hostility), Socrates chides Euthyphro for being "indolent" (τρυφᾶν) and helps the conversation along by asking about something seemingly narrower or simpler. When Euthyphro agrees that everything that is holy is just (δίκαιον), Socrates asks, "But is everything that is just also holy (ἆρ᾽ οὖν καὶ πᾶν τὸ δίκαιον ὅσιον)?" When Euthyphro says he is confused by this question, Socrates employs two analogies to make his meaning clear. Just as where there is reverence there is fear, though not all fear involves reverence; and where there is oddness there is number, though not all number is odd[13]; where there is holiness there is justice, but not all justice is holiness (12a-d). When Euthyphro finally understands, he agrees that "holiness is a part of the just" (μόριον γὰρ τοῦ δικαίου τὸ ὅσιον), and that therefore their task is to identify which part (12d-e). Euthyphro does this, obligingly, with his own *peri* construction: holiness is that part of the just 'about the care of the gods' (τὸ περὶ τὴν τῶν θεῶν θεραπείαν), while the rest of justice deals with the care of humans (12e). Socrates agrees this seems right, but says there is just "one little thing" (σμικροῦ) about which he requires clarification, namely the nature of the thing Euthyphro terms "care" (13a).[14]

Socrates suggests that Euthyphro must not mean "care" (θεραπείαν) for the gods in the same way it is meant in relation to other things, as the horseman cares for horses, for example, or the huntsman for dogs (13a). When Euthyphro says he does mean it this way,

[13]The term for the "odd" here—which is certainly more than one example among many—is *peritton*, literally a *peri* construction, connoting something supernumerary, something lying outside the correspondence of the two leaves of the even with each other. What part of number is the odd? The one which lies closer to the dyad. This reinforces the two contradictory schemata invoked by *peri* constructions. As sense, one might say, *peri* is the circumference, the horizon, the limit. As reference, so to speak, it is what refuses to be bounded. The referent is excessive and deficient with respect to sense, is what refuses to be fully identified with sense, is more and less than what we have under our hand, here, as sense. Thus two topological schemata—limit and violation of the limit—are invoked together by the *peri*: the horizon of sense and the excessive referent which crosses it, the limited and the crossing of that limit. (Everything at stake between Plato and Heidegger can be focused here. Compare also Bataille, Foucault, and Priest.) Note that the *peri* in this sense, as the *peras*, would pick out a part. But the part wanders; or, alternatively, the referent is within and without.

[14]This "one little thing" is the standard sign that we are close to the crux of the problem, the loss of the object which will incomplete all grandiose top-down definitions . Here it will mark the unraveling of the apparently terminal word "care" (θεραπείαν) to find the whole structure repeating itself, so that the definition is circular. Put more straightfowardly, the "one little thing" is code for the good itself escaping our grasp.

Socrates asks if care in all these cases "aim[s] to accomplish the same end", namely, to benefit (ὠφελοῦνται) and make better (βελτίους γίγνονται) that which is cared for (13b). Euthyphro agrees this is indeed the aim of care in the case of huntsman and oxherds, but balks (as any pious man must) at the suggestion that anything humans could do would make the gods better (13c-d). As if horrified to have been caught implying, however unintentionally, that the gods might be dependent on humans the way common animals are to their owners, when Socrates pushes for an alternate characterization, Euthyphro offers "the way slaves (δοῦλοι) attend their masters (δεσπότας)" (13d). Socrates responds by subtly complicating the power dynamic Euthyphro would (re)establish in this formulation.[15] He interprets Euthyphro to mean there is some "service" (ὑπηρετική) humans perform for the gods, suggesting humans might serve the gods as (say) a doctor's assistant helps the doctor to bring about health (13e). But to what end, Socrates asks, would humans serve the gods, what work (εἰς τίνος ἔργου[16]) would such service help to accomplish? When Euthyphro replies that the gods accomplish "many fine things" (πολλὰ καὶ καλά), Socrates demands to know which among these things is their main accomplishment (13e-14a). Euthyphro's frustration is palpable when he meets Socrates' pressure for details with a reminder that it is a "long task" (πλείονος ἔργου) to learn all these things "accurately"—ἀκριβῶς, the same word he used at 5a to characterize his knowledge of divine matters—and instead offers yet another definition of holiness: "when one knows (ἐπίστηται) how to say and do what is gratifying (κεχαρισμένα) to the gods, in praying and sacrificing, that is holiness, and such things bring salvation (σώζει) to individual families and to states" (14b). Rather, this definition is not new (the vocabulary has changed, but this definition still relies on the preferences of the gods) but Socrates treats it as new to keep Euthyphro from shutting down before the second arc of the *elenchos* becomes clear to him.

Socrates interprets "sacrificing" as giving gifts to the gods, and "praying" as asking for things from them, so that holiness would be ἐπιστήμη αἰτήσεως καὶ δόσεως, "a science of asking and giving"; Euthyphro agrees this is precisely what he meant (14c-d). Socrates suggests that "to ask rightly" (ὀρθῶς αἰτεῖν) would be to ask what for what one needs (δεόμεθα) from the gods, and "to give rightly" (διδόναι ὀρθῶς) would mean offering what they need from us (δεόμενοι παρ᾽ ἡμῶν), since anything else would not be "scientific" (τεχνικόν); Euthyphro agrees, though hesitates to fully endorse Socrates' further paraphrase (which Socrates himself clearly finds dubious) of holiness as an "art of trade" (ἐμπορικὴ ... τέχνη) between gods and men (14d-e). But if this is indeed an economic art, a properly "scientific" kind of exchange, then surely it cannot be only humans who benefit, but the gods must as well. Hence Socrates again presses—"what advantage (ὠφελία) do [the gods] derive from what they get from us?"—and again Euthyphro's piety requires that he reject any implication that the gods are benefited or made better by anything humans could offer (15a). Then what in the world (τί δή ποτε), Socrates asks, could our gifts to them be? "Honor and praise and ... gratitude," Euthyphro responds. Socrates suggests that these things then must be "gratifying" (κεχαρισμένον) to the gods but not "advantageous" (ὠφέλιμον) or "precious" (φίλον) to them; Euthyphro counters that they are rather "most precious of all" (15a-b).

[15] Compare the following characterization of assistance with *Charmides*, in which *homotechnoi* (fellow doctors, say) are the ones best suited to review one another's work, rather than those who would be supervisors *as such*.

[16] Compare *Charmides*: the question of the product of *sophrosune*.

Socrates then declares this line of inquiry defunct, for they have come full circle (περιελθὼν πάλιν) and arrived back at defining holiness as that which is dear to the gods, and insists they must begin all over again (15b-c).

Though Euthyphro fails to see it, it is easy for us to recognize this second half of the elenctic sequence—with the use of τίνος, the partitive questions, the invocation of benefit—as Socrates' attempt to press, with ever-increasing urgency, the *peri tinos* question, the question of aboutness. For the question "what part of the just is holiness?" can be revealed, with some care, to be a simple transformation of the *peri tinos* question. The transformation is accomplished by taking both of these (justice and holiness) as themselves about something. This converts the apparently partitive question to one with the full power of Socrates' total question: *what part of knowledge saves?* The "of knowledge", whence "knowledge of what?", is what Euthyphro is being pushed to address; his use of a *peri* construction ("about care of the gods") indicates he may even sense vaguely what is being demanded of him. But, by reverting to his earlier definition in the face of Socrates' mounting pressure, Euthyphro prevents the discussion from rising to the level at which the *peri tinos* can be posed and appreciated fully.

To review: There are two main elenctic sequences, or two main arcs of the elenctic sequence, with the dilemma serving as both boundary and bridge between them. The first arc, the *ti esti* arc, drives toward a unified concept of holiness, which turns out to be a kind of knowledge—in this case, the gods' knowledge, what enables them to identify the holy and make it the object of their love. The problem with this definition then is not that it is not properly one over many, that it fails to capture all and only those things that are holy and differentiate them from all unholy things. Rather, as the dilemma shows, the problem is that, even if Euthyphro could know with certainty what the gods love, *i.e.*, what they consider holy, he would not thereby have any *insight* into holiness as such, would not know what the gods know; he would at best know only *that* they believe a given thing to be holy, about which they could well be wrong. To the extent that the gods themselves require some knowledge, some process of judgment, to identify the holy, they can only be our fellow inquirers into the good, not decisive authorities, while to the extent that it is merely their whims that dictate what they love, then they are not knowers or deciders, but only forces, and can teach us nothing about the good. The second arc, driven by an increasingly urgent though never quite explicit *peri tinos*, drives toward circularity. With a little prompting Socrates draws out of Euthyphro a definition of holiness as a kind or branch of knowledge, this time a *tekhne* of 'barter' between gods and men, in which we ask the gods for what we need and offer things to them in return. But what could we offer them that they need? Nothing we could do would make the gods better or improve their situation in any way. We get everything from them, but what could they possibly want from us? Honor, praise, gratitude, Euthyphro says, which last is precious to them. But gratitude for what? For giving us what we need. But what do we need? To know what we need, *i.e.*, to know what is just, right, holy, good. We do not know what to ask them for unless we already know the good; we do not know what to be grateful for unless we already know the good. (Compare the Pythagorean injunction against petitionary prayer.)

Like so many elenctic dialogues, *Euthyphro* ends with a hard reset: Socrates demands the investigation must begin again from the beginning, but his interlocutor will not (or cannot) continue. It is easy to take Euthyphro's hasty exit from the conversation as a sign of bad

faith, but it is also possible he has simply run out of resources while the argument would demand more. In fact, some level of insight has been reached, however tacit and however misinterpreted, when an interlocutor feels the pointlessness of going on, feels the anxiety of weakness; this is indeed part of the ethical, to feel the break as a break, strongly. If nothing else, it prevents one from thinking that one is doing philosophy when one is not.

2.2 Reasons and Causes: *Ion*

Recall that, in each case of *elenchos*, Socrates is concerned with some claim, implicit or explicit, to *ethical knowledge*: in what I have called virtue- or anti-traditionalist *elenchoi*, the proximate goal of the conversation is to answer the *ti esti* regarding some virtue or other, to come to know something which, the investigation reveals, must itself be a kind of knowledge; in knowledge- or anti-sophistical *elenchoi*, the discussion begins with a claim to expertise, and the search is for its goodness, for what benefit one derives from knowing it, driven by the *peri tinos*. Though Ion is not a sophist by title but a rhapsode, and hence in the content of his discourse more closely aligned with the traditionalists, in terms of its form *Ion* offers the plainest and most elegant case of the latter type of search, as well as shedding light on the complicity between the traditionalist and sophistical others of Socratic *elenchos*. Though the exact phrase *peri tinos* appears only once (at 536e), there are over eighty *peri* constructions in the dialogue's twelve Stephanus pages; the word appears twenty-four times on 531 alone. Though often dismissed as a mere footnote in aesthetics or (at best) hermeneutics, read with an appreciation for the *peri tinos* question, the dialogue's formal instructiveness is striking. Conversely, for readers who are not yet attuned to the *peri tinos* question, *Ion* is a relentless tutorial in the necessity of asking it and resolutely drawing the aporetic consequences of its answers. The *Ion*, in fact, is only proximately *about poetry*.[17] More fundamentally, it is about *aboutness*.

The dialogue begins, after a genuinely-friendly exchange of pleasantries (530a-b), with a deceptively-brief characterization of the rhapsode's art. Socrates says he has always envied (ἐζήλωσα) the rhapsodes for their art (τέχνη), which works toward not merely memorizing the poet's lines but "apprehending" (ἐκμανθάνειν) his "thought" (διάνοιαν), and the "good rhapsode" (ἀγαθὸς ῥαψῳδός) uses his understanding of what the poet means (συνείη τὰ λεγόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ) by making himself a "messenger" (ἑρμηνέα) between the poet and the public, helping them understand it as well (530b-c). Ion accepts this eagerly, saying he has found this to be the most difficult or most important work (πλεῖστον ἔργον) of his art. As a result, he boasts, "I speak *about Homer* (περὶ Ὁμήρου) better than anybody"; no one yet born has "had so many and such fine remarks/thoughts (διανοίας) to offer *on Homer* (περὶ Ὁμήρου) as I have"; and that "it is worth hearing how well *I have embellished Homer* (κεκόσμηκα τὸν Ὅμηρον)" (530c-d). Replacing Homer's thoughts with thoughts *about* Homer (objectified as remarks) is more than a failure to follow the grammar and the logic of Socrates' remark; it is the gesture by which Ion constitutes and represents himself professionally *qua* rhapsode. Just as at *Euthyphro* 4e-5a, though Ion is the first to use a

[17] Capuccino (2011) has made this claim to the letter, but the reason given—that there is a difference between a poet and a rhapsode—effects only a local adjustment of priorities. In the context of the transitive model of inspiration, these two are similar links in the same chain.

peri construction, he replaces it almost immediately with an accusative construction which he clearly takes to be equivalent. In this way, he puts his finger in the breach, plugging in advance the logical and ontological leak which intentionality springs; he unconsciously responds, that is, to the danger of regress that opens up in taking an intentional state as an intentional object with this anxious reassurance, as if to say, "I speak *about Homer*, full stop, and there is no further question here." Nor, for Ion, is the idea of literally counting his thoughts involved in any difficulty springing from their intentional or referential status. For him, thoughts are individuated as remarks; there are as many thoughts as there are good lines. Next to Gorgias, who claims to answer *any* question put to him, and Protagoras, who claims to teach *virtue itself*, Ion's knowledge-claim seems rather modest, though he is not shy about the pride he takes in his expertise: he knows *about Homer*. But, just as with the sophists, the conversation will reveal this is not as straightforward a claim as it seems. For combining Ion's and Socrates' descriptions, the "Homer" that Ion claims to know includes not just his words but his thoughts, which themselves must be about something. Put this way, it is clear the problem of the *Ion* amounts to a manageable first draft of the crucial question of knowledge of knowledge explored at much greater length and apparent complexity in the *Charmides*. Though here the problem of reflection stretches across (at least) two minds, those of the poet and the rhapsode, rather than staging the reflection of a single thinker who wishes to know his "own" knowledge and ignorance, perhaps Plato leads us to see that this makes less of a difference than we would first be inclined to think. At least, one of the most strikingly-contemporary things about the Platonic dialogues is this very neutrality with respect to Cartesian first-person privilege.[18]

We will be in a position to judge the unity and development of the *Ion-Charmides* line of questioning better after the next chapter. Here, at any rate, the point of Socrates' probing is to establish that, his accusative termination to the contrary, Ion's art is necessarily, in implication, iterative, infinite. It is a thinking about a thinking about something, a speaking about a speaking about something, a knowing about a knowing about something:$K(H(x))$. The exteriority of this second something $= x$ troubles Ion, who nevertheless constitutes himself as rhapsode, both in his egological self-relation and, inextricably, in his social function, precisely by proclaiming himself untroubled about it. *Qua* analyst, Socrates must intervene on the side of the anxiety: it must be reawakened by calling attention to and breaking the circle of interpellation by which Ion constitutes and secures his place as rhapsode. Note that after Lacan and Althusser, it is impossible to ignore that the dialogue's first words (τὸν Ἴωνα χαίρειν)—opening words almost-always delivering a significant clue in Plato—here combine just such an interpellating recognition ("Hail Ion!") with, literally, the imperative to *jouissance* ("Ion, enjoy!"), as if to ask, "What is the excessive object that you are obeying an ideological command to enjoy, Ion, in seeming to position yourself at a secure logical remove from it?"[19] The answer to this question is, I suggest, "the second object, the object of Homer's thought." In the exemplarily excessive form of war, this object governs Ion's fantasies of generalship even while he claims to know only language, specifically Homer's language. The exteriority of this object causes the subject that uses signs and is used by

[18]This may also give a way of reading the city-soul relationship in the *Republic* beyond the dubious assertion of parallelism between these obviously-entangled levels.

[19]It is necessary to recognize this dimension of the opening line not *despite* but *because* of the ordinariness of Socrates' greeting.

them, whether in speaking or at the very roots of perception, to depend radically on something else. And this exteriority, intriguingly, is not that of an empiricism, with which Plato would have no traffic, but the consequence of a formal necessity. Plato is not ultimately so concerned about the alterity and resistance of matter *per se*, except insofar as matter is one of the modes of the exteriority of precisely what is most properly inner: speech, thinking as speech to oneself, insofar as what is most properly its own, its truth and falsity, depends radically on formal-existential conditions that cannot be mastered by any procedure.

The unity of logical and existential (or, indeed, psychoanalytic) method that a metalogical rereading of Platonic dialectic offers to us is nowhere more evident than here: in the *elenchos* a formal analysis is the means of compelling the subject to face his anxiety. But in raising the anxiety-charged question to the surface, the Socratic therapy poses a question which is also about itself. What is the logical form of this activity of Ion's? What must a *tekhne* that grants this ability be like? What does Ion actually know if he knows this *tekhne*, or, through it, knows Homer? But also: does Socrates' examination or *elenchos*, amounting as it does to speaking about Ion's speaking about Homer (speaking about something), only participate in the same problem, or succeed also in mentioning it, showing it?[20] By way of a necessary but particularly-radical translation between Plato and Sartre, we can put the question in this way: does all reflection play the role of an accessory to equivocation, taking contradiction as the form of its value (its idea of the good), or is a purifying reflection possible?

Socrates wastes no time drawing into focus what Ion volunteered but also obscured in his own descriptions of his art, *i.e.*, its *aboutness*. (More than half the dialogue's 80 *peri* constructions occur in the not-quite-three Stephanus pages over which the first elenctic sequence unfolds.) Socrates' opening pair of questions serve to drive home the nested intentionality at issue, first reintroducing the *peri* Ion had dropped in his last formulation—"are you skilled in Homer only (περὶ Ὁμήρου μόνον), or in (περὶ) Hesiod and Archilochus as well?"—then reminding Ion that Homer and the other poets themselves speak about something—"And is there anything on which (περὶ ὅτου) Homer and Hesiod both say the same?" (531a). Though Ion states (almost humbly) that his expertise is limited to Homer, he must admit, given the transparency of their speech (insofar as he understands it), that he would do equally speaking about other poets concerning those things (περί γε τούτων) about which (περὶ ὧν) Homer and the other poets say the same (530a). (Whether he habitually uses this currency or not, it is his.) Socrates suggests Homer and Hesiod both have something to say "about the seer's art", περὶ μαντικῆς,[21] and asks Ion if he or a good seer would better "expound" (ἐξηγήσαιο) what the poets say about it, whether they speak the same (ὁμοίως) or differently (διαφόρως). Ion concedes the seer would do better, and that indeed the seer's ability to explain where they agree implies his ability to do so where they disagree (531b); by analogy, Socrates sug-

[20]Gonzalez (2011) notes, rightly, a kinship along these lines between Ion and Socrates, and asks "where exactly the philosopher stands in the opposition between divinely inspired poet and technical expert". This is indeed an interesting question, but to claim that *Ion* "leaves [this question] very obscure" is to miss what is shown by the function of the *elenchos* here (and thematized elsewhere): the philosopher must stand negatively between knowledge and inspiration, consistency and completeness, preventing their synthesis but causing their intersection.

[21]Surely more than a random example, given the inclusion of seers in Socrates' forthcoming account of divine inspiration, as well as referring back to Euthyphro the mantis, and forward to the elenchos of Critias, who has in mind, in the ideal knower, "the seer ... and also someone else".

gests, Ion's ability should extend to the other poets as well, at least insofar as they speak about the same things (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν τούτων) as Homer (531b-d). Ion concedes that all the poets speak about the same things, but opines that Homer stands apart because he does it better than the other poets. But again, after considering a few other examples (this time number[22] and nutrition) of several speakers all speaking about the same things (περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν), Ion agrees that the same person will be a "competent judge" (κριτὴν ἱκανὸν) of all the speakers, however their manner or quality of speech may differ, and that person will be one with knowledge of the topic being discussed (531d-532b).

In this line of argument, the person best equipped to speak about another's speech, whether to explain it or to evaluate it, does so not from any second-order knowledge, not some special supervisory or evaluative capacity over speakers as such, but from their own first-order knowledge of what is being spoken about. That is, knowledge of Homer, insofar as he speaks about x, turns out to be equivalent to or at least grounded in knowledge of x, not knowledge of Homer. As we will see in the second half of the present dialogue, and reinforced in the *Charmides* and also at the end of *Republic V*, knowledges are individuated by their objects, not their subjects. The distinction of level between poet and rhapsode then disappears; the poet is no longer an object but a fellow *subject* of the same knowledge. While there may be an implicit kinship between them as knowers, essential use is not made of the fact that it is *Homer* who knows these things; Homer's words, the proximate object and anxious terminus of Ion's expertise, are no longer essential.

Ion seems to accept this line of argument, yet insists his ability truly is centered on Homer, and implores Socrates to explain how this could be so: "Then what can be the reason (τὸ αἴτιον), Socrates, why I pay no attention when somebody discusses any other poet, and am unable to offer any remark at all of any value, but simply drop into a doze (ἀτεχνῶς νυστάζω), whereas if anyone mentions something connected with Homer I wake up (ἐγρήγορα) at once and attend and have plenty to say?" (532b-c) By way of answer, Socrates first describes what a knowledge that did include Homer as an object would have to be like: a *tekhne* that knew Homer would have to be an art of poetry "as a whole" (τὸ ὅλον), with "the same principle of inquiry" (ὁ αὐτὸς τρόπος τῆς σκέψεως) holding throughout (532c-d). Though Socrates says this is something any "common man" (ἰδιώτην ἄνθρωπον) would know, it can be read as adumbrating some rather rigorous criteria for what could count as a *tekhne*: it must be a systematically connected body of knowledge, the object of which is conceptually unified and well-defined, and which affords a unified, consistent set of criteria for distinguishing between what is well and what ill done or said regarding its object (532d-533c). If one were to speak "with art" about Homer, but not by the arts of those things Homer speaks about, it would have to be by this art. $K(H(x))$ is here found equivalent not to $K(x)$ but to a first-order knowledge all the same, $K(P)$, which includes Homer, but only as one poet among others. And just as before, this dissolves or sidesteps the question of speaking about speaking about something: a first-order art about poetry as such must insist that the poet's intentionality is not within its purview, that it can talk (think, know) meaningfully about poetry without engaging with anything the poets talk about. For otherwise it would have to claim access to *everything* the poets talk about, *i.e.*, effective omniscience. This point is not pressed here, though it is not bracketed for long; this is essentially the target of what I take to be the

[22] Also surely not a random example.

dialogue's second elenctic sequence. Here, Ion admits that he does not possess an art of poetry like the one Socrates has described, but nevertheless reasserts his exceptional talent, and demands an alternative explanation. Socrates obliges with the famous account of divine inspiration.

Socrates' appeal to divine intervention to explain Ion to himself may strike us as overblown, but again it is a quite serious and nuanced answer to Ion's question. What could it mean that Ion's ability is confined to something (Homer) which cannot rationally be isolated? It is because this "ability" is not something that Ion has, but rather something that has him. Though this is driven home most clearly here, Socrates has been hinting at it (or rather, drawing on it) the whole time: knowledge is distinguished not only by its intentionality but by its *systematicity*. This is the weight behind Socrates' emphasis on each art being grasped "as a whole": a body of knowledge is a *system* of knowledge, is organized, structured as its object is structured (arguably *by* its object's structure). Technical knowledge understands how its object works, can give an account of these workings, and thus knows how to make things work, rather than simply being worked on by them. If Ion's ability to speak well about Homer came from knowledge, it would extend beyond Homer to the whole of poetry because of this very wholeness, this systematicity, inherent in knowledge.[23] But by Ion's own admission it doesn't; therefore, this is not a relation of knowledge. But then *what other kind of relation is there?* The emphasis on a rigorous, not to say rigid, conception of knowledge has not been for the sake of a single criterion, not just to beat up the poets (or rhapsodes) for not having knowledge, but to bring to light *another relation*, one clearly not unrelated to knowledge but just as clearly not identical to it. Knowledge of this other relation, knowledge testifying to its others: this is surely close to the heart of philosophy.

Two senses of knowledge correspond to two senses of explanation, inseparable but non-identical and nonassimilable to a totality: reasons and causes. These are especially easy and especially dangerous to conflate when it comes to intentional states, like believing, desiring, and (their unstable hybrid) valuing. If someone asks, "Why does A believe that P?", we might be inclined to give a justification for the belief, *reasons* for believing it: scientific studies strongly support P, or, it follows from Q and R. We give reasons *for* or *about the belief*, and we do so in terms of other reasons, other propositions or beliefs about the world and the relations between them, ultimately appealing to reasons *about* reasons, the rigor of logic or the scientific method. The purest case of reason is of course *proof*. On the other hand, we might answer with a causal account, particularly when reasons fail us, when we are unable to understand the other's reasons, or if there is no (reasonable, meaningful) reason at all: A believes P because she was raised that way, or, she's delusional. In this latter case we might be able to give specific causes of the madness (imbalance of humors, childhood trauma, brain injury). We give a causal account *about the believer*, and we do so, finally, in terms of forces, which are themselves not *about* anything, but simply *are*.[24] Reasons are articulate, discrete, hierarchical, general, one over many; forces are mute, continuous, flat,

[23] Of course it will turn out there is no "art of poetry as a whole"; one is tempted to say, "because poetry is not even an art" by Socrates' account, but that "because" would be misplaced—poetry cannot be an art, it will be shown, because *it cannot be a whole*.

[24] This is surely the Eleatic suffering of madness, that delusional beliefs are not merely mistaken beliefs about the reality but are not even about anything, because they fail to touch reality at a requisite cardinality of points.

unrepeatable.

Now, Socrates' account of divine inspiration is just such a causal account. If Ion's relation to Homer were a knowledge relation, then it would extend beyond Homer in certain systematic ways, to other knowledges and other knowers, but by Ion's own admission it does not; it lacks the generality, the freedom of ideality, required of knowledge. Instead, Socrates suggests, Ion is caught up in a causal chain of a particular kind. This explanation preserves the specificity Ion insists upon; in a way it preserves the hierarchy as well, keeping Ion and Homer on distinct 'levels' (and even multiplies their number, adding the gods at one end and the audience at the other). But it does this at the cost of inverting basically everything else about Ion's understanding of how his own talent works. Now "Homer" is no longer something Ion has mastered, but rather something that has mastered him; Ion's ability is not something he "has", by which he has Homer, but something *other* that has both of them. Indeed his talent turns out not even to be his own: the force that works on them not merely ignores but shunts aside both his and Homer's intentionality, driving them "out of their minds" (οὐκ ἔμφρων) and moving them with a power they do not understand, to say and do things they do not understand; and it does this not in order to teach them anything (at least not directly), but in order, through them, to reproduce itself. Indeed it is a key point of the account that the gods empty their "ministers" of their own intentionality, their own agency, so that their audience will know "that it is God himself who speaks and addresses us through them" (534d).

While this may be an adequate explanation of how Ion does what he does (Ion seems to think so), does it solve the original problem of the second object? Here, A not only acts on B but reproduces in B the power to act on C as it was acted upon; Ion does not need to know what Homer knows in order to convey this knowledge to others. Is this not a break out of the subject-object problem? Rather, this solution can only apply on the level of force, not of knowledge or representation. Just as in *Euthyphro,* the gods have knowledge (we presume), have reasons for doing what they do, communicating what they communicate, but what they transmit is not their knowledge as such. Nor the poet nor the rhapsode nor the audience learns anything in this transitive passing of forces. Or at least, they do not themselves come to know what the gods know. They may learn "what the gods love", *i.e.*, what the gods would have us do and not do, what they would have us drawn to or repulsed by, what they want us to emulate and what to feel ashamed of. But this would be out of awe for their authority, out of faith that they (so to speak) know what they are about, such that *we do not have to know.* This is authority: the imaginary synthesis of force and reason whose positing (as real, as true) is the founding dissimulation of the social, this equivocation between something being commanded because it is good and being good because it is commanded. The perpetuation of this dissimulation is in effect proffered by Capuccino (2006) as the rhapsode's true function: to "educate" Greek nobles in the sense of enculturating them, inspiring them to admire and emulate those individuals and traits prized by their society, so that society can reproduce itself. This is, of course, essentially the same as Protagoras's own defense of his art in the eponymous dialogue. But the Protagorean gambit must be in bad faith. (See the discussion of the previous chapter.) Either it cynically equivocates between criteria of truth and of reproducibility, or else it posits a theological synthesis between reasons and causes, knowledge and power, and falls back on appeal to a divine intellect. Either way, or more likely both, the disclosure of the form of this perpetual

alliance between traditional *muthos* and radical sophistry simultaneously closes both paths to philosophy.

As if pushing back against being assimilated into a system of force, pushing back against being simply a tool (however divine the user), and reasserting (so he thinks) his autonomy, his own agency in the process *as* his own, Ion insists he is not mad when he *praises* Homer. (Like someone insisting on their "values" as a way of asserting themselves, as if their values belonged to them, rather than being something they belong to.) Since this rhapsode's art of "praising" Homer does not spring from madness, the obvious alternative is that it comes from knowledge. But if so, then this knowledge must be *about* something. Socrates' reopening question is the *about what* in what I have taken to be its canonical form—ὧν Ὅμηρος λέγει **περὶ τίνος** εὖ λέγεις, "of what Homer says, *about what* do you speak well?" Ion responds, in perhaps the only way he can, given Socrates' earlier emphasis on wholeness, "everything". So we are back to the question, what is the logical form of speaking about X when X is itself a speaking about something, when this knowledge is essentially nested, *i.e.,* the second intentionality is not bracketed?

Ion is happy to accept the causal account as explanation for his *performance* of Homer, but insists that when he *praises Homer* (Ὅμηρον ἐπαινῶ, accusative construction) he is surely not mad or possessed, and that if Socrates heard him do so he would agree (536d). Socrates says he is perfectly willing to hear it, but only if Ion "answers" him (ἀποκρίνῃ, just as at 531a) this first: "on what thing (περὶ τίνος) in Homer's story do you speak well (εὖ λέγεις)? Not on all of them (περὶ ἁπάντων), I presume" (536d-e). Ion insists, περὶ οὐδενὸς ὅτου οὔ, "on all without a single exception" (536e). Socrates asks if this includes even those things Ion himself does not know but which Homer yet treats; Ion replies, incredulously, "And what sort of things are they, which Homer tells, but of which I have no knowledge?" (536e) Socrates reminds Ion that Homer speaks in many places about arts (περὶ τεχνῶν), like piloting and medicine; Ion even recites some lines of the *Iliad* (23.335 ff) containing advice on chariot-racing (537a-c). Socrates asks whether a doctor or a charioteer would know better whether Homer speaks "rightly" (ὀρθῶς) in these lines; Ion agrees it is the charioteer, for this is his art (537c). Socrates suggests and Ion agrees that the arts are distinguished from one another by their objects, and that what is known by one art is not known by any other; so no man can be capable of "knowing aright the words and works" of any art unless he himself possesses it (537d-538a). Socrates then himself invokes other passages of Homer in which the works of other arts are spoken about—medicine, fishing, divining—and Ion agrees in each case that it belongs to practitioners of these arts to judge the merits of these passages (538a-539d). Socrates then asks Ion to pick out those passages that belong to the rhapsode's art "to consider and distinguish beyond the rest of mankind" (539d-e). Ion insists that it is "all of them", but when Socrates reminds him of the agreement they just came to, he amends this "all" to exclude discussions of the particular arts, and instead offers that the rhapsode will know what "it befits a man to say, and the sort of thing that a woman should say; the sort for a slave and the sort for a freeman; and the sort for a subject or for a ruler" (539e-540b).[25] But again, when pressed by Socrates to consider the things they would talk about, Ion must concede that the one who knows about those things, by this knowledge, would know better than he what to say about them (540b-e).

[25] *Cf.* Meno's definition of virtue at 71e-72a.

Whereas before the focus was on each art being a whole (the subject who really "has" an art has it as a whole), now the emphasis is on the plurality of the arts, their separateness from one another: what is known by one art is not known (at least not in the same way) by any other. (By the same token, if two people know the same thing, they both know it by the same art.) Socrates gets Ion to quote or himself quotes various passages from the Homeric corpus in which Homer relates the practice of various arts. Each time he asks to which art the knowledge of this passage "belongs"; each time Ion answers that it belongs to the art being talked about, and (hence) *not* his (rhapsode's) art. That is, each time there is some particular content to Homer's speaking, some specified x, the situation is like that from the very first argument, and it is by knowledge of what is talked about, not some second-order knowledge, that a passage's meaning (or "thought" etc) is known. Each particular moment of knowing punches a hole in Ion's knowledge of Homer. Ion retreats to what would seem to be all that was left to him of Homer—take out all the 'technical stuff' and what is left?—what it is "fitting" (πρέπω) for people (of various social positions) to say, irrespective of the content or context of the speech, but depending on the speaker alone. But again when Socrates presses with examples of people talking *about* some particular thing, Ion admits their speech "belongs" to some art other than the rhapsode's. The exception, startlingly, is the general, specifically the general "exhorting his men"—this, Ion insists, belongs to the rhapsode at least as much to the general. When pressed, Ion goes so far as to claim that the rhapsode's and the general's art are the same in this regard. We can imagine Socrates reiterating what is by now a standard *peri tinos* question—what would a general say about whether to attack today or tomorrow, *etc.*—but he does not. Instead the conversation takes a curious, apparently-topical detour into the military and political relations among Athens and Sparta and Ion's home city of Ephesus. That is to say, we are back to power, to force (not quite to say violence). Ion now claims for the rhapsode a somewhat more sinister version of the sort of power he had in Socrates' account of inspiration: he can inspire men to kill and die at the will of their superiors, whose reasons neither he nor the soldiers ever need know. The chilling lesson of the equivalence is not that Ion possesses military expertise, but that the ideological function of the general, in point of descriptive fact, depends upon a rhapsodic dissimulation.

It is only from this point that philosophy's difficult relation to art can be understood. The quarrel of the Socratic *elenchos* is not with all art or with art as such, but the art which carries the reassuring function of Ion's representational exegesis, which is at once narrative and religion, entertainment and encyclopedia, just as the diagonal theorems do not indict all mathematics, but the mathematics of the One-All in the form consistency-completeness. In a deeper sense, one cannot have art *until* philosophy's purifying reflection causes it to break with the implicit ontology of myth and narrative, just as one cannot have pure mathematics until the latter ceases to identify itself directly with its models, that is, with a literal *geo-metry*.[26] The mimetic arts—poetry, painting, *etc.*—claim a general power

[26]Kahn (1996) rightly identifies in *Ion* (under the heading of "an incipient theory of *tekhne*") several of Plato's key structural requirements for knowledge; he makes much in particular of "the fundamental principle of a one-to-one mapping between a science and its subject matter" against which Ion's insistent claims to knowledge repeatedly founder. But there is nothing "tricky or perverse" in the use Socrates makes of this principle, for Plato's goal is deeper than merely "undermining the claims of poetry to be counted as *sophia*". Rather than "making the work of art disappear" by continually forcing Ion "back onto the extra-poetic terrain

of *representation*. What can these arts be about, what can they show? Apparently anything and everything. Nothing is *a priori* excluded from their scope, which is why they come always pre-charged with existential significance. But essentially included in this "everything" are things with their own aboutness, knowledges and knowers, and these are, as we now see, impossible to represent in any adequate sense. Ion has not merely been tricked; this difficulty discloses the genuine reason that Ion's thorough knowledge of Homer does not grant him access to the many knowledges talked about in Homer by joining his difficulty to a greater and more fatal impossibility. We witness it in the spectacularly ordinary but still telling observation that there are no good films, or even novels, about, for instance, mathematicians *as* mathematicians. For how does one represent another's thinking except by repeating it, by thinking, in which case it is no longer sovereign *representation* but *participation*. Our reading of the *Ion* thus deposits us at an essential elenctic syllogism: 1) Knowledge forms a blind spot, a point of opacity, for any general power of representation, of which the famous (truth-functional or substitutional) opacity of intensional clauses or oblique contexts is but the foremost symptom. 2) But knowledge arguably projects itself as just such a general power of representation. 3) Thus what knowledge forms a blind spot *for* is not just *another* knowledge but *itself*.

And this even is the Socratic-Platonic *discovery* of the *for-itself*, or the negative answer to the problem of intentionality-reflexivity. Sartre himself recognizes the inevitability and aptness of such a Platonic translation, though with two qualifications. First, like many of his most important remarks, this one functions only at the level of autocommentary apparently outside the main argument of *Being and Nothingness*. Second, like most representatives of the French post-Heideggerian reception of Plato, Sartre gravitates to a default view of the "late" dialogues as those with properly ontological import. Thus, the easiest point at which to effect the almost-parenthetical translation is, for him, the *Sophist*: "If the *cogito* necessarily leads outside the self, if consciousness is a slippery slope on which one can not take one's stand without immediately finding oneself tipped outside onto being-in-itself, this is because consciousness does not have by itself any sufficiency of being as an absolute subjectivity; from the start it refers to the thing. For consciousness, there is no being except for this precise obligation to be a revealing intuition of something. What does this mean except that consciousness is the Platonic *Other?*" (786) For us, it is only what now appears to be the phenomenological detour of identifying the for-itself exclusively (through the *cogito*) as *consciousness* which has to be altered in this identification. Sartre cedes the terrain of digital knowledge and its signs, stepping back to the analog flux of consciousness. I am no longer convinced that this retreat is necessary. Knowledge will benefit from its release from a phenomenological derivation, without ceasing to rejoin, through its own metalogical dialectic, the great phenomenological themes of purifying reflection and detotalized-totality, not because it is possible to trace the functions of signs back to that of consciousness, but simply insofar as signs are subject both to norms of structure and of aboutness, without these norms being reconcilable except negatively. Sartre continues:

> We may recall the fine description which the Stranger in the *Sophist* gives of this "other," which can be apprehended only "as in a dream," which has no

of the first-order arts", Plato's Socrates makes visible the radically unsaturated (that is to say, intentional) nature of poetry and of mimetic art in general.

> being except its being-other (*i.e.,* which enjoys only a borrowed being), which if considered only by itself disappears and which takes on a marginal existence only if one fixes his look on being, this other which is exhausted in being other than itself and other than being. It even seems that Plato perceived the dynamic character which the otherness of the other presented in relation to itself, for in certain passages he sees in this the origin of motion. But he could have gone still further; he would have seen then that the other, or relative non-being, could have a semblance of existence only by virtue of consciousness. To be other than being is to be self-consciousness in the unity of the temporalizing ekstases. Indeed, what can the otherness be if not the game of musical chairs played by the reflected and the reflecting which we described at the heart of the for-itself? For the only way in which the other can exist as other is to be consciousness (of) being other. Otherness is, in fact, an internal negation, and only a consciousness can be constituted as an internal negation. (787)

I shall have to describe in the next chapters why I suggest that metalogical negation and metalogical difference succeed better at the task of making intelligible the "internal" negation and alterity which Sartre demands. But even on the basis of our metalogical interpretations so far, it is possible to outline the needed reply to the charge that Plato "could have gone still further." Plato *does* go further, not just further than the paradoxes of the different (for which, see the later discussion of Plato's strange dualism), but, in a certain sense further toward the origin of negation than Sartre is able to reach, though in a way that I suggest is recognizable and accessible to us only after and through first *Being and Nothingness* and then *Being and Event.* But the radical step is not necessarily found in the place in the Platonic text where we are most habituated to look, namely in the overtly ontological reflections of the later dialogues. Rather it is in the more austere transcription of the Socratic problem that Plato succeeds in posing the problem more radically than can be equaled by his own subsequent attempts at solution. The *Ion*'s minimalist syllogism, for instance, which Plato pushes to greater refinement in *Charmides,* is, on the face of it, as relentlessly negative as Sartre's pure reflection, and in the same way. To put it as bleakly as possible, it looks like there can be no knowledge acceptable to philosophy without reflexivity, but also no knowledge with it, either. Knowledge cannot live with or without reflection. The *elenchos* is our initiation into this problem. Only an adequate solution to it deserves to be recognized with the name "form-idea of the Good."

2.3 Form of *Elenchos* Restated

"Socrates' interlocutors, and we ourselves", Gonzalez (1998) remarks, "frequently converse about courage, friendship, temperance, and virtue in general." Yes, we converse all-too-much about these things, but not with attention and care for their form, by which I mean not only what unifies the supposed instances and answers the question *ti esti*, but just as importantly the fact that these things—courage and the rest—have their own aboutness. The latter observation is not a typical part of everyday discourse, but is virtually Socrates' signature, to the point that his "What is x?" question simply cannot be understood except as driving toward the second question "About what?". What is a virtue? Something that

we not only speak about but which contains its own aboutness—and we cannot say about what. We find, that is, once we acknowledge the aboutness of a virtue, that we must and cannot say what it is about. The second object, which is the ethical object, is radically missing—this is is at once the essential reflective idea of Plato's Socrates and the engine of his method. It is what he shows and what he puts to work in a particular place, time and conversation. That this second level of aboutness 1) can be recovered from a reflection on ordinary language, and yet 2) it is genuinely aporetic, up to nontrivial discoveries about the form of any possible self-reference, are the joint explanation for what Gonzalez offers as a "paradox": "Socrates is not satisfied with whatever intuitive awareness of the virtues is involved in our everyday experience (*i.e.,* in our ability to recognize examples of virtue and even in our practice of virtue), and yet, by his own admission, his method fails in each dialogue to provide any higher form of knowledge."

Actually, the parenthetical asserts too much, for it does not treat the consequences of our ignorance of the Good with anything like Socratic gravity. Gonzalez must be leaning too heavily, as nearly all interpreters do, on the presumption of irony in Socratic ignorance, at the expense of taking seriously the negative import of Socrates' elenctic work. If such abilities—to recognize and practice virtue—were evident, then, even in the absence of a concept, conflict about good and bad would cease, at least in those instances.[27] Since this state of affairs seems to be neither extant nor forthcoming, let us strip away such reassuring but contradictory retractions of our ignorance of the Good, to face Socratic not-knowing without the proviso that everyday know-how—which means, in practice, navigating established relations of power—will remain unshaken. For the voiding of the authority of the given is indeed the "positive" work of the elenchos, the absence of which is typically regretted in the very place we are prevented from seeing it by conflations of everyday coping with ethical competence. The former, if it is a form of knowledge at all, is knowledge of how to get ourselves fed, paid, out of jail, in a job, tenured, respected, envied, desired by those we desire, ignored by the NSA, *etc.*, none of which require or evidence ethical knowledge in a Socratic sense.

"Negative" elenchos can mean simply saying what there is not in the sense of ruling out some hypotheses, in which case the information is as significant as the hypotheses rejected were compelling. But it can also mean more than this: saying truly that there is not something we thought there to be. If I say, "That's not the right answer", and leave it at that, you are usually justified in asking me to say what the right answer is—though I may not know, and it would be wrong of you to to think in that event that you have gained no information. (We have come far enough in thinking about information to recognize that it is only in ruling out alternatives, that is, neither in full positivity nor full negativity, that there is meaning.[28]) But if I say, "There is no greatest prime number" or "There is no justification for this war", or "God does not exist", in each case I say something of unusual significance, with respect to which to reply, "But tell me what there is," would be to miss the point.

[27] Perhaps it give way to the fantasy we never tire of restaging of a conflict between good and evil.

[28] It is in this context, by the way, and not in terms of a theory (inadequate) of predication that the famed reference of "Theaetetus flies" to "Theaetetus sits" should be received.

Chapter 3

Reflexivity: *Charmides*

3.1 Plato's *Charmides*

The *Charmides* is probably the first sustained investigation of the structure and limits of self-knowledge in Ancient Greek philosophy. Plato's Socrates[1] recalls (in the first person, to an unidentified auditor) his discussion with the young Charmides and the rising sophist Critias. Both are Plato's relatives. Both would be notorious to Plato's audience for their later prominence (Critias centrally, Charmides in a peripherally-associated role) in the regime of the "Thirty Tyrants" who exercised unchecked power during the interval between Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War and the reestablishment of the democracy which would eventually condemn Socrates.[2] The ostensible topic of conversation between Socrates and the future tyrants is, pointedly, σωφροσύνη, *sophrosune* (*sophrosyne* in older texts), a semantically-thick term with a prominent place and deep roots in Greek culture, connoting "self-control", "temperance", "moderation", "sound-mindedness", or even "sanity" or "moral sanity"[3]. Initial

[1] "Socrates" throughout this study refers to the conceptual persona of philosophical interest, Plato's Socrates, though it is tedious to make this reminder explicit in every instance. This textual reduction, however, *in no way* implies that what gets written as and about this figure of Socrates can be limited to Plato's intentions. Plato writes in response to something to which the text continually refers, in which it continually participates, but which remains other: the event of Socrates.

[2] See Nails (2002) for a detailed critical summary of the available, often-contradictory biographical information on Charmides and Critias. Wolfsdorf's note on the Thirty is also helpful, particularly in recalling Socrates' civil disobedience to its important place in any consideration of the Critias-Socrates relationship as an opening on Plato's thought of *power*.

> During their brief reign, the tyrants banished from the city and disenfranchised approximately 90% of the Athenian citizenry... Socrates maintained his civil rights and was permitted to continue living in the city. But the Thirty passed a law forbidding the instruction of rhetoric (*tekhne logon*) and Xenophon, a contemporary, says this law was specifically intended to terminate the philosophical activities of Socrates. In addition, the Thirty ordered Socrates, with four other citizens, to arrest the general Leon of Salamis and return him to Athens to be executed. Socrates tacitly disobeyed. But, he escaped punishment because the reign of the Thirty soon ended. (Wolfsdorf 1997, 66)

[3] "Sanity" as a positive attribute, rather than something defined negative with respect to pathology. *Cf.* Korzybski. But Plato's treatment of the attribute of sanity goes beyond this: a power with attractive and even erotic force.

candidate definitions ("quietness", "shame", "doing one's *own* things", "doing *good* things") meet with recognizable patterns of Socratic refutation. A turning-point is reached at 164d where Critias proposes to identify *sophrosune* with the familiar Delphic ideal of "knowing oneself". Remarkably, in light of Socrates' manifest commitment to some version of this ideal and to the project of self-knowledge, his subsequent examination of Critias raises non-trivial challenges to the logical cogency, metaphysical possibility, and ethical/political utility of self-knowledge. The reader is invited to reconsider the very idea of self-knowledge, and to determine in what the differences, if any, between Socratic and Critian versions of self-knowledge might lie. The *Charmides* thus has a claim to be considered a foundational text for philosophical work on self-knowledge, whether this be pursued under the heading of logic, epistemology, philosophy of mind, ethics, or all of these together.

The *Charmides* is an understudied dialogue. In none of the several receptions of Platonic thought in European and American philosophy has it been canonized as an essential work in its own right, in the way that certainly the *Republic* and even the *Sophist* have; neither has it been assigned a key role in modulating our understanding of Platonic thought, like, in different ways, the *Apology* or the *Parmenides*. From the turn of the twentieth century to the present, only six monographs exclusively devoted to the *Charmides* have appeared in English: those of Tuckey (1951), Hyland (1981), Van der Ben (1985), Schmid (1998), Tuozzo (2011), and Levine (2015).[4] To this tally, one can justifiably add significant chapters of Kahn (1996), Gonzalez (1998), Lampert (2010), Moore (2015), and, especially, Sprague (1976).[5] Most of these studies interact minimally with their predecessors, and disagree on nearly all points of interpretation and assessment of the text to a degree extraordinary even for discussions of a Platonic dialogue, which are typically divergent. A small, but perhaps growing, representation in the journal literature suggests inconclusively that this neglect is being reconsidered by individual researchers in a number of significant cases, but the critical mass of attention and interaction necessary to constitute a sustained discussion of the *Charmides* has not yet been reached in any contemporary philosophical community. As a result, the writer on the *Charmides* who chooses this text as the site from which to launch an intervention intended to be of broad philosophical interest shoulders additional burdens of familiarization and advocacy for the dialogue, which do not face an interpreter of better-established texts. General philosophical interest in the dialogue cannot be presupposed, much less the interest of those for whom these remarks are particularly intended: Continentally-literate philosophers for whom a relationship with mathematics is inseparable from their friendship with Plato, and with philosophy as such.

It is conceivable that the rethinking of the nature and possibility of philosophical and political community which the *Charmides* demands plays a direct role in this neglect; it is more certain that the project of reading the text is conditioned by the lack and excess which surface whenever philosophy encounters alien forms of *desire* and of *mathematical* reasoning, and all the more when it encounters them together.

Historically, say, in the long period dominated by the Hellenistic and Christian regulations

[4]Note that all but Tuckey appear after 1980. The situation does not differ dramatically in the other European literatures.

[5]Since a useful compilation of the literature on the *Charmides* is not extant, I provide one as an appendix to this document, concurrently developed for this investigation and already deployed for use by the philosophical public at *PhilPapers*: `http://philpapers.org/browse/plato-charmides`.

of desire between Aristotle and Jowett, it is likely that avoidance of the *Charmides* took hold and was perpetuated as much on account of the singular eroticism of its first-person self-portrait of Socratic subjectivity, as on account of its difficult and incomplete argument. It is all-too-easy to place ourselves beyond this period. It will become clear that the form of Socratic desire, when recognized in this dialogue, remains as threatening to the defenders of society now as it ever was in the years of Athenian decline, and this not only because of Socrates' obvious and positive erotic relation to Charmides, but, inseparably and at least as importantly, also from the zeroing-out of his erotic relation to Critias, at the precise moment when the latter, ascendant in power, claims to have actualized philosophy, and therefore to be the necessary and appropriate object of an admiring return-gaze from the young Charmides, as actuality to potentiality (as well as to Socrates himself inasmuch as the latter maintains himself in a position of avowed non-knowing). The outcome of the dialogue at the pole of desire is the performance of a relation between two potentialities, between two *dunameis* as such, that bypasses Critian actuality and power as things *less* philosophically realized than themselves, showing a radical incompatibility between philosophy and the forms of authority proper to hierarchical society, or, "the state". I will have to elaborate, under the dissonant heading of a Socratic-metalogical foundation of anarchism, this reconfiguration of the relation of philosophical *eros* to the rights of status and power that the *Charmides* shows to be imbricated with the operation of the *elenchos.* For the moment, it is sufficient to observe that Socrates' eroticism is as transgressive to the state in what it refuses to Critias as in what it extends toward Charmides. Socrates dares to maintain a desire which is at once thoroughly political and at a distance from the state, a desire which neither conforms nor withdraws, and he affirms this desire and its consequences as philosophy itself.

But even if the first of these rationales is now presumed inoperative, which is uncertain, the habit of historical neglect continues to operate in the form of a working presupposition of the dialogue's relative insignificance, while the development, from Cantor, through Peirce, Frege, Gödel, *et al.,* of the modest but nonzero formal resources I claim to be necessary for articulating a fully satisfactory reconstruction and appreciation of its argument[6] has taken place for the most part in scholarly channels failing to intersect with those of Platonic studies.[7,8]

It is the second of these considerations that is proximately decisive for individual contemporary readings of the *Charmides*, and of the dialogues generally, considered apart from historical factors (to the limited extent that these can be separated). If the *Charmides* re-

[6]Not only this but as generally for an appreciation of the true logic-mathematical potentials of Platonic dialectic.

[7]Here, the reflection on community enters the discussion at the point of the only-apparently-contingent problem of the division of intellectual labor in the University.

[8]This is a novel claim and will require much elaboration. Nevertheless, it has significant precedents. Like so much in this study, the couplet Plato/Cantor comes easily to us only because of the path-breaking work of Badiou (particularly but not exclusively in *Being and Event*), the presence of which in this text is pervasive and intended, even and especially when it is not made a theme. Nevertheless, like many of his predecessors in twentieth-century thought, Badiou's *Socrates* is not developed to the level of his appreciation of the more directly ontological themes of "later" dialogues. One of the scholarly objectives of this study is to elevate the relative importance of Socratic factors in the new readings of Plato that Badiou, Priest, Livingston, *et al.* are making possible for us, all of which are in some way either logical or mathematical or both, and all of which contain specifically metalogical/metamathematical contributions that are relevant here.

mains an undervalued dialogue today, it is because—as I shall show, and mean to rectify—the logical force of its main argument has not been recognized.

By the *force* of the *Charmides'* argument, I mean something intrinsically dual, not something univocal: on the one side, its rigor and inescapability, and on the other side, the ubiquity and generativity of its consequences across all conceivable nontrivial contexts. 1) The argument is locally valid: at root this is a criterion of *consistency.* 2) The argument is of global significance: at root this is a criterion of *completeness.* The twofold challenge of *misology,* that is, of how 1*) consistency can be something other than empty "formal" regimentation of language, and 2*) how completeness can be something other than sophistic or pious illusion, of course applies to it, as it applies to all arguments. What brings the *Charmides'* argument to the level of philosophy proper is that this puzzle not only applies to the argument, but is *in question* in it; I take the struggle to establish philosophy in the face of misological skepticism, in other words, to measure the degree to which arguments have become philosophical in a strict sense.[9] A usually-equivalent criterion, and one which is easier to parse at first, is that the problems of philosophy are the problems of self-reference. The general solution to the paradox[10] of misology as will be explored throughout this work is that the global significance in question is *negative*: the mark in the place of completeness is not "yes" but "no"; the value registered on the axis of completeness by the true philosophical proposition is precisely *incompleteness.* Incompleteness, raised to the level of a concept, does not resemble in its logical function that of *something* incomplete; it belongs as essentially to the dimension of completeness as the false does to the class of truth-values*;* in this difference between incompleteness and something incomplete, we find a first indication of the ontic-ontological function of incompleteness. The logically-interested reader will immediately recognize that these methodological remarks encode an anticipation of diagonalization, the formal witness of the phenomenon of incompleteness. This is not accidental; the genesis of the most recent incarnation of this project lies in the observation that what I was trying to communicate to "students" about Cantor's and Gödel's diagonalizations (in a number of seminars on logic in the mid-2000s) was in a nonobvious sense identical to what I was learning, repeatedly, from the *Charmides* and from Sartre.

As a remark like this, like every remark on self-reference, already involves the methodological wager of this study, I hasten to supplement it with an explicit announcement. 1) The tools needed to recognize and participate in the dialectic of Plato's Socrates, indeed 2) those needed in order to understand dialectical philosophy generally, through Hegel, Sartre, Bataille, and Badiou, and finally 3) in order to productively engage the problems of philosophy—which are none other than the problems of self-reference—are not only logical, in the prevailing sense of 'analytic' philosophy (*i.e.,* those of first-order logic), nor are they hermeneutical, as in most Continental approaches to the Platonic dialogues. Rather they are *metalogical.* The duality of consistency and completeness can be identified as *metalogical* duality; dialectically it can perhaps be regarded as the intramathematical appearance of the duality of logic and ethics. While I maintain and proceed according to the most general form of the claim (3)—metalogic is the right methodology for tackling philosophical problems—I

[9] This is, of course, one of the most fundamental axioms which make the very different realizations of dialectic in Plato and Hegel more than homonymous.

[10] Or "paradoxes". Like everything having to do with the function of the Dyad in thought, it/they ought to be presented grammatically in the *dual* number, lost to English but still optional in Plato's Greek.

will begin on a smaller scale with (1). I propose to show that Socrates' main argument in the *Charmides* is *metalogical*. Alternatively: *metamathematical*. The two terms are coextensive, and can be taken as practically-synonymous until further notice, but the latter has the advantage of unequivocally chiastic definition: metamathematics is *the mathematics of the language of mathematics*. The implications of the extensional identity of metalogic and metamathematics for our understanding of the first-order disciplines logic and mathematics, in their relation to each other and to philosophy, *i.e.*, the priority of mathematics over logic (in themselves and for philosophy), and philosophy's options in assuming or refusing its essential relation to mathematics, will be articulated once a basic metalogical perspective has become more familiar. They arrive at a position which overlaps in large part with the conclusions of Badiou, while perhaps providing a more extensible, flexible, and intuitive platform for the resumption of Platonic dialectic than any first-order mathematical theory, be it of sets or of topoi, can realize. The primary use of the equivalence of metamathematics and metalogic for the moment will be to underline that the diagonal theorems which guide the study belong intrinsically under both headings, and that therefore to caution that the appearance of mathematics proper whenever our reflection on the logic of X has been brought to metalogical nontriviality never amounts to arbitrarily or willfully changing the subject, but is perhaps the most characteristic and necessary transition of Platonic, *i.e.,* mathematical, dialectic.

The importance of the *Charmides* lies precisely in this degree of explicitness to which the metalogical character of *elenchos* is brought by the development of the problematic of self-knowledge, so that one has a chance to see mentioned here metalogical considerations which elsewhere are put more directly to use. The *Charmides* provides the royal road[11] to acquaintance with that conceptual persona I advance under the name of the *metalogical Plato*.

Textually, by the main argument of the *Charmides*, I mean to indicate the couple of Stephanus pages from 169d to 171c. These boundaries are, of course, conventional and flexible; a full appreciation of the grounds and consequences of the argument expands to embrace the entirety of the dialogue, the corpus, philosophy itself, and philosophy in relation to mathematics. Nevertheless it is useful for communicative, mnemonic, and clarifying purposes to push the opposite tendency, that of contraction, as far as possible, in order to arrive at that point of textual minimalism, or the maximal compression of thinking, at which the silence toward which all philosophical thinkers are tempted (to the extent that they know themselves) reverses, and one finds that one must expand a little. This exercise is intended to contrast with the tendency of nearly all extant commentaries on the *Charmides* to tend to proceed excessively one-to-one, which is a sign not so much of respect for the text as of being at a loss within it.[12] To name an argument is already to foreshadow its interpretation, and it is only careful consideration of the argument and of its place in the philosophy of Plato's Socrates that will justify my referring to this text also according to its function, non-uniquely, as "the dilemma of *sophrosune*", "the dilemma of reflection" or "the dilemma of metaknowledge". The part of the compound name that can be held constant here is the one we have a well-established logical name for in philosophy. We are supposed

[11] Royal road: more precisely the *regicidal* road!

[12] As so often in this study, Sprague (1976) is the most significant exception.

to know what a dilemma is, while our language for talking about reflection and self-reference remains awkward, plural, and underdeveloped. Yet since, as far as I have been able to discern, the culminating argument of the *Charmides* has never been explicitly recognized as a dilemma, it is with this point that my concrete interpretive work must begin. However we refer to it, this argument, with its dilemmatic structure made explicit, becomes one the two most important texts in the whole of the Platonic corpus for my purposes, the second being, naturally, the Agathology of the *Republic,* initialized, however, at 505, where Plato presents a close variation of the dilemma as what I will call "the form *of the question* of the Good", the complete structure of which must be understood prior to the evaluation of any proffered answering "form of the good".

Several philosophers have noted a close resemblance between these two texts, and tracked the consequences of the similarity to their own conclusions: Kahn, Rowe, Politis, and most importantly, Sprague. Yet all, if I am right, are hampered by an insufficient formal explication of the *Charmides*' dilemma. Sprague is alone among the dialogue's close readers in taking the difficulty of the exchange with Critias as a sign of logical nontriviality comparable to that of the *Theaetetus* or *Parmenides*, rather than of fallacy easily-dismissed, or of misunderstandings dramatically tracing the cognitive limits of the interlocutors, and her interpretation has not exerted an influence in proportion to its intrinsic interest. The perhaps-misleadingly-titled *Plato's Philosopher-King: The Theoretical Background* (1976), by far the most logically-significant study of the *Charmides*, if not of the relation between the *Republic* and the "early" dialogues generally, is infrequently and often-inaptly cited. Sprague argues that the problems of the early dialogues, especially the *Charmides*, demand to be solved, and are solved by Plato, by postulating a philosopher (alternatively "statesman", on her account, in the eponymous dialogue) who has the power of second-order knowledge, or knowledge of knowledge, which is identical to what it is for a philosopher to have knowledge of the form-idea of the Good.[13] On my view, Sprague has uniquely suggested precisely the right analysis of the question but given the opposite of the true answer—opposite in reality, but also mistaken as an interpretation of the argument that Plato's Socrates gives us, at least in the *Charmides*, and so, as our estimation of the work done in that dialogue increases, possibly also mistaken, we may decide, about the Agathology which resumes that argument. The form of the good is indeed equivalent to the truth about self-reference in knowledge. But that there truly *is* such a power as second-order knowledge is precisely *Critias'* view, subjected to devastating and far-reaching Socratic *elenchos* in the very argument that is the main object of this study.[14] To the contrary, I suggest that the idea of the good and the form of Socratic *elenchos* are identical to each other and to the metalogical truth *that there is not* a faculty of second-order knowledge, or, put objectively, *that there is not an idea of the idea.* In the end, the existing commentaries regard the Agathology as overcoming (easily, to judge by the accounts they give of it) the problems of knowledge's reflection on itself raised in the *Charmides*. None takes this effectively extra-canonical dialogue and its negative conclusion as having something fundamental and irrecusable to teach us, logically and ethically, in its

[13]Sprague's monograph came to my attention accidentally, and only when my thesis was long in preparation, but just in time to be able to begin by acknowledging this important precedent.

[14]Press (2002) goes so far in this direction as to assert that Critias' vision is the one realized in the *Republic*, which should be taken, I think, as an especially grim reminder of what is at stake in distinguishing between the Socratic and Critian positions.

own right, much less as a text needed (my view) to rule-out very natural but invalid ontotheological and/or constructivist interpretations of the Agathology itself. The *Charmides* thus guards the rigorous *form of the question of the good* from the sham solutions insinuated when the problem is inadequately (pre-metalogically) presented and thus reduced, whil,e to my reading, it poses the burden of explaining, before the end, what conversion in the structure of value must take place in order for an argument that is fundamentally negative from nearly every given point of view (logical, theological, epistemological, *etc.*) to be recognized as mathematically and ethically affirmative.

3.2 The Definitions of *Sophrosune*

Santas, one of the closest readers of the dialogue, nevertheless speaks for most of its readers when he finds that its sequence of definitions lacks structure. The best response to this is to exhibit the structure. Where Santas sees overreactions in Critias' responses, massive leaps from extreme to extreme where minor adjustments would do, he shows he actually understands Socrates and his methods less well than Critias does. Critias has heard or been party to enough of Socrates' conversations to know that minor adjustments will not suffice, because Socrates' objections cut deeper than mere Prodican logic-chopping. Critias' responses, even including the last one Charmides gives which clearly came from Critias, anticipate Socrates' typical questions and attempt to overcome his objections before Socrates even makes them. In order to attain the level at which a metalogical analysis of the dialogue as a whole and of its culminating argument are possible, it is advisable synoptically to reference what I have determined to be the seven definitions of *sophrosune* (plus three transitional forms) which fall to *elenchos* in the *Charmides*, and especially the forms of their failure. I follow Van Der Ben's outline of the dialogue when possible, adhering to his selection of the Greek text where available. I add definitions a-d and 7, the numbering scheme, as well as all translations, analysis, and identification of spoilers (except in the most important case of (6), which will be treated separately below).

(1) ἡσυχιότης τις / whatever is quiet (159b) and (2) αἰδώς / modesty (160e)

Charmides first attempt at definition is "doing everything orderly and quietly" (τὸ κοσμίως πάντα πράττειν καὶ ἡσυχῇ, 159b), which is not at all absurd or thoughtless, though some commentators write it off as such. Charmides is a teenage aristocrat and the picture his suggestion paints is intuitively clear. He is repeating the sort of advice that authority has substituted for thinking and experience in his education (not to gesticulate wildly and dance around when he wants to make a point, but to comport himself with some measure of patrician *gravitas*), so when he is asked for the definition of this most aristocratic of virtues, he gives quietness. This is good advice in that it is a clearly formulated rule, but it is not hard to show that following it does not always lead to ideal results. Socrates turns to this immediately, meeting Charmides' perfectly reasonable (even modest) suggestion with the question, "Is not temperance ... among the honorable things (τῶν καλῶν)?" (159b-c). After working through numerous instances—in learning and teaching, playing music, athletics—in which the quieter thing is not the more honorable thing, the two agree that quietness is at best no more likely to be admirable than not; but *sophrosune* must *always* honorable, so "quietness" cannot be what is meant by it (159c-160d). Socrates then enjoins Charmides to

try again, and, after a pause and "a quite manly effort of self-examination (διασκεψάμενος)", Charmides suggests that, since *sophrosune* makes men embarrassed or ashamed, it is the same thing as αἰδώς, modesty or shame (160e). But Socrates reminds Charmides that he just agreed *sophrosune* is an honorable thing, one that makes men "good" (ἀγαθόν) and thus must itself be a good thing. Socrates then asks Charmides if he agrees with Homer's line, "Modesty, no good mate for a needy man"; for if so, they have identified a situation in which modesty is not good (160e-161a). Again they conclude that, since *sophrosune* must always be good, and shame is not always so, *sophrosune* cannot be shame (161a-b).

This pattern will be familiar from the outline of *elenchos* given in Chapter 1. The logical form of a virtue requires that its definition be good both *as* a definition—it must be a cognizable rule, a knowledge-function—and also *by* definition—the rule must produce good results in *all* cases of its application. Charmides' first definition of *sophrosune* as "quietness" is indeed a good rule—it is easy to distinguish between the more and less quiet, and to follow the instruction "be quieter" in any given situation without presupposing a prior understanding of what is to be done—but following it does not guarantee good outcomes, and so it is disqualified. Santas and Sprague, among other commentators, point out that Socrates' refutation takes the key word "quietness" in a way other than Charmides intended; this may well be true, but it is beside the point. Charmides could have objected at any time, as Critias will once he takes over, that Socrates misunderstood him, and offered a Prodican precising of the term; Socrates' subsequent argument presumably would have been different, but its ultimate conclusion would be the same. The problem is not that *this* concept's extension is wrong, that *these particular* things are not the right ones, whether it is Socrates or the interlocutor who has 'misunderstood'; it is rather that no articulable concept can catch *all and only* the right things, that no intension can map perfectly onto the (complete) extension. Usually it takes a few attempts at adjustment or refinement for this to begin to sink in for the interlocutor. Here Charmides' response is to try a different concept entirely, rather than a retooling of the first, but his second definition meets with the same objection. This time Socrates supplies only one counterexample, but by now Charmides has caught on that one is enough to disqualify this definition as decisively as the first. The failure is formal, and not simply a failure to hit the correct formula.

(3) τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν / doing one's own things (161b)

Descriptive or predicative definitions (drawn from introspection) having failed him twice, Charmides suddenly remembers "something [he] once heard" (ὃ ἤδη του ἤκουσα λέγοντος) and wants to know Socrates' opinion of it: that *sophrosune* is τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν, doing one's own things (161b). Socrates teasingly calls Charmides a "rascal" (μιαρέ) and says he must have heard this from Critias (which Critias promptly denies) or "some other of our wise men" (ἄλλου του τῶν σοφῶν). Charmides suggests and Socrates agrees that what really matters is not who said it but whether it is "truly spoken" (ἀληθὲς λέγεται), but Socrates says he would be "surprised" (θαυμάζοιμ') if they could find this out, since it seems to be a kind of "riddle" (αἰνίγματι; 161b-c). When Charmides asks what he means, Socrates says the words could not have been meant exactly as they were spoken, for taken straightforwardly their implications are absurd: *sophrosune* would then require every man to make his own shoes, weave and clean his own cloak, build his own house, be his own doctor, *etc.*; and it would forbid even reading or writing anyone's name but one's own. Since, Socrates and Charmides agree, "doing one's own things" construed in this obvious way is clearly not what is meant

by *sophrosune*, the man who spoke them must have been "riddling" (ἠινίττετο), or else a simpleton or a fool (161c-162a). When Charmides says the man who said it indeed "seemed to be very wise" (πάνυ ἐδόκει σοφὸς εἶναι), Socrates again says he must have "propounded it as a riddle (αἴνιγμα αὐτὸ προύβαλεν)", given how difficult (χαλεπὸν) it is to understand (γνῶναι), and asks again "what in the world" this phrase could possibly mean (162a-b). Charmides admits he is at a loss, but floats the possibility, with a "sly laugh" (ὑπεγέλα) and a glance at Critias, that even he who first said it did not know what it meant (162b).

At this point in the characteristic pattern of *elenchos*, after two rounds of definitions which meet the cognitive criterion (*i.e.*, that are good algorithms) but fail to meet the ethical criterion (*i.e.*, do not always result in goodness), we should expect a definition responding to the other pole of the duality, in which goodness is built directly into the definition, but by which move it becomes circular, non-wellfounded, a bad algorithm. Indeed we will get the purest form of this type as Critias' first self-proclaimed definition, but only as a transformation of something (seemingly) more sophisticated. Charmides' third and final definition (or, by a different count, Critias' first) seems to disrupt the pattern by anticipating it, deploying a concept that does not clearly belong either to logic or to ethics, but instead splits the difference between them, *i.e.*, "what is one's own". But Socrates' subsequent questioning demonstrates how, rather than overcoming or avoiding the duality, this concept is itself split by the duality. This is the upshot of Socrates' repeated identification of the definition as a "riddle": if taken at face value, "what is one's own" names something absurd or meaningless, but if presumed to be meaningful (*i.e.*, nontrivial) its meaning is utterly opaque. Put another way: insofar as it is taken to be well-founded, to be aligned with conceptual clarity and transparency, then it picks out only wrong objects, or at best no more right than wrong; if it is instead taken to meet the other criteria, to be only of the good, to name only the right objects, then it offers no help in selecting or identifying exactly which objects those should be, and one is required already to know by some other means.[15] Socrates works through the former interpretation first, with Charmides, and shows that it falls to the first horn of the elenctic dilemma, just as Charmides' previous definitions did. And just as with the previous definitions, no amount of fine-tuning can save this definition, as Critias' response will show.

(4) ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν πρᾶξις / doing [not making] good things (163e)

Charmides' failure to defend "doing one's own things", Socrates reports, makes Critias agitated and angry, "as a poet [becomes] with an actor who mishandles his verses on the stage"; and, though Critias does not admit to being the source of this definition, he does (at Socrates' prompting) explicitly "concede" (συγχωρῶ) to believing it, and agrees to take over its defense (162c-e). First he points out that Socrates has improperly conflated "doing" (πράττειν) with "making" (ποιεῖν), which are no more the same, says Critias, than "working" (ἐργάζεσθαι) and "making", as we learn from Hesiod's famous line, "work (ἔργον) is no reproach." For if "doing" and "working" are construed to include "making" of any and all kinds,

[15] Waugh overstates the matter when she says that Socrates "intentionally misunderstands" this definition "by equating doing (*prattein*) with producing or making (*poiein*), which allows him to turn the aristocratic notion of each person's doing that which he is by nature most fit to do into quite the opposite notion of each man's weaving and washing his own coat[.]" (292). Socrates does not simply misrepresent something the meaning of which is perfectly plain to him; rather he provocatively subverts this aristocratic platitude in order to reveal the equivocation at its core.

then the great poet would be praising such vulgar activities as "shoe-making or pickle-selling or serving the stews", which are surely not beyond reproach (163a-b). This is emphatically "not to be supposed" (οὐκ οἴεσθαί γε χρή); rather, by "works" (ἔργα) he must have meant only things "made honorably and usefully" (καλῶς τε καὶ ὠφελίμως ποιούμενα), and only these are truly one's own, whereas all "harmful" (βλαβερά) things belong to others. With the proper meanings of "doing" and "one's own things" clarified, then, "we must conclude" (χρὴ οἴεσθαι) that Hesiod and anyone else "of good sense" (φρόνιμος) would call he who "does his own things" temperate (163b-c). Socrates says Critias is welcome to define his terms however he likes, as long as it is clear what things are called by what names, and so he bids Critias to "begin over again" (πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς) and "define more plainly" (σαφέστερον ὅρισαι) what he means (163d). After a brief exchange, Critias announces "the doing of good things" (τὴν γὰρ τῶν ἀγαθῶν πρᾶξιν) as his "plain definition" (σαφῶς διορίζομαι) of *sophrosune* (163d-e).

Critias' defense of "doing one's own things" as meaningful (*i.e.*, neither absurd nor vacuous) employs classic sophists' tricks: he cites a famous line by a respected poet and interprets it by drawing fine distinctions between shades of meaning, insistently invoking something like a principle of hermeneutic charity—we 'must conclude' that these words mean something, since we 'must suppose' their source to be 'sensible' and reasonable, and only our own sloppy use (or disingenuous *mis*use) of language prevents us from seeing this. But what Critias presents as linguistic clarification (in what Socrates explicitly names the Prodican style (163d)) is really a reinscription and further obfuscation of the ambiguity that prompted it. The leak in the concept, the naive permissiveness that admits into "what is one's own" things obviously unethical (not honorable or beneficial), is patched not with further conceptual specificity, not by providing further cognizable criteria for picking out the right things and excluding the wrong ones, but by appeal to a nebulous good judgment, shored up by cultural authority. The only way to ensure "one's own" is understood to include only good things is by explicitly equating the two, which Critias ultimately does, at the cost of effectiveness or well-foundedness: if the rightness of the object is built into the definition, we are unable to reach it by following a rule. Everything is already here for a reader who has learned to recognize the fundamental duality underlying Socrates' questioning, but for philosophical reflection to learn the import and finality of this dilemma, it must be played out on multiple conceptual levels, in order to pursue and to exhaust all avenues of escape. Thus acknowledgment of the dilemma is postponed by the introduction of knowledge into its own scope.

(5) τὸ γιγνώσκειν ἑαυτόν / to know oneself (164d)

Rather than directly rejecting Critias' "plain definition" as self-presupposing or circular, Socrates says he "wonders" (θαυμάζω) whether Critias believes that a *sophron* man might not know (ἀγνοεῖν) himself to be so; when Critias says he does not, Socrates proceeds to show that this is in fact an immediate consequence of the way Critias has just defined *sophrosune* (164a-b). The crux of the argument is the following exchange (164b-c):

ἦ οὖν καὶ γιγνώσκειν ἀνάγκη τῷ ἰατρῷ ὅταν τε ὠφελίμως ἰᾶται καὶ ὅταν μή; καὶ ἑκάστῳ τῶν δημιουργῶν ὅταν τε μέλλῃ ὀνήσεσθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ ἔργου οὗ ἂν πράττῃ καὶ ὅταν μή;	Well, and must the doctor know when his medicine will be helpful, and when not? And must every craftsman know when he is likely to be benefited by the work he does, and when not?
ἴσως οὔ.	Probably not.
ἐνίοτε ἄρα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὠφελίμως πράξας ἢ βλαβερῶς ὁ ἰατρὸς οὐ γιγνώσκει ἑαυτὸν ὡς ἔπραξεν: καίτοι ὠφελίμως πράξας, ὡς ὁ σὸς λόγος, σωφρόνως ἔπραξεν. ἢ οὐχ οὕτως ἔλεγες;	Then sometimes, I went on, the doctor may have done what is helpful or harmful without knowing the effect of his own action; and yet, in doing what was helpful, by your statement, he has done temperately. Or did you not state that?
ἔγωγε.	I did.
οὐκοῦν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐνίοτε ὠφελίμως πράξας πράττει μὲν σωφρόνως καὶ σωφρονεῖ, ἀγνοεῖ δ' ἑαυτὸν ὅτι σωφρονεῖ;	Then it would seem that in doing what is helpful he may sometimes do temperately and be temperate, but be ignorant of his own temperance?

Socrates asks two distinct questions in the first line quoted above, but they are each problematic for the same reason: the *externality* of the criterion by which the result is judged to the criterion which makes the action what it is, including any cognitive component of it. A doctor's knowledge of and ability to produce health, what makes a doctor a doctor, has essentially nothing to do with whether he or his patient will ultimately benefit from the application of his knowledge and ability. The value of the craftsman's work relative to the craft's own standards, *i.e.*, whether it is well or badly executed, bears no correlation to its goodness. Thus the doctor could know with all the certainty possible for a human mind that he has "done what he ought" according to the rules of medicine and still be none the wiser about whether his work was truly beneficial; his work may or may not fall under the scope of Critias' "doing good things", but either way this fact eludes his knowledge.[16]

That a man might be *sophron* but not know it is utterly unacceptable to Critias, so much so that he says he is willing to retract some or all of his previous statements in order to eliminate this as a possibility; for he "would almost say that this very thing, self-knowledge (τὸ γιγνώσκειν ἑαυτόν), is temperance," and that no less impressive a figure than he who dedicated the famous inscription at Delphi would agree with him in this (164c-d). Critias then announces that he will "abandon" all that was previously said in order to now convince Socrates of the truth of this definition, that *sophrosune* is self-knowledge (165b). Goodness having eluded knowledge's grasp, knowledge turns back to *itself* as mediator between itself and its object, and itself and its value, in order to fill in the gap. Knowledge is introduced into its own scope, in order, Critias hopes, to become its own foundation. This is not to "drop"

[16] What Socrates has as the implicitly normal case: that knowledge controls neither truth nor goodness. What appears here as a gap between knowledge and goodness (and therefore bars an idea of the good) must be replaced by a gap internal to the cognitive side, which gap is the Good. Not just externalism, but the externalism of what is most intimate.

the previous definition, as Van Der Ben frames it, but to marshal every means to realize it in the face of the impending return of the dilemma. It is paramount to recognize that Critias' response here is a valid, even inevitable, response to the elenctic pressure heretofore: if what ruined the other definitions was an external relation, it seems that the thing to do to recover the norm is to internalize that relation. It is not that he does not follow what has been happening, but that he does; this definition is not an overreaction (as Santas would have it), but rather in anticipation of Socrates' demands. The philosophical richness of the reflexive gambit is shown in the rapid development of expressive power in the transitional formulations (a-d) which finally transform (5) into (6). As the opening statement of this gambit, even (5) can reasonably be regarded as a first draft of (6), but this is apparently not how Socrates is counting, since he identifies (6) as Critias' third definition. The development is driven by the attempt to answer the *peri tinos* question, which now explicitly appears, and thus to save the well-foundedness of the definition: ἡ σωφροσύνη τίνος ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη, ὃ τυγχάνει ἕτερον ὂν αὐτῆς τῆς σωφροσύνης; / Of what is *sophrosune* the *episteme*, which would be different from *sophrosune* itself? (166b)

(a) ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτοῦ / knowledge of oneself (165c)

This is a hybrid expression, like the provocation "idea of the Good", composed of halves we do not know how to fit together. The top-down ethical concept of "oneself" cannot be appended directly to the bottom-up formal "knowledge/science". At least one of these concepts—self or knowledge—must leave its certainty and be refitted to play by the rules of a different game. The choice is neither neutral nor arbitrary. Since it is selfhood and not knowledge which is on the side of certainty rather than of truth, it is this concept which must be led out of itself in order to find a meaning for itself. Now, in the rule-bound contexts in which we know how to speak of knowledge, we do not know how to speak of subjects or selves, while in the thick, ethical (rather, complete) ordinary-language contexts in which self-identifications are used, the limitation of scope which makes possible scientific rules like "the knower must be other than the known" is absent.[17] In an apparently-very-different setting, we have the treatment of the same problem in the *Tractatus* in perhaps its most telling analysis—there is no relation between a person and a proposition.[18] If Critias wants to claim *episteme*, he has to translate the self into epistemic terms, which means clarifying the form of self-reference itself. This great experiment is not, as many commentators have suggested, a simple fallacy which can be pinned on the first step from *episteme heautou* to *episteme heautes*, but is rather the taking up of a task obviously of great interest to Plato, who is perhaps the first to recognize its extreme difficulty.[19]

[17] *Cf.* the question between Althusser and Lacan, between Badiou and Badiou: Is there a subject of science?

[18] I suggest reading this is in the sense of *il n'ya pas de rapport...*

[19] *Annas and the Soul Objection.* Annas (1985) notes that the Critian formulation "knowledge of itself" (*episteme heautes*) is indifferent to whether the reflective object is oneself *qua* knower or another. I have been emphasizing the importance of this neutrality throughout the reading of the *Ion*, and using it to bring that dialogue close to the *Charmides*. Now we see some additional existential significance of the neutrality as Socrates underlines the indifference of *elenchos* between self-refutation and other-refutation in order to calm Critias at the interlude 166c *ff.* as the discussion overheats and its pragmatic possibility or motivation are called into question. This reflexive interlude and reminder of neutrality occur at the threshhold of the Third Offering, and make the continuation of the discussion to its logical heights there intersubjectively and emotionally possible. But Annas describes what I take to be Plato's remarkable *progress* on the question of

(b) ἐπιστήμη ἑαυτῆς / knowledge of itself (166c)

This is an incomplete expression, transitional under analytic pressure, but by no means simply a wrong term. If there is to be a subject, that is, if there is to be a self in two places with respect to knowledge, something that knows and something that is known, then

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self-knowledge as a product of Critian overabstraction, and takes it as a shortcoming, even when its second-person use in constituting the space of philosophical conversation has just been so relevantly exhibited by Plato's Socrates, on Critias, and not by him. According to Annas, by this abstraction, "[A]ttention moves to the question of first- and second-order knowledge in general, and so to the question of whether one can have knowledge of *another's* knowledge, not just of one's own." (134) True enough, and also justified, because knowledges indexed monadically by their subjects to the detriment of their intentional objects have been shown, since the *Ion*, not to be proper objects of reflective knowledge. "The discussion of knowledge of knowledge has in fact acquired a life of its own, and come to replace the promised discussion of self-knowledge." (*Ibid.*) I would say rather that *how* that promise is fulfilled involves the transformation of the logical structure of the question under elenctic development. The dialogue is not breaking a promise to deliver a topical discourse, but fulfilling philosophy's promise to give, by dialectical ascent, nontrivial discussions that do not confine themselves to mirroring the terms and ontologies presupposed in their starting points. (The alternative to such dialectical development, taken to its logical conclusion, would be the finality of Meno's paradox of inquiry.) Annas is representative of a whole line of commentary on this point, which maintains that the "self" is lost in its logical investigation (in the Third Offering, and, it is usually implied, in any logico-mathematical investigation). On my reading, by contrast, it is only the self of soul-substance that is lost to the problematic of intentionality-reflexivity, and it is lost not by being dropped from the discussion, but by the demonstration in which its powers show themselves to be contradictory.

Nevertheless, there is no reason to suppose that this distinction was, or could have been, entirely clear to Plato himself, in the writing of the *Charmides* or across his career. Thus Annas' judicious narration of the consequences of the difficulty of the problem of self-knowledge loses none of its interest, even if it must be qualified as telling mostly a philosophical-historical story rather than a conceptually-necessary one:

> Socrates brings, in many different guises, the objection that knowledge must have a subject-matter distinct from itself. Knowledge of knowledge peters out because there is no way of interpreting it as knowledge *of* something in the way Socrates requires; and it is clear that the requirement can only be met if knowledge is conceived of as a relation between a subject and a distinct object, existing separately from the knower. This demand on knowledge, that its subject-matter exist separately from the knowing subject, is one which is very visible in the middle dialogues, where the preferred model of knowledge is mathematics and it is one of the main features of what we mean by 'platonism' as a philosophical position. The demand plays a role, though an unobtrusive one, in many of the passages where Plato establishes Forms and mathematical objects as objects of knowledge. Here we find a further reason for the demise of self-knowledge as a central concern for Plato. For the more he thinks of knowledge on the model of something like mathematics, the less he will be able to accept self-knowledge as genuinely being *knowledge*. The self is not the required kind of *distinct* object that knowledge, given this model, requires. The end of the *Charmides* (in part, for other things are going on there too) chronicles Plato's struggles to retain the notion of self-knowledge as a philosophically comprehensible one, and they are losing struggles; every attempt to explain knowledge of self as knowledge that has itself as object fades because Plato, given the way he now thinks of knowledge, can no longer even make philosophical sense of them. And as the notion of self-*knowledge* becomes problematic, it drops out of Plato's major discussions of *sophrosune** and loses its role as the basis for all the virtues. (135-136)

The argument of the *Charmides* is indeed exceptional in Plato; it does not correspond to our image of Platonism as a philosophical position. But rather than explaining it away as an artefact of inappropriate mathematicization, thinking only of the unproblematic extension of mathematical knowledge toward its horizons, we should notice its reappearance at the heart of *mathematics' own reflection, i.e.*, metamathematics, at the point (Cantor/Gödel) where the latter becomes expressible. That the inseparability of the two lines

knowledge must in turn be in two places relative to itself. *Contra* Brentano, this (and the corresponding elenctic moments in the other dialogues, at least as early as the *Ion*) would seem to be the real discovery of the *problem* of intentionality and of the for-itself. The transition is easily accomplished from the side of structure. The structural requirements for *episteme* being *episteme*—its self-sufficiency, power, and effectiveness—require the expansion of its formulation and of its scope, just as in the apparently-much-simpler *Ion*. Ion would like his knowledge to be knowledge, *i.e.*, to be something meeting structural requirements (a free ideality, in Husserl's terms), but he would also like it to be of one object only, Homer, who happens unfortunately to individuate himself by being not just a paradigmatic member of a class of objects, but also a subject who knows and fails to know. That Critias recognizes the problem is no easier in the first person case (when the knowledge is of "oneself" rather than Homer) is enormously to his credit, and places him ahead of most readers of the dialogue.[20]

(c) ...τῶν τε ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν / ...and the other knowledges (166c) and (d) ...καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσύνης / ...and non-knowledge (166e)

The structural requirements are developed, and the scope of self-knowledge proves to be ominously large (in fact, complete). Accepting that the input of *sophrosune* is knowledge *per se* does not have the effect of narrowing its domain but of expanding it beyond limit; likewise with its extension to non-knowledge. In fact knowledge of ignorance or non-knowledge (*anepistemosune*) is easily seen to be the only real advance (apart from the dubious advance of its centralization) that second-order knowledge would claim to make over first-order knowledge. It is on the ground of the form of knowledge of ignorance, whether it be a Critian power which objectifies its object, or a Socratic participation in non-knowing, that the question of the form of self-knowledge, and indeed of self-reference, will be decided.

(6) τὸ εἰδέναι ἅ τε οἶδεν καὶ ἃ μὴ οἶδεν / to know [that one knows] what one knows and [that one does not know] what one does not know (167a)

Critias' "third" attempt, by Socrates' count, with 4 and 5. The complete expression for reflexive knowledge has arrived with inclusion of the relations to other knowledges, non-knowledge, and finally both intentional objects. The dilemma of reflection can now be posed. This is the richest and most difficult part of the dialogue by far, and is treated in the next section.

(7) ἥι τὸ ἀγαθόν καὶ τὸ κακόν / [that knowledge by which are known] the good and the bad (174b)

Critias has insisted that *sophrosune*, granted by Socrates at this point in the argument

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of investigation, of the forms and of intentionality-reflexivity, proves to be robust beyond Plato's observation or power to verify is indeed the primary motivation for the Badiousian project of constructing an alternative Platonism.

*It would be interesting to attempt 1) a careful textual measurement of the dropping-out Annas observes, 2) to see whether it correlates, as one might suspect in light of the present work, with the dropping-out of *peri* constructions which Brandwood observes to be a characteristic of Plato's late style, and finally 3) whether either trend is affected by the striking return of Plato's Socrates and the problems of the Good in the *Philebus*.

[20]It is worth noting that a turning in the sense of *exception* and *exceptionality* governs Critias' wager on *episteme epistemes* and its elenctic failure. At 166b Critias insists precisely on the exceptional status of his posited knowledge of knowledge. But it turns out to be an exception *to* the structure of knowledge (well-foundedness, irreflexivity) and knowledge *of* this exception, rather than being first a knowledge (a power of judgment) and second also exceptional.

to be equivalent to omniscience, is the key to living life well. This definition responds to the reiteration of the *tinos* question at 173d as "one little thing" (σμικρὸν): "of what is the knowledge" (τίνος ἐπιστημόνως) by which we fare well and are made happy? They quickly agree it is not knowledge of "shoe-making" or "working in brass", so it can not be knowledge *simpliciter* that grants happiness, or all knowledges equally (173d-174b). They go on to reject "draught-playing" and "reckoning" and even "health", though Critias says this is closer to what he means; ultimately he volunteers that the knowledge that makes men happy is ᾗι τὸ ἀγαθόν καὶ τὸ κακόν, "[that knowledge by which are known] the good and the bad" (174b). (Note that while the natural reading is just this, the elision also compels the reading to bleed over into the indexical "that knowledge by which are *caused* the good and bad.") Socrates immediate marks this definition as circular: ὦ μιαρέ...πάλαι με περιέλκεις κύκλῳ, "Vile creature! ... you have all this time been dragging me round and round[.]" Note the pun now on the circular sense of *peri* in *peri-elkeis*—instead of telling me what it is about, providing the referent, you have been dragging me about, that is, leading me pointlessly around a circle of sense, or of nonsense, which is more likely when the aboutness relation itself goes in a circle.[21] The accusation of circularity is just the one repeated at *Republic* 505: The Good is knowledge of (knowledge of (knowledge of (knowledge of....))) the Good. Note that the thinking subject *constitutes* itself in relation to this series, by interpreting this iteration of the unary trait as depth, *i.e.,* recursion or iteration proper. With this the elenctic sequence is closed: the reflexive gambit has not evaded the *tinos* question. We have attempted to avoid the contingency or exteriority that this question indexes through the assertion of an absolute knowing, and have failed. (Compare the restatement of the pattern of elenchos at the end of the last chapter.)[22]

[21]This verb appears just one other time in the Platonic corpus, in the *Protagoras*, in the context of a related ethical problem pertaining to *episteme*, namely the problem of *akrasia*: Many, perhaps most, people feel about knowledge (*peri tes epistemes*) the same way as "about a slave, that it may be dragged about (*perielkomenes*) by any other force." (352c)

[22]Gonzalez, despite a sensitive analysis of the problem, finally asserts that while, "[i]n calculation, the object is completely external to the knowledge...this externality...is not present in the knowledge of good and evil. My knowledge of the good is itself good; in knowing the good I become good. This means that in some sense, the good is the same as the knowledge of the good" (56) This is indeed the shape of the *problem* of the Good, but I fail to see how we should accept it as a *solution* to the problem. Gonzalez is representative in this regard of a major trend of interpretation of the *Charmides*, which takes the logical examination of the dilemma to be "empty intellectualism" or "empty formal wisdom" compared to a "process" of self-examination, which is "nonpropositional". There is something to be said for the identification of the Good with a practice, especially if it is a practice of reflection. But there is also, it seems to me, a necessary formal insight that corresponds non-temporally and non-factically to this practice which must be preserved, or else we pass too quickly from the Platonic care of the self on the basis of insight to the Hellenistic care of the self as self-grounding and self-explanatory. Even if Plato persuades himself, at times, in error or in bad faith, that he has solved the problem when he has not, I do not believe that Plato would settle for anything less than a rigorous solution.

3.3 The Dilemma of Reflection (169d—171c)

3.3.1 Forms of the Dilemmatic Question

The problem I call "the dilemma of reflection" is posed by Plato's Socrates in at least three distinct variants, across texts ranging from the 'early' dialogues through the Agathology. It is helpful to arrange these in sequence from the most general (which is the most accessible to ordinary language and cares, or "most knowable to us") to the most formally-articulated and alienating version (the one "most knowable in itself"). If I am right, only at the formal extreme is a satisfactory clarification and solution of the problem possible, while mobilizing the formal solution in turn requires careful re-descent, in which the consequences of the dilemma are reconnected to the places in language charged by the original ethical-existential stakes of reflection. This double movement of recollection is, of course, characteristic of Platonic dialectic, especially the concern to trace the path back to the most general form of the inquiry when the motivation and stakes of the formal inquiry are in danger of being lost sight of rather than temporarily bracketed. The extremely-important central position of the *elenchos* in this context exemplifies its role as a mediator between the ethical and mathematical extremes of formulation; indeed, without a long tutorial in the operation of *elenchos* as a Janus-faced procedure, continually troubling existential intuitions with formal ones and *vice versa*, it is probably impossible to accustom oneself to seeing metalogic as ethics.[23] The three hypostases of the dilemma are:

[23] *Balaban and the process-content objection:* Balaban (1990) recognizes a dilemma closely related to, though finally incompatible with, the one I am proposing. (Almost uniquely, Balaban also recognizes Sartre as one of Plato's nearest available interlocutors on the question; in this, he is joined, to my knowledge, only by Kosman.) According to Balaban's refreshing thesis,

> Plato takes an anti-formalist approach to knowledge. That is, the object of self-consciousness is nullified by reduction of the process of knowing to the content of knowledge. In this regard there is a paradox in Plato's philosophy that needs to be explained. On the one hand, Plato reduces virtue to knowledge; on the other, he rejects the possibility of knowledge, or at least has serious doubts that it exists. (21)

Balaban usefully identifies as the crux of the "Hintikka-Santas controversy" (which he may coin) exactly this question of "whether there is a difference in Plato's philosophy between the function of knowledge and its object" (21). However, Balaban maintains that "Plato's definition of virtue as knowledge is a logical outcome of his denial that the cognitive relation is an aspect of knowledge" (*Ibid.*), whereas I can accept neither side of this proposed consequence. On my view, the interpretation that Plato suppresses process is implausible. If this were the case, he could have no concept of *logos* distinct from *aletheia*; the opening question of the *Sophist*, whether sophist, statesman, and philosopher are one, two, or three, which uses numerical distinctness to mark the difference of sense and reference as flawlessly as Frege ever did, could not even be asked. I suspect that Balaban is inclined to this view because he misses the dialectical alternation of Plato's demands. He concludes that because Plato recognizes the instability of internalism with respect to the object of knowledge that he does not also demand it. This mistake is interesting because it is the opposite of the usual one, equally one-sided, which takes the theory of ideas for an internalism.

Balaban's reading is interesting also because it takes seriously Plato's anti-epistemological position, historically always a minority position, perhaps represented in one form by the Skeptical Academy. *If* by knowledge one means the synthesis of the internalist and externalist norms, that is, of *logos* and *aletheia*, then it is the work of the *elenchos*, repeated at a higher level in the *Charmides*, and again in the *Theaetetus*, to show that there is no such thing. But if the point of philosophical knowledge is to disclose this duality itself, and, I might add, to remove the authority of the unified knowledge-power by which society constitutes

1. *Is self-knowledge possible?* Arguably, this is the problem of philosophy. (See Chapter 1.)

2. *Can knowledge be included/excluded from its own scope?* On my reading, this is the dilemma which Socrates operates in a typical *elenchos*. (See Chapters 1 and 2.)

3. *Does or does not a putative second-order knowledge have access to the intentional object of first-order knowledge?* Pushing the analysis to this degree of explicitness, so that the fine formal structure of the problem emerges and a rigorous solution is possible, is unique to the *Charmides*.

3.3.2 The Power of *Sophrosune* as *Episteme Epistemes*

Let us consider now the third formulation, definition 6 above. By hypothesis, *sophron* man can fly freely over the space of judgments, that is, above the two-dimensional lattice of decisions (decisions being occurrent tokens of knowledge-application); he can elect to consider, or simply encounter, one such token; finally, he can judge of the event whether or not the *episteme* in question knows the given object, that is, whether it can decide of its object, on the rational basis of a first-order knowledge-function, that it is or is not an instance of the property that this first-order *episteme* is configured to detect. Or, in the more human terms from which the Socratic-Platonic argument takes off: the operator of *sophrosune*, if it is the sort of metacognitive power that Critias claims, must be able to encounter knowledge-workers in the thick of their practice and to correctly adjudicate their judgments. This picture is, of course, the familiar one of a supervisor or overseer who has the justified power (*i.e.*, the faculty) to evaluate knowledge-work. The elenctic dilemma shows

itself as hierarchy, then there is a measure of success. So Balaban's critique is extremely valuable as against the image of a Plato for whom the "theory of ideas" would be a directly-applicable foundation for ordinary epistemology (as opposed to a local exception from the general impossibility of any epistemology), but is in danger of collapsing, for all its formal ingenuity, into an exceptionless metaphilosophical opposition of ontotheology and constructivism, in Badiou's typology. This becomes clear when the Dilemma of Sophrosune itself is taken as a theme. Balaban cannot allow that the gap disclosed by this argument is a genuine structure of the Real. Putting his finger on the crucial duality, Balaban mistakes a question of *truth* for a question of *meaning*: "Plato seems to consider only two possible *meanings* of the knowledge of knowledge: to know what is known (to know the content); or to know only that one knows or does not know." (24) Again, "He leaves no room for there being a theory or science of knowledge." (25) Not at all. What is at stake is not dis/allowing of a third meaning *a priori*, but of staging a logical experiment to determine whether the two meanings already given can be synthesized. These two alternatives correspond to two norms of a true nontrivial reflection. Making one out of many, such a reflection would compresss the first-order manifold of knowledge. Yet, it would still observe ground truth, avoiding trivialization. This is not *unthinkable* (for lack of the right term, or for lack of leaving space for it), but *impossible.* The two norms *exclude* each other's fulfillment, and present us instead with a relation to truth as incompressible, *i.e.,* that there are many ones-over-multiples, but not a one-over-all-ones-over-multiples. The impossibility of this re-presentation is what diagonalization shows in each of its settings, giving a negative answer to the question of a power of truth. Plato's Socrates is continually running experiments which have as their outcome that what one would like to posit as one whole totality of meaning keeps dividing into two, an outcome which is not preprogrammed into the dialectical experiments, and which is unintended if anything is, given their philosophical consequences. If there were a function that synthesized the two, Plato would like nothing better than to identify it with divine *nous*. But there is no such function, even if in phenomenological reflection we feel that there must be, mistaking the pull of value for an intuition of truth.

this figure to be the *Ur*-sophistical illusion—the illusion of the sophist, whether fooling himself or another, whether invested or uninvested with institutional power. But the thick ethical-political ramifications of the dissolution of this picture, to which we will turn shortly, must be bracketed at the outset, precisely in order to bring to these discussions a formal supplement—not, certainly, the uninteresting and often harmful formalization *of* ethics, but an alien gift, the gift *to* ethics of a formally-articulable insight that it, at the outset, does not acknowledge any need of or even any relation to, certainly not that need and relation which thought and desire would have to the Good.

Sophron man decides on decisions, that is, on whether or not the first-order knowers correctly decide the question. Note the ground of this power, on the Critian hypothesis: It is *because* the man possessed of *sophrosune* knows knowledge that he judges judgments. The application of his knowledge of knowledge, Critias maintains, yields decisions on decisions, just as the application of first-order knowledge functions yields decisions on objects. What concerns us in our attempt to follow the *elenchos* of Critias is the form of this hypothetical power. Is the Critian assertion that this supervisory power naturally flows from the self-application of formal investigation in fact confirmed by formal investigation? Is self-knowledge a second-order knowledge analogous to first-order knowledge with respect to its modes of participation? Critias is not alone in the history of thought between Socrates and Gödel in supposing it to be a sure thing—that if knowledge were compelled to testify about itself, it would surely affirm its own power, and also that, since the experiment is in no danger of being performable, participation in this self-affirmation of knowledge can be had for the taking. Moreover, since the only difference in form between the two terms of the analogy between first- and second- order knowledges is that the second-order function operates on an iterated dyad of first-order knowledge-function and first-order object, the Critian wager on the parallelism of first- and second-order knowledges appears promising, logically and existentially, especially in the framework of a theory of forms-ideas (*eide*) and participation (*methexis*) to which it directly appeals. If it succeeds, the lack in first-order knowledge (ordinary ignorance) is repaired at a reflective level by knowledge of ignorance, while the only way it could fail is if, in the general passage from a monadic to a dyadic argument, our whole picture of participation must change. Remarkably this turns out to be the case. Though the infinitizing power of the Dyad (*aoristos duas*) is never named in it (any more than the power of division used throughout it as the paradigm of knowledge is explicitly observed to be such), the *Charmides* may be considered to be the text in which philosophy, attempting the self-referential closure of knowledge, or the One-All, first learns instead to count to Two.[24]

The terms in which *sophron* man expresses his second-order judgments depend slightly

[24]The conventional restriction of these concepts to the context of "late" and "unwritten" theories clearly cannot be sustained by a close reading of the dialogues. On this point, see especially Hopkins. Plato likes to introduce terms of art when their *use* has already been repeatedly illustrated, *i.e.*, to give them a name once their place in argument has been well-prepared. (Or, he discovers them this way, which is just as good.) The mother of all such moves, of course, is his introduction of the Idea of the Good as something *you* have often often-heard (*pollakis akekoas*) at *Republic* 505. The absence, in the early dialogues, of the terms of art we associate with "late" Plato does not indicate a deficit, unless it be ours. However, if I correctly understand what Kahn means by the "proleptic" reading, the dialectical fugue of use and mention I appeal to here has quite a different ground than that relation among theses.

on whether we identify the first-order objects with sound or unsound knowledge-functions. The first-order knowledge function (*episteme*) in question may be taken to be intrinsically sound, *i.e.,* delivering only correct judgments. Though it corresponds perfectly to the contemporary concept of a sound algorithm, this is not an artifice imported from elsewhere and applied externally to the Platonic text—it is a hypothesis frequently entertained in the dialogues, one explicitly discussed, and one which clearly exercised their author's repeated reflection. When we want to reason about "doctors," for instance, the question immediately splits. If we are reasoning about "the doctor himself", meaning medicine itself, then perhaps by definition whatever the true doctor decides s/he decides correctly. On the other hand, if we are discussing what a materially instantiated intelligence, be it human or artificial, does, then we need a way of recognizing and accounting for errors. Then, taking the context of evaluation, as we should, as part of the system under discussion, such errors will appear formally as inconsistencies. Though deftly manipulated by sophists, the distinction itself is not sophistical.[25] Quite the contrary: transferring results illicitly from one side of the distinction to the other without the proper structural transformations in the judgment—which one is as apt to do by ignoring the distinction as by deploying it as a cynical trick—is sophistical. It may contribute to the better understanding of Plato to note that (perhaps surprisingly) the metacognitive dilemma which the *Charmides* brings to light is not eluded by allowing it to refer only to sound *epistemai*. This difference makes little difference from the proper vantage point—all of the pertinent phenomena are isomorphic under a simple relabeling—though they may suggest different psychological associations.[26] In the case in which the first-order *episteme* is sound, it will not render a decision unless it is competent to do so (*i.e.,* unless the truth of the matter can be reached by a reason which it can follow). In that case there will be, at the second order, a first case of decision, further divided into the affirmative and negative, and a second case of failure to decide. In the case in which the first-order *episteme* is unsound, *sophron* man will have to identify not failures of decision (truth-value gaps), but contradictions (truth-value gluts). In each case, the fundamental behaviors of the first-order knowledge function are having a reason which renders the object decidable (that is, commensurable in its system of measurement), or lacking a reason.[27] In each case, *sophron* man is in a position to observe, by a procedure, the identity or difference between truth and the outcome of other procedures. In each case, the crux of the matter is something that can be called "knowledge of ignorance" (*episteme anepistemosunes*). In the first case, that means *incompleteness*, in the second, *unsoundness* (or, by the aforementioned exchange of code and context, *inconsistency*).

[25] Neither, importantly, is it Eleatic.

[26] Some philosophers have been led, by a misapplication of the metalogical duality of consistency and completeness, to suppose that its inconsistency gives our thinking transcomputational powers, *i.e.*, access to a nontrivial form of completeness, as though, in place of second-order knowledge, contradiction could be globally deployed as a paradoxical supplement to knowledge, apart from its exceptional function on the diagonal. This illusion does not succeed in identifying in paradox a dual relation to inconsistency in place of incompleteness. Rather, it reinscribes the ontotheological One-All, simply approaching it from the side of the inconsistent All rather than from the side of the consistent One. But this is nothing new: the two gambits of description, that of rational theology and that of paradoxicophilic mysticism, have always collaborated as much as they have competed in the reinforcement of ontotheology.

[27] In computational terms, the two fundamental outputs of a program are not yes/no, but deciding/not-deciding.

3.3.3 Metalogical setting of the dilemma: Structural requirements, completeness, and existential contexts

The metalogical predicates (*incompleteness, inconsistency, unsoundness,* and others to come) are clearly indispensable to the correct analysis of the dilemma. Some, particularly inconsistency, make frequent appearance in the literature on Socratic method and Platonic dialectic in general, and even in that on the text of the *Charmides* which proximately concerns us, but generally piecemeal and haphazard use is made of them. The fact that they are metalogical predicates is never mentioned, so the question of their relation to first-order predicates remains obscure, as do the systematic interactions among them, *e.g.*, that when one discusses inconsistency (as the commentators do ubiquitously) one should expect to have to discuss (and indeed to have to recognize oneself as always-already discussing) that dual form of *anepistemosune*, incompleteness (which they never mention). But it is precisely such *structural requirements,* as I have called them, which Plato's Socrates is at pains to bring out in the elenctic work leading up to the dilemma, *e.g.,* that *knowledge* "of itself" will have to be knowledge of the other knowledges as well, that *knowledge* of knowledge will have also to be knowledge of ignorance, that *knowledge* of knowledge will have to interact in systematic ways with knowledge *of that* of which those knowledges are knowledge. It is always useful to consider the neglected *Ion* as a tutorial on the question of the *Charmides*, so I will repeat: that *knowledge* of Homer will have to interact in systematic ways with knowledge *of Hesiod*, and with knowledge of that *of which* Homer and Hesiod have knowledge. The structural requirements play a pivotal role in the arc of the *elenchos* governed by the *peri tinos* question, which, here and throughout the dialogues (as I have argued in previous chapters), is the coequal dual of its famous partner the *ti esti*.

Despite the formal irrelevance of the attempt of reflection to place itself voluntarily on one side or the other of the metalogical duality, this difference has a different function which seems to have gone largely unnoticed, namely to provide an elegant characterization of *existential,* or *pre-ethical*, contexts. Existential contexts are pre-ethical in that they come preloaded with questions of value; they are charged with a significance which is not merely theoretical; in them, the being of the knower as care (*Sorge,* of course, but first *epimelia*), bracketed in the ordinary exercise of knowledge, is again at stake. But they are almost never ethical in the stricter sense, in which an orientation or a saving decision, with or without a rule, points out something of the Good (including its withdrawal). Rather, to be *un*-clarified with respect to the Good is of the essence of existential situations initially and for the most part, just as it is with respect to the True. They come charged with essentially-obscure value, and the obscurity is part of their form, particularly in the necessity that operates on their subject: to decide without knowledge—without grounds, and without insight. Soldiers, lovers, justices of the peace, parents of small children, *etc.* must, or so it appears, decide not what they know, but whatever comes up on their watch. To speak Greek about it, the opposition *logos/taxis* deserves to be added to the list of the pairs in which reason encounters its others, and deserves close attention wherever it occurs. (The significance of Socrates' military service, about which he is mostly, conspicuously, silent, has to be understood in light of such a necessity of deciding what one has no grounds for deciding.) It is irresponsible to ignore whatever comes up on one's watch, and in a more fundamental sense it is impossible, neglect being one way of deciding. If I have the watch

the night you pass the checkpoint, I decide whether to let you pass. Every way I have of *not* deciding either lets you pass or tries to prevent it. But since it is also unethical to decide without knowledge, ethical situations are always-already unethical. This is the beginning of the transition from the pre-ethical or existential situation to the ethical. Minimizing this original sin of authority is one of the main reasons that it is in the moral self-interest of "legitimate" authority-holders or place-holders, even if they are ignorant of the articulation of processes of truly collective and autonomous decision-making, to open up the process of decision-making to as much knowledge as possible, knowledge lying in that multiplicity of persons which is at first represented as merely passively affected, if only in order to avoid self-criminalization. If, on the other hand, I emphasize the asymmetry between the scope of the decision and its effects, and say, "I am the decider", I have already decided wrongly. I have embraced what should only come at the limits of my capacity to resist it: deciding without knowledge. Science, by contrast, at least modern science, is characterized by not being total, by not claiming to give a theory of everything.[28] This is the real, metalogically explicable, source of its otherwise-puzzling value-neutrality (and of the violations thereof, which always come to light as one traces the material existence of scientific procedures back into these pseudo-complete social settings). Decisionisms arise by recognizing the factical imperative of being-there to decide, without being able to place it in the context of the competing dual norms of consistent knowledge and existential completeness, much less to articulate their highest relation, the conceptual experience of *incompleteness* as ethical. The closely-related standpoint of authority takes one calculative step back from decisionism: it conceals the force by which it holds the place, presenting it instead as a form of right. Systematically misrepresenting as metacognition what is actually the simple power to hold the place, its actual function is to make concealed rent-seeking behavior possible. The orientation of Critias, as we shall see, vacillates between these two forms of decisionist tyranny and an authoritarianism concerned with legitimacy, *i.e.,* rent-seeking. These problems of political economy are rooted in an ambiguity which can be metalogically explicated, nonuniquely, as pertaining to the *place*, the *Da-* of *Dasein*. The place of *Dasein*, essentially indexical and therefore essentially shifting, can not be totally identified with the extensional place that can be held, but neither can it be completely divorced from that place: a being-there which is *only* a shifter is nowhere at all, at least in the City, where persons and places are deliberately identified. How to occupy a place without participating in the mystical violence of authority, how to avoid identification with the place without thereby sliding from the philosopher's intrinsic nomadism to suicidal acquiescence in erasure. But the relation between indexical and extensional contexts, and between the semiotic functions of index and icon in judgment, is something that diagonalization first fundamentally enables us to clarify. Therefore, it is to this that we should continue to look, as the development of another line of investigation confirms that we are on the right track in projecting the hypothesis that metalogic is ethics.

[28]Lacan picks up this theme from the French epistemological tradition; it is the most important point of entry to his theorization of the subject of science.

3.3.4 The Dilemma

The account of the hypothetical powers of *sophron* man elicited stepwise from Critias by Socratic questioning fills out a familiar ideal of reflective knowledge with astonishing logical thoroughness; however the resulting faculty is contradictory *a priori*, as Plato's Socrates shows by a dilemmatic, apagogic argument closely connected to the common core and engine of the well-known diagonal theorems, *i.e.*, to diagonalization itself.[29] The question which precipitates the dilemma can be posed very simply, for the purposes of a first pass:

Question: When *sophron* man looks at the practitioner of an *episteme* in a particular case, can he open them up or not? That is to say, can he see only the practitioner and the unmodified object of judgment (so to speak from the exterior), or can he see what the practitioner sees (so to speak from the interior)?

The metaphors, particularly, the opposition *inside/outside*, are intuitive but imperfect. The view from the interior is not best conceived as the disclosure of an until-then hidden object, nor is the second object, when not in play, best thought of along the lines of Wittgenstein's "thing in the box." In fact, to the extent that it is present it may be all the more out of play.[30] What we are really asking, by referring to the point of view of the practitioner

[29]That there is a connection between what Plato's Socrates is doing here and the diagonal theorems seems first to have been explicitly noted in English by Brown (1979), in an unpublished dissertation:

> On the basis of that point it seems to be possible to construct an interesting analogy between Godel's Proof and Socrates' discussion of scientific knowledge of scientific knowledge. Socrates has shown that on the basis of scientific knowledge of scientific knowledge one can not know what one knows and what one does not know. Using the scientific knowledge which is the scientific knowledge of scientific knowledge as the axiomatic system, and the other scientific knowledge of which the first scientific knowledge is scientific knowledge as the set of theorems derivable from the axioms, "Socrates' Proof" would show that one cannot derive scientific knowledge of what one knows from scientific knowledge of scientific knowledge. This makes good sense in that one obvious way to understand the scientific knowledge which is scientific knowledge of scientific knowledge would be as the principles of any possible knowledge. (280-281)

[30]No node traversed by reflection is more inert, while claiming more power, than the configuration in which both objects are present-at-hand *next to* each other, as in the two inputs to the dyadic reflective function, in which the evaluation of the one at the other, the application of one to the other, the work of the one on the other, is imagined to follow mechanically. In formal diagonalization, this illusion is concentrated at, *e.g.*, the top left of Yanovsky's commutative diagram, the external Cartesian product of the given set with itself, presumed to have reflection as a *power*, until it is emptied of its presumption by what Sartre, like Plato, names a *katharsis*: namely *elenchos* or purifying reflection. Sartre cautions that in that eidetic of bad faith, *Being and Nothingness,* the "structure" and "motivation" of pure reflection are, in a way, excluded, while this and every other proposition of *BN* also rests solely on the possibility of a true reflection. It is the discovery of the *structure* and *motivation* of purifying reflection and the internal limitation of phenomenological bracketing which the step forward into metalogic and the step backward into Plato can provide for Sartre (the step forward its structure, the step backward its motivation). Reflection reaches its truth, which is simultaneously the appearance of a nontrivial concept of truth *per se*, by way of a purification of the original hypothesis of its own power. It is purified by discovering, in diagonalization, the necessity of its contingency, that is, of its participation in the not-knowing of the first-order knowledge-functions to which it is materially identical *in-itself* throughout, and its identity to which it is able, or rather, forced, against its intention, to discover itself *for-itself* at the one point of darkness illuminated at the diagonal.

of first-order knowledge, is not whether the second object is simply present or not, but whether, in observing the relation of concept and object, *sophron* man applies the concept to the object. Plato's Socrates emphasizes the nontriviality of the relation of application by referring continually to the *work* (*ergon*) of knowledge, by which the division (*diairesis*) of a class is accomplished according to a reason (*logos*).

Does the work of reflection involve an application of its two objects to each other, as object to concept? The reflective dilemma is articulated by following out the two, exclusive and exhaustive, alternatives given by the *no* (first horn) and the *yes* (second horn) to this question. In Plato's Greek, the difference between applying or not the first object of reflection (the first concept) to its second object (the first concept's object) is tracked by the difference between *episteme epistemes* knowing only *that* (*hoti*) its object is or is not a formally-correct bit of knowledge, *i.e.,* a knowledge-function, and knowing *what* (*ha*) the latter knows and does not know. *Both*, however, are useless**,** for the former is disastrously trivializing, compressing all knowledge to a single point, and the latter disastrously regressive, repeating verbatim the applications of concepts to objects it wishes to judge. Second-order knowledge runs aground, then, on the general incompressibility of truth, which, though it be, in one sense, the form of form, by virtue of being the form of the concept's (or form's) relation to its objects, does not iterate any farther the compression of many into one—unless it iterates it beyond usefulness (*ophelia*). Rather than supplying an idea of the idea, it shows why there is none.[31]

3.3.5 First horn: Triviality

For suppose the answer is "no"; suppose that *sophron* man is allowed only the view from the exterior. Then his art is very well-defined; it is something that could indeed be someone's job, one human's job. Unlike the powers that Critias, becoming visible as a tyrant *in nucleo* (precisely by this ascription, that is, by a metalogical mistake, and not from some destiny of character), assigns the *sophron* man, it could be the job of a mere mortal following a rule. This mortal is not ruling anything or anyone, however, and especially not ruling on or over applications of knowledge. Rather, he is a *parser*. A parser can catch syntax errors, like

[31] I build on the precedent of van der Ben, who has put the problem precisely: "The intricate 169d2-172a6 argument may, for the present purpose, be briefly summarized as follows. The hypothetical notion of a 'knowledge (A) of knowledge (B) of object (x) of B' has been critically approached in two ways—both from the point of view of A and from that of x: the latter (x) is the object of B only, not therefore of any other knowledge such as A; and the former (A) is able to recognize B merely as knowledge, but is unable to identify it as the particular knowledge it is. Therefore, a gap exists between A and x. Socrates and Critias are unable to produce an x being the object of A." (77) van der Ben's B is what I call the first object and second concept of reflective knowledge. A is the first concept, x is the second object. On this translation, van der Ben points out, rightly, that the difficulty of this part of the argument lies in the necessity and difficulty of mediating between reflective knowledge and its second object. We can add that this "gap" is associated with a difficulty in fixing the *adicity* of that mediating term—first object and second concept. Even better is that van der Ben presents this entire argument as giving the sense of "nowhere" (*oudamou*), in Socrates' conclusion that "nowhere" have we found validation for the Critian postulate of a self-knowing knowledge. Conceptualizing this hermeneutical observation, we say that the search for a reflexive or self-referential knowledge comes to focus and to founder on the need to locate a second object which is not simply *elsewhere* but radically lost, lost at once in physical and conceptual space. It is always of this object (the Good) that the *peri tinos* question is in the final instance asked.

having a different number of opening and closing parentheses if that happens to be illegal in your programming language, your syntax of knowledge. Note that the relativity of *sophron* man's decisions on this side of the dilemma to the rather arbitrary rules of a fixed formal language should not be surprising, for this is all that remains in the examination of a language which is *about nothing*. The parser can check only trivial properties to determine whether the operation under consideration is structured like a knowledge at all. Now, this ability could be useful in some cases, as we can see if we put some human flesh back on the formal bones. *Sophron* man could catch some extremely obvious cases of non-knowledge. He might, up to a point, be able to recognize very bad frauds who are proceeding according to some observably non-rational procedure, for instance, sheer memory of what they heard a doctor once say. Or he might call out a putative doctor who first reduces a diagnosis to a series of yes/no questions and then flips a coin repeatedly. "Hey, that's not science!" cries *sophron* man. But on the hypothesis that there are nontrivial mistakes caused not by doing non-science but which arise in the course of doing science or of reasoning, by *misapplication* of concepts to objects, *sophron* man will not be able to detect these, which are surely the ones we care about most. And probably we want to say, following the image of the *Theaetetus* which is strictly parallel to the *Charmides* on this point, that interesting errors, errors in good faith, for the most part do not arise from the applying non-knowledge birds where a knowledge bird is wanted, but from laying hold of another (an other) knowledge-bird which happens to be the wrong knowledge-bird for the job; that is to say, applying a real computation in the wrong way, making the wrong use of it. *Observing use*, which is surely part of the function of the Good in Plato, keeping a watch on use, requires, then, access to the second object, the object of our objectified concept. We shift to the other side of the dilemma. [32]

3.3.6 Second Horn: Regress

Suppose, then, that reflection follows the lead of first-order knowledge in applying its concept to its object. Then, instead of standing hierarchically over all of the other knowledges, and directing them as ruler, *sophrosune* is at best, while it is formally simulating an art, participating in its work, at least in all of its computational work. *Sophron* man is no longer an authority at this point, but the fellow-inquirer. A doctor checks his reasoning with another doctor, which is to say, to give it the philosophical name that seems appropriate, not the ruler but the colleague, or the one who is a friend in *logos*. Further, if *sophron* man is capable of participating in the *tekhne* he is trying to evaluate, capable of seeing the second object, seeing what and more importantly seeing *as* the doctor sees, applying the doctor's concepts once again to the division of their objects, *simulating* the doctor's calculation in the rigorous sense of *repeating* it by running the program over again, then he inherits the doctor's capacity to make the same intelligent mistakes. If your metacognitive function has universal *expressive* power, if it can see something intentionally nontrivial, which is to say, if it can shift back and forth between looking at the doctor from the outside and looking at what the doctor is looking at—and computationally all that means is being arithmetically nontrivial, for being able to do a small fragment of arithmetic puts you in this position of having to

[32] Production/use is one of the major interpretations which the duality takes in Plato. *Cf. Euthydemus,* and famously, *Phaedrus.*

balance the view from the inside and the view from the outside of knowledge without there being a meta-epistemic rule for doing so—if all of that, then your meta-decider inherits the 'power' or impotentiality (whichever you want to call it) to make the same mistakes and, even in an errorless system, like a pure formal system of arithmetic, to fall into perplexity at the same point, to be unable to decide. Opting for either horn of the dilemma, then, the examination of reflection as second-order knowledge reveals only failure, whether in the form of triviality or of regress.

3.3.7 Observations on the Dilemma

The most fundamental point to be made about this dilemma is now immediate in light of the results of the previous chapters, namely that in it the elenctic *peri tinos* or "of what?" question returns, repeating its function at a new level. *Sophron* man will not be able to determine "of what" the knowledge is which it identifies as present or absent in a given case of reflection. Thus, while the motivation of the Critian reflective gambit is precisely to escape the contingency of knowledge on what is external to thought, which the first iteration of the *peri tinos* question brought to light, by incorporating knowledge and its object into one another, this proposed synthesis of concept and object in reflection is stable only in imagination, and not in logico-mathematical investigation. The inquiry into the second object is a privileged means of disclosing this imaginary or ideological condition, and bringing it to closure. Reflection will not be able to answer the iterated *peri tinos* question about its own object (the first-order concept and first object of reflective knowledge) insofar as the latter continues to be contingent, not just for its existence but for its truth-value, on its own object (the second object). It has no doubt been Sartre (for whom the question arises in the specific context of the motivation of phenomenological reduction) who has combined the greatest clarity about the motivation of reflection with the willingness to entertain the most resolute skepticism about its results. Sartrean *conversion*, or the difference between accessory and pure reflection, operates only on the basis of the difference between these two. ("Without failure, no ethics.") To have verified this account from out of a completely unexpected quarter, unintended by all parties, lends support to the triple translation that I suggest, following Badiou, to constitute dialectic: that among 1) Socratic-Platonic *elenchos*, 2) Sartrean existential phenomenology, and 3) metalogic/metamathematics.

Next, it is important to note, in contrast with the character-driven readings to which some other instances of elenctic failure leave themselves open, that the effectiveness of *elenchos* at disclosing the essential ignorance of *sophron* man cannot be ascribed to the personal failures of this hypothetical—indeed ideal—figure.[33] Rather, what we have here is something like a hypothetical *elenchos* against the best case, an *elenchos* of the *best possible* second-

[33] But readings of *elenchos* according to which character is fate seem to make a mockery of both explicit Socratic commitments and of the practice itself. For Plato's Socrates, theory matters. The whole point of his investigations is to show that the failures which we observe from a great distance or after the fact, and reduplicate at the level of explanation as the "character" of Critias or whomever, have formal causes. This seems to me so close to the root presupposition and motivation of philosophy in the Socratic-Platonic tradition that it is fascinating that it can be set aside by interpreters.

order knower who is posited as embodying at least a maximum of knowledge, and plausibly, thereby, of divinity and authority. The essential and ineliminable function of *elenchos* is thus confirmed at the same time that it leads to substantive, though "negative", logical and ontological results, *viz.* that there cannot, in general, be such a unity of concept and object, characteristic of a maximal degree of knowledge. We thus draw very close to recognizing Socrates' theorem here on *sophrosune* as an inadvertent Socratic-Platonic anticipation of Sartre's also reflectively-disclosed thesis, that being-in-and-for-itself is a contradiction, both in this form, as well as in the form which we can now recognize, in the wake of Badiou's *Being and Event*, as the translation of this thesis into directly ontological language: that the One-All is not.

It is after and through the diagonal theorems of Cantor, Gödel, Turing, Tarski, *et al.*, and in particular by the lemma known as Rice's theorem for short, or the Rice-Myhill-Shapiro theorem, that we are able to put precise figures to the dilemma's two alternatives: the syntax checker or *parser*, and the universal machine or *simulator*. The program, here, is our instance of first-order knowledge. A program can be taken to perform a division of the given class of natural numbers that are its inputs, a division that effects the discernment of a property. The program, that is, decides some cases of an affirmative or negative judgment $P(n)$. (Some, but not necessarily all, or the question of metaknowledge would be superfluous.) To have knowledge of knowledge, in our position, is to be able to determine something about program behavior. Rice's theorem embeds an instance of the Halting Problem in the discernment of any nontrivial property of program behavior, thus reducing the Halting Problem to the problem of detection of the behavior in question, and conversely showing every nontrivial property of program behavior to be *undecidable*, on pain of deciding the corresponding instance of the halting problem. (The other direction is automatic: every problem reduces to some instance of the Halting Problem, namely the instance that corresponds to its own level of computational complexity.)[34] In Socratic-Platonic terms, what this means is that there is a strong correspondence between reflexive and pre-reflexive epistemological problematics, quite as tight as we would expect them to be, since one only states explicitly or mentions the problems that are already in play in the other, the problems that the other already *is*. In the first direction, reduction to the Halting Problem, we have as its Platonic-Socratic correlate the slide by which *sophrosune* acquires the cash value of omniscience, even if delegated omniscience. Given *sophron* man in a ruling position, everything is done according to knowledge. Socrates thus "dreams" of a society ordered according to omniscient knowledge. The first-order *tekhnai* and their practitioners effectively become the extended organs of *sophron* man, who knows through them as absolute subject in mediated relation to all the things that are. In the second direction, in Socratic-Platonic terms, we have that the detection of any semantic property, that is, the decision of any question that is legitimately *about something*

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See the final chapter for further remarks on the arithmetical hierarchy, which expresses this complexity in a remarkably simple ordering, though, of course, as a scale for measuring the complexity of mathematical truths, we know *a priori* that it cannot be effectively applied as a general method of measurement on pain of undermining itself, for the complexity of a proposition P must, in general, be less than the complexity of the proposition which is capable of determining the complexity of P. This hierarchy of ignorance is the ironic post-diagonal successor to the metaphysical equation of knowledge and self-knowledge.

other than itself, can serve as a name of the One or of truth. But the price for this intimate participation of metalogical form in all form is that our effective knowledge of even these minimally referring properties is limited to the scansion of their syntax. That is, while any nontrivial name serves as *a name of the One*, our knowledge of these unities is confined, in general to the surface, to *the One of a name.* That knowing is, on metamathematical grounds, not a survey from a position of sovereign control, but a depth of experience and an experience of depth, is the transition to ethics.

What there is globally, then, is ignorance of knowledge and ignorance, one point of which, however—showing *that* this is the case—passes over to the side of local knowledge, and even a specifically *reflexive* knowledge. It is only in the sense of this logic of exception, formalized nonparadoxically in diagonalization, that the *elenchos* accomplishes a singular instance of the reflection that it shows generally to be impossible. This is the formal solution to the problem which, in Socratic studies, presents itself either as a performative contradiction within the *Charmides*, or as a tension between the *Charmides* and Socrates' self-description of his elenctic mission in the *Apology.*

If the root of the dilemma lies in the duality of the principles of unity and multiplicity of which consistency and completeness are only a first intramathematical approximation, the site of its appearance is the other-directedness, or intentionality, of mental states, signs, *etc.* If we consider the philosopher as a concrete part of the experiment, then we refer to a problem of reflection, while if we consider this as a problem only for the philosopher, regarded as outside the system, we refer to a problem of intentionality. Any time an intentional operator, paradigmatically knowledge, attempts to survey itself as such and as a whole, a paradox arises, which is discharged only by converting the inconsistency of presupposed self-access into the incompleteness of self-exploration. As Agamben and others have noted, this problem of intentionality is rediscovered in the twentieth century as "Russell's paradox", but all that Russell is doing, explicitly and by his own admission, is drawing out the consequences of Cantor's diagonalization in order to find a way to avoid its consequences. (See Russell (1905).) In each case, it is a reflection in which basically other-referring or heterological signs or intentional states attempt to catch sight of themselves. Therefore, *contra* the readings of Tuozzo and Kahn, if, in the first part of the Third Offering (the division of relations), Socrates does not perform a division of relations in which knowledge situates itself on the reflexive or irreflexive side, this is not because the investigation has proven beyond his individual powers, or because Plato refers it to further study in the Academy (though these may both be true), but because it is impossible. Whether Plato could see this clearly is doubtful, of course. The explication of it just *is* the discovery of Cantor's diagonalization. But there is no question that the structure gets itself instantiated in Plato's writing here, as much as in the *Parmenides* (as Ryle noticed) for no other reason than that it falls immediately out of any sufficiently expressively-powerful staging of the intentional-reflexive problematic. As soon as knowledge recognizes its other-directedness, it is immersed in the diagonal problematic, at first in the form of paradox, and then, subsequently, by the discovery which purges it of inconsistency, showing how this demanded and banned self-reference can arise without presupposing itself.

Part II

Philosophical Remarks

Chapter 4

Remarks on Sartre's Pure Reflection

4.1 Aporias of Reflection

It is well-known that two reflections are distinguished in the works of Sartre's phenomenological period. *Pure reflection*, the methodological and ethical center of the works, yet always able to be indicated there only in marginal gestures,[1] would be an acknowledgment and affirmation of the condition that accessory reflection merely lives and propagates, not without confounding its own obscure intention to flight.[2] The contradiction in its own structure is simultaneously intimate enough to consign the for-itself to permanent—and meaningless—suffering, and at the same time essentially *nonlocal*, sterile of consequences for itself. Itself structured by the elsewhereness of the "phantom dyad" reflection/reflection, consciousness in the project of accessory reflection plays on the elsewhereness of its impasse in a manner comparable to the stability of omega-inconsistency in a reflexively impoverished formal language.

The problematization of reflection comprises one of Sartre's most characteristic reversals of philosophy's account of itself[3]: the aspiration to self-knowledge, unless ontologically clarified, does not necessarily represent anything like the sincere desire to get closer to oneself or closer to life that it advertises itself as, but is even primarily a flight from existence into the appropriative distance of the knowledge (subject-object) relation. Accessory reflection may logically presuppose the truth of pure reflection, and display it by way of its own flight and failure in a way recoverable by the phenomenologist—this is the wager of *Being and Nothingness*—but it does not *turn* to affirm its condition, and the paralysis of consciousness, if anything, makes the question of the position of the phenomenologist more puzzling rather than being resolved by it. That the phenomenologist could successfully transpose consciousness's relation to itself—unable either to be or to escape itself, unable (in my suggested metalogical reformulation) either to include or to exclude its intentionality from its own scope—into a different, more playable key, is no more readily grasped than that consciousness, making a pass of its impasse, should directly escape from bad faith.[4]

[1] A footnote, an interruption, a framing remark, a digression, and most characteristically, I think, an *acceleration* of logical and performative tempo.

[2] (a flight in bad faith, since flight is an intention not to know what it must know in order to intend flight)

[3] (not unrelated to Nietzsche's suspicion of the will to truth)

[4] *Being and Nothingness*, in particular, is a temporary compromise, a book split between the consciousness

If the for-itself does not initially turn to affirm its condition, this is perhaps because what to turn *toward* is fundamentally unclear. It seems that the situation of the for-itself has invalidated in advance all possible headings of conversion. Here I must made a Platonic admission that the orthodox existentialist responses of the form "Not toward any point but toward *itself*", "Not a choice of anything but a choice of *itself*", now seem to me, after a peculiar Platonic conversion, to belong to the structure of the problem. They demand and place constraints upon a solution, but they do not solve the puzzle. The puzzle, at once existentially pressing and formally rigorous (luckily, *qua* Platonist, I now no longer have to oppose these) is "What does a consciousness (or for that matter a concept) that turns toward *itself* turn *toward*?" This difficulty has a structure, and we can add to the formulation of scope just cited (intentionality can neither include nor exclude itself from its own scope) a topological formulation of *orientation*: it seems that the for-itself can turn only toward or away from itself, and that either heading is groundless. The paradox of value in the original position of the for-itself is that both acts, turning toward and turning away from itself, seem to result in two different modes of turning away from itself. The bad faith of flight and the good faith of sincerity are both in bad faith. The attempt to know consciousness in accessory reflection simultaneously brings consciousness too close, since its flux defers knowledge, and keeps it too far away, since we have, in nonpositional consciousness-(of)-self, a completely intimate relation without perspective, which is not knowledge. Accessory reflection is too ambitious and not ambitious enough for the same reason: that it attempts to combine the intimacy of consciousness with the perspective of another, a third person. Sartre thinks that the project of preconversion love tends to be a staging of accessory reflection: I want the other to confer a being on me, yet I also want to destroy that being in order to recover my freedom. Such paralyzed projects are collectively and aptly called "Hell".

The scope difficulty and the topological difficulty are almost certainly just two ways of spelling out the same problem. They can be derived with equal rigor from the radicalized (ontologized) intentionality thesis. The being of the for-itself is exhausted by its intentionality: being what it is for-itself is not a stable condition but a gesture—a lack and excess of being that consists in trying to consume and vomiting forth its reflection in succession. It is therefore never an object of knowledge for itself, though the aspiration toward this, even in the purest *phenomenological* reflection (too pure and not pure enough, as we shall see) instantiates, in its full paradoxicality, a completely real pre-intentional lack of being and desire-to-be. Illegitimately bracketing the question of value, making it into only one phenomenological field of investigation among others rather than the total structure of the field, it seems easy enough to say that consciousness is, even while being a perspectival knowledge of things, an experiential sliding and, to the second power, a stance upon itself as the immanent structure of perspective—which is not a content that can fulfill any intentional act. Yet the problem persists. Determining the relation between this "second power" of a

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of the phenomenologist and the revealed structure of bad faith, which demands that the relation of the two be clarified. Either the phenomenological reflection is one project in bad faith among others, in which case the standpoint of witnessing that subtends its claim to truth is subverted, or else a radical conversion is possible through this reflection which passes to the level of consciousness. Considerations of this sort, undermining the possibility of the neutral descriptive stance feigned in *Being and Nothingness*, necessarily link that book, by way of a clarification of the problem of pure reflection, with the ethical sequel that only ever appeared as notes and fragments.

stance or orientation, a tension or torsion in position, and the second-order consciousness of a reflection which it seems equally bad to assume (the constitution of the ego) or to deny (the inauthentic projection of values into the world in the natural attitude) permanently overextends phenomenology's powers of conceptual and expressive innovation. Thus a third schematization of aporia. We could continue, but this would seem enough to reactivate the point.

We might be tempted to dismiss these formal aporias of reflection as confusions of language, were it not that they arise there with equal inevitability. The claim that we can be acquainted, in consciousness, with something that is always falsified by becoming a theme is not intrinsically more mysterious than the claim that we can understand the meaning of "of" even though the meaning of "of" is definitely transformed, even distorted, when it is made into the subject of a proposition, as in *"Of* is a preposition." Understanding such sentences plausibly requires first accepting and then finding a way to undo or compensate for the distortion that had to be tolerated in order to call one's attention to their subject. Thus with consciousness as well. This observation departs from what *Being and Nothingness* says, but only to underline what it does—the way that its methodology fundamentally relies upon a textual performance denied at the level of the ideology of an exclusively one-way relation of foundation between consciousness and the signifier. While most phenomenologists call for going back before the advent of these problems of nested quotation, or iterated reflection, Sartre, as I read him, does something different—he accepts the provisional statement of the problems of reflection with their internal paradoxes and tries to develop a reflection *forward* to a point where the nonlocal paradoxes of the for-itself's being can become *momentarily locally fixed.* This moment of pure reflection involves both a failure of reflection as knowledge, even phenomenological knowledge, the collapse of the reflective hierarchy and the distance it presupposes, but also, inseparably, the success of reflection in the sense of establishing a new type of relation between levels of consciousness, and between consciousness and the in-itself, precisely in the collapse of iterated reflection onto the plane of existence, which is, for a moment, a plane of immanence, that is, *a flat hierarchy as such.*

Clearly difficult problems, simultaneously existential and formal, are incurred by this gambit of going forward, allowing the problems of self-reference both in prereflective and reflective consciousnesses to be posed and pushed to the point of their greatest tension. This obviously leaves the door open to the disparagement of his phenomenology *qua* phenomenology, for failing to think back before consciousness and reflection, but it is also what makes Sartre's investigations so rich a source of inspiration for a post-phenomenological reading which would recognize in them, despite his intentions, the presence, indeed the determinative presence, of a dialectical experiment of formalization. The quasi-formal structure as which a flat hierarchy can momentarily exist is not, I suggest, hopelessly contradictory or complicated, but neither is it quite obvious, or identical to the statement of the problem; it seems just complex enough to be habitually distorted by philosophical reflection that does not keep the form in mind, and to call for a single nontrivial step. Reflection is necessary in order to call attention to being-for-itself, but produces distorting effects that have to be undone in understanding-fulfilling them. It thus has the topology of a cycle, the crucial points of which are not the mythical objectifying and purely subjective extremes, but in each case the crossing of levels between the two, the entanglement between the logical levels of intentionality and self-reference that constitutes consciousness to begin with. Only a

hybridization of the schemas of the intentional vector and the reflexive loop could manage to fulfill the criteria of both intentionality and reflection, resulting in a reflection at once *true* and enacting a revealing-participation in prereflective consciousness, where either form taken naively fails. But it is not clear that this third form exists, that there is any conceivable architecture of the reflexive concept that avoids the hierarchy of metalanguages on the one hand, and the ill-founded loop of *nous* on the other. Thus the importance of the identification of the form toward which Sartre's descriptions of pure reflection point, which I suggest to be the one that is sometimes called "diagonalization."

Separating them provisionally for the sake of the understanding, we give the points of correspondence that link pure reflection to diagonalization:

1. It is a local structure emerging as a consequence of a general reflexive structure, but not intuitively predictable on its basis.

2. It bears on an ideal totality, and negates it punctually.

3. It establishes a bridge, outside the ordinary intentional arc, between an excess of intension and an excess of extension.

4. It displaces one fixed point—the fixed point of negation projected as being in-and-for-itself—and finds another: making the truth of incompleteness out of the impasse of inconsistency.

5. It hybridizes icon (knowledge) and index (existence).

6. It opens onto ontological dimensions methodologically excluded from Sartre's early phenomenological thought, due to the unavoidable function of the signifier at the heart of consciousness, thus suggesting an anomalous monism / evental materialism comparable to Davidson's / Badiou's.

7. It reverses the arrow from the two to the one, which reversal affects the structure of *value.* (The slogan here is: from two-in-order-to-be-one to one-in-order-to-be-two".)

8. It solves the riddle of pure reflection as "quasi-knowledge", which gestures to "simple presence" and the phenomenological reduction do not.

4.2 Minimal Sartre

The two logical propositions essential to a correct reading of *Being and Nothingness*:[5]

1. The identity of in-itself and for-itself is just the in-itself. $Id(es, ps) = es$.

[5]These remarks are among the products of repeated close readings of Sartre since 1995, and have been communicated in increasingly-refined forms in many settings. I am particularly grateful to Lucca Fraser, Michael Kim, Dorothea Olkowski, and Graham Priest for more recent conversations touching on one or several of the propositions included here.

2. The relation of in-itself and for-itself is just the for-itself. $Rel(es, ps) = ps$.[6]

Observations:

1. It takes these two propositions to say positively what one says negatively in a single proposition: *that the in-itself-for-itself is a contradiction.*[7]

2. These propositions do not depend on adopting a standard Sartrean model of in-itself and for-itself, but apply in the setting of any sufficiently-fundamental duality in which intentionality plays a role.[8] (Thus their usefulness and potential interest beyond Sartre studies.)

3. The for-itself's *problem*, at the level of desire/value, is likewise twofold. It wants its identity to lie inside itself as for-itself and not (just) as in-itself. Again, it wants to establish, in reflection, a mediating relation between itself and the in-itself, while it already *is* its own relation to the in-itself (and this is all the relation it will ever have). These failed internalizations and externalizations, respectively, are not two distinct doomed desires, but two ways of developing, in the consistent setting of theory, the for-itself's contradictory desire to be in-itself-for-itself.

4. Because of his adherence to the standard model (his own), Sartre is unable consistently to articulate the central concept of his own system, pure/purifying reflection.[9] But on the nonstandard model which brings together Socratic-Platonic cognitivism with Sartrean detotalization, purifying reflection is the process by which desire *is* transformed by metalogical duality to the extent that it *learns* how so to be transformed.

[6] [L]e pour-soi et l'en-soi sont réunis par une liaison synthétique qui n'est autre que le pour-soi lui-même. (*EN* 665, "En-soi et pour soi : aperçus métaphysiques". Barnes: [T]he for-itself and the In-itself are reunited by a synthetic connection which is nothing other than the For-itself itself.")

[7] This impossibility claim is the organizing thesis of the *a priori* atheological dialectic of *Being and Nothingness*, but no one, including Sartre, has stated in a satisfactory way what precisely makes the in-itself-for-itself contradictory. In fact, I suggest, the in-itself-for-itself turns out to be one of the characteristic totalities, in which negation has a fixed point, which stand as the hypothesis for *reductio* in diagonal arguments. The two logical rules given above are indispensable to the presentation of this isomorphism, and to that of the corresponding one between pure reflection and diagonalization. Please note I do not at all imply that philosophical progress is only made in the positive assertions. Quite the contrary, the philosophical project I call "negative foundations" is premised on the idea that, just as with Sartre's thesis, the most significant philosophical truths are negative truths. The pair of positive, dual, propositions helps us see how to put the negative insight to *use*, not to replace it.

[8] In the methodology of *Being and Nothingness*, the in-itself and for-itself, while not actually identified with matter and consciousness, have a tendency to drift in that direction, and these, as has often been observed, may not be sufficiently-developed categories to do the work Sartre expects of them, especially at points where signification, the body, relations inside the in-itself, *etc.* come into play. And, of course, formal considerations are explicitly avoided in *Being and Nothingness*—yet with a systematicity and conceptual energy that causes them to be legibly inscribed on the underside, as it were, of each phenomenological assay.

[9] Among the acknowledged consequences of this is a lack of determinacy concerning the fate of the ideal of the in-itself-for-itself in a purifying reflection: is this contradiction structurally-inevitable, overcome, replaced, bracketed, *etc.*? Each of these interpretations is defended in the secondary literature, but, on my view, one cannot make progress on this point without observing the formal distinction between the *locally-affirmative* and *globally-negative* functions of the diagonal witness to contradiction.

4.3 The Argument for Negative Foundations

To fill out the concept of pure reflection and its indexicality, we need to begin disambiguating the concepts of "witness" already deployed above. The first point to be emphasized is that, *contra* Priest and others, I am not embracing paradox or dialetheism, so when I say that X is a witness to the proposition "P is contradictory", and deploy this syntax in discussing the relation of the event of pure reflection to the ontological thesis that the in-itself-for-itself is a contradiction, I mean first of all that it negates that ideal. It does not paradoxically both-negate-and-affirm it, or show it to be contradictory-but-assertable, or anything of that sort. At this point, rather, the spell is broken, even if we do not know how (yet) to put the breaking of the spell to use, or to say "positively" what is there negatively shown.

To the extent, though, that the ideal shown to be contradictory seems to be an inevitable posit of reason, we have to look more closely at what is being affirmed and what is being negated. For one thing, there is nothing contradictory about reason's having to posit a *hypothesis* which falls to *reductio*. In fact, we can frame an argument (for reference, call it the "Argument for Negative Foundations") that any *single* (true) genuinely ontological proposition has to be negative in precisely this way. It has to have the form, "X does not exist" (where X is some name for the Absolute). Why? Because meaning is differential. The only way to provide a characterization is by contrast, by drawing a distinction, and with what can Being be contrasted? Only with what essentially does not exist.

The ancients were therefore by no means mistaken to maintain that a characterization of being must proceed by way of reference to a perfect being; they simply mistook the sign, taking for theology what is properly atheology. This is why it is valid for Sartre to maintain the structural, ontological importance of the nonexistence of God, despite the apparently reactive position that it seems, to the friends of some supposedly-pure affirmation, to leave him in, and why the corresponding post-Cantorian form of the same proposition occurs at the head or heart of each of Badiou's major works.

The changed relation to ontotheology makes it clear at what point the solution to the problems of reason's dissatisfaction and limits in negative foundations is non-Heideggerian. Neither is it Kantian, because the ontological question is neither illicit nor paradoxical. Finally, of course, it is not Hegelian, since the Hegelian synthesis is precisely what is negated.

4.4 Pure Reflection and Negative Foundations

The dilemma of reflection takes multiple forms even in *Being and Nothingness*, but one of them especially exercises Sartre's *methodological* attention. One need not put the dilemma of reflection in this way, but it is natural for Sartre, thinking on a vector that passes from Descartes to Bergson, to put it like this: Is the *Cogito*, which is supposed to deliver certain (and true) self-knowledge, instantaneous or not, given that the ipseity aimed at in reflection, my stream of consciousness, is temporally extended? We may note that this is a way of asking whether the *Cogito* is one or multiple, in the context of the general temporal and empirical biases of post-Kantian philosophy, extending into phenomenology. The question is dilemmatic because either outcome turns out badly, both from a methodological perspective, and what for Sartre amounts to the same (and has attracted more attention from readers

of *Being and Nothingness*) from a concrete existential perspective. If the *Cogito* is instantaneous, there's a lack of shared being with the thing known. And if, as the dialectician has reason to believe, the principle like-knows-like can only be deferred from activation for a finite number of steps of argumentation, then we suspect that whatever a timeless *Cogito* succeeds in knowing is itself some timeless proposition, ideal object, or generic image of consciousness, but not the real thing, this very consciousness. But if the *Cogito* is itself temporal, woven into the same temporal fabric as its referent, loss of certainty results. A knowledge that has to be synthesized across time looks to Sartre like empirical probability, not rational certainty, and what is for Sartre problematically the same thing,[10] whatever unfolds itself in adumbrations (*Abschattungen*) belongs to the in-itself anyway. So if the *Cogito* is instantaneous, we have a lack on the side of being and truth, while if it is extended, we have a lack on the side of knowledge and certainty. To view the dialectic of in-itself and for-itself as driven and focused by an attempt to overcome the duality of truth and certainty certainly underlines the extent to which Hegel's logic is operating in *Being and Nothingness* even where it is explicitly refused; and is useful for seeing that the dilemma of reflection drives Hegel's dialectic: Hegel is also (already) a negative Cartesian in that, at least in the *Phenomenology*, the *Cogito* functions as the engine of the negative. The difference between Hegel's negative Cartesianism and Sartre's, of course, lies in the status of the projected synthesis, the unity of substance and subject or the drive toward the in-itself-for-itself. Sartre, of course, infinitizes Hegel's reinterpretation of the *Cogito* as anti-substance by positing that the point of synthesis is not only not-actual but is irredeemably contradictory, and therefore must, in some way, be traversed in order to escape from the theological fantasy.

But we can gain a still-more-complete contextualization by noting that the dilemma provides a natural positioning of Sartre relative not only to Hegel but to Plato. To put it in something like the language of the *Parmenides*, suppose that the multiple (or a multiple) needs to have self-knowledge. Will the knower be the one or the multiple? If it's the one, it fails because it's not *self*-knowledge but *other*-knowledge, knowledge of what is unlike. To be self-knowledge, then, it has to be the multiple that knows the multiple; but the self-knowing then lacks the necessary unity of knowledge. It seems that self-knowledge fails either on the side of multiple-being or on the side of the one of knowledge.

Note that the problem of the relation of meaning and extension is the problem of truth itself. To say that a proposition is true is to say that it is true *somewhere*. This is not just me. It's the intrinsically topological character of model theory that speaks here. (The following, for instance, is a perfectly-good question of mathematical ontology: Is it the case that whatever is true is true on some open interval? On some closed interval? *etc.*) Model theory is always finally topological. The question is always, starting from the trivial model of a set of propositions (*i.e.,* first-order logic), what folds, tears, collapses, are possible that change not the propositional "meaning" but the global *sense*? The topological problem of the *Cogito*, likewise, lies in the impasse between the pointlikeness of certainty and the extension necessary to accomplish a reflection in and on the stream of consciousness. Whether you call it self-consciousness, self-knowledge, or self-reference, the same topological problem is posed: the formal punctuality of truth and the lived extendedness of reflexivity contradict, so that

[10]Problematically because it equates ideal and real objects too quickly, and because it calls the question of Sartre's simultaneous appeal to and neglect of multiplicity in the in-itself.

it seems that self-knowledge is impossible, and with it, an intelligible relation between form and existence.

Two general lines of inadequate solution are immediately recognizable. 1) One may assert that the duality can be overcome, as a concrete universal whose form is that of the in-itself-for-itself, or consistency + completeness. 2) One may assert that the duality is internal to the for-itself. (Phenomenologically-speaking, this is to contrast intentionality and its object *within the intentional setting*, and to ignore the question of the *being* of intentionality.) Both of these amount to forms of idealism. In the first case, consciousness asserts its identity with what opposes it, while in the second, it asserts that the latter does not exist. In addition, 3) I rule out solutions in which the bulk of the work is done by a change of terminology: self-knowledge and self-consciousness are, for instance, certainly different in the first person, but it simply does not follow that a solution to the problem is arrived at by drawing this distinction between a knowledge that I can represent reflectively, and a reflection which I am; the fundamental unclarity of self-reference persists.

The solution I propose will appear, at least to phenomenologists, like a formalist trick. It would have seemed that way to Sartre, which is why, I think, he resists putting it this clearly. In a way it *is* a formal trick, but disappointment at this should be bracketed if it can be shown that it is precisely the trick needed here: not merely an appeal to life to solve all formal problems, but a genuine relation of form and life, explicable from both sides. A certain kind of truth—recognition of a contradiction—seems uniquely to transcend the requirements of localization. (As I argue in more detail elsewhere, this is, on reflection, both obvious and coherent with the general localization of truth: If what exists exists locally, the only trans-local truth is negative, pertaining to what intrinsically does not exist.) The absolutely negative, in this sense, can be true not just at a point or on a region, but *everywhere*, without becoming thereby extended and positionally relative. To begin from a mathematical example: that "the greatest prime number" is a contradiction is true. True where? True throughout the model, true everywhere. Each term of the model is conditioned, and interestingly so, by not being it. That the nonexistence is *interesting*, even if, in this first example, modestly so, is crucial, for the suspicion naturally arises that with negative truths one is dealing with a banal series of the sort, "Whatever exists is not a triangular circle ... is not a square circle ... is not a pentagonal circle..."—incontestable truths on the cheap, and all completely irrelevant. Can a ubiquitous contradiction also be *significant*? It can—here we are essentially instructed by Sartre's phenomenology—at least if the structure it shows to be contradictory is that of *value*, also known as the in-itself-for-itself, God, the perfect, or, on my metalogical interpretation, the synthesis of consistency and completeness. If it is this structure which is shown to be contradictory, then the truth of this both obtains everywhere and is (unlike the various trivial contradictions) also of the highest significance for existence.

4.5 Was There Ever a Semiotic Triad? From Triadic to Tetradic Dialectic

> The appearance of pure reflection constitutes another type of existence in which the project as pure existence, whose dimension is nonthetic consciousness (of) self, is at the same time thematized and called into question within the detotalized

> reflected/reflecting unity... The modifications brought about by nonaccessory reflection (which is not a form of contemplation but is itself a project) are the following: A new, "authentic," way of being oneself and for oneself, which transcends the dialectic of sincerity and bad faith. *This way of being has four terms this time: reflected (reflection/reflecting), reflective ([reflection]/reflecting).*[*Cette manière d'être est à quatre termes cette fois: réfléchi (reflet-reflétant), réflexif (reflet-reflétant).*] [11]

Sartre's pronouncement in the *Cahiers* has drawn attention for its affirmation of a new existential possibility, but for me, the status of this text as the central proposition of Sartre's theory of pure reflection rests not on the "new authentic way of being oneself", which is sheer advertising, but on the formal shift in the *adicity* of reflection. Here, Sartre announces that the possibility of pure reflection rests on the supplanting of the triadic dialectic of lack by a tetradic dialectic that redoubles and repeats the "phantom dyad" of the for-itself. What formal effects does this revision have, and given that the cited lines (misrendered in the Chicago translation of the *Cahiers,* distorting the fourfold count and emended here) comprise the *entire discussion* of the change in adicity between accessory and pure reflection found anywhere (to my knowledge) in Sartre's corpus, what formal background can be brought to assist their intelligibility?

The question of a formal dialectic and dialectic of formalization has raised itself in the development of the problematic of pure reflection. It has demanded at a phenomenological and ethical level, the establishment of a new dialectic that is no longer triadic, *i.e.*, in which reflection pushes through the ideal of self-recovery or value, and opens on an unforeseen relation to itself and existence. We have shown that diagonalization suggests that this dialectic is formally inscribable, and that it depends on the function of the signifier. My closing question is therefore posed upon an only-apparently abrupt change of ground. Having conceded so much to the symbolic, the logic of a pure reflection demands, at the end, that a critical question be directed, on behalf of Sartre, Plato, and Badiou, toward the friends of the triad, to Hegel, Peirce, Husserl, and Lacan (and Badiou again!): *Was there ever a semiotic—or dialectical—triad?*

Peirce's insistence that he (perhaps he alone) had mastered the form of counting proper to semiotics, mathematics, philosophy, that it finally went, for all its internal complexity, *one, two, three*: was all of this perhaps grounded by the seductions of internal coherence and lack of an intuitive alternative? Specifically, we must ask whether there was ever a token. Is the token a third proper form of signification on the level of the icon and the index, or is it simply the name for an inert signifier as such, uncoupled from the circuits of signification? The stakes of the question include the very existence of the symbolic as such!

What alternative is there? In particular what alternative to Peirce's brilliant analysis could make another sense of his examples? Well, what if the tetrad precedes the triad? What if there were first these two, icon and index, and then another two, the same and the other? And what if, as has happened before, the place of the other turned out to be non-negligible? Suppose accordingly that the illusion of a third kind materializes from the transparency of the same and the opacity of the other. On this hypothesis there would be

[11] *Notebooks for an Ethics* 474-4. Emphasis added, translation revised.

no token *per se*, but the function of the token would be that of the Other: the icon-for-the-index (a constitutively excluded limit point) conflated with the index-for-the-icon (likewise). Something, indeed, happens if we actually throw these points of dysfunction together at the highest level of abstraction, if we say that the Other is, in a way, selfsame, and try to determine what that way is. (*E.g.*, to avoid the parenthetical "likewise" of the previous line but one would already have been pedantic and unhelpful.) But it seems possible to imagine this conflation, the selfsameness of the Other, as the linchpin of the "perfect system of logical notation" (Peirce) or Absolute knowing (Hegel), only if we keep from trying it out and observing that its function is dysfunction, its product the death of meaning. Does the motivated boldness of the imagination—its imaginary boldness—consist, upon raising the dangerous question of the meaning of "meaning", in refraining from actually taking the last step of an *experimentum* of semiotic breakdown in order to keep imagining transcendence as synthesis? What local evidence could persuade us to cultivate that global suspicion? If under analytic pressure the signifier on the one hand and "meaning" on the other keep splitting, not into a coordinated pair consisting of icon and index, but into a pair consisting of one *or* the other paired with a badly-infinite, dysfunctional remainder.

In this story of doubling, to speak a little after the style of John Horton Conway, the one occurs "on day one", the two on day two, the four on day *three*, and the three only on day *four*, by limitation and conflation, when the Other is mistaken for a term of the System. This is not to say that such ambiguity, the attempted binding of the Other into a term, is never productive; indeed, it seems almost to institute and perpetuate (to produce) a myth of production and to cover over what in the system cannot, at the level of truth, even function, much less signify, or what is finally the same thing for the pragmatist, produce. System: "productive" ambiguity, ambiguity of production. But in this alternative genealogy of the triad, we can begin to see the basis for that same sudden suspicion of triads which separates Plato from Aristotle, Sartre from Husserl and Hegel, and both from the System. The common thread which holds together Plato and Sartre, and which has made Badiou's work possible, is thus their recovery of dyadic (or tetradic, but never triadic) dialectic.

4.6 The step back and the step in: the adicity of value

The experience of value is, in general, an instance of mystification. The Japanese mask *is* terrifying. Which means that it has a certain relation to me which does not count, for me, *as* a relation, and instead seems to inhere in the thing as a magical predicate. At the same time I am aware, obscurely, that the terror is *not* a property of the thing, and breaking the spell remains always possible, and in a way cognitively, and even morally, imperative. The point is deeply related to Sartre's theory of emotions, which figures among his best work, but it is also apart of his nascent logic of conversion, and so poses fundamental problems for any existential ethics. For if this is the general form of value, it is impossible for it to be reflectively affirmed. The sheepdog also does not know that it is simply a herding animal, bred to be so for reasons that are in no way its own. Rather, it experiences the sheep, meaningfully, we suspect, as there-in-order-to-be-herded. As long as this delusion remains

the basis of the other's project, there is something lovable, if pathetic, about it. Our vision of it is as something contingent, an extreme form of guarding the contingency of the Other exemplified in the *Cahiers* by the love of the Other's body. The solution given there is surely a necessary part of the story: affirmation of the other's freedom through her project. But this does not suffice to solve the problem, any more than the for itself "taking its own freedom as an end" solves the problem of indeterminate content. Like Critian reflection, these finally attempt self-reference by force, without solving the puzzle of its formal possibility.

The problem of the relation between the step back of the reduction and the step in of commitment is never fully overcome in Sartre, especially not by the humanist trope of *conferring value*. Once seen, these forms of life can only be the object of disillusioned compassion. The attempt to enter into meaning-constituting activities voluntarily is surely part of the return of religiosity and the end of post modernity, and is surely in bad faith, from a Sartrean point of view, if anything is. Formally, these solutions rest on obscurity involving adicity: one asserts, by force of passion, that what is simply the two of a relation is somehow the one of value.

Up to this point, truth and value are simply inversely proportioned. The life of bad faith is played out at this level. What is discovered in diagonalization is an unexpected point of inflection in this correlation, which complicates it, and begins to reverse it. Here, we have a truth which takes nihilism to the extreme, in the sense of the undoing of the correlation between mind and world. And one which relies on no metaphysical tricks involving self-reference. (The slogan: "There is no self-reference in diagonalization.") Diagonalization does not force a unity of two into one. Rather, it relies on a *point of intersection* (*cf.* Merleau-Ponty's fold, the Lacanian *point de capiton*) to indicate how it is possible rationally to think a new relation between relation and nonrelation, between, that is, a monadic and dyadic function. It may not reach so far as the "reenchantment of the world", for the world is something surpassed in it. But there is something, exceptionally, other than horror in this surpassing. A participatory truth. An aspectual truth, in which a minimum of perspective and subjectivity, just enough for a joke, for ambiguity, *etc.*, are suddenly requisitioned from out of the heart of pure mathematics, in order to rise from the algorithm to truth. Incredibly minimal—not a promise of happiness, not a meaning of life, simply a requisitioning of life, for a moment, in its full complexity, including that of consciousness, for the production of truth. Perhaps no more in itself than a momentary alleviation of the pure horror of existence. Yet this grace is surely the work of the Good if anything is.

Chapter 5

Remarks on Metamathematical Dialectic

5.1 Socratic *Elenchos* and Diagonalization: Plato/Frege

One might justifiably ask what all of this textual work on the Socratic *elenchos* really has to do with diagonalization. Here is a brief answer, taking Frege, somewhat contingently, as the middle term.[1]

In the early chapters of this work, I have assembled evidence for the thesis that the *ti esti* and *peri tinos* questions are

1. equally fundamental (*not* subordinated), and
2. distinct from each other (*not* identical), but also
3. systematically connected (*not* separable)

in the pattern of questioning that has come to be known as the Socratic *elenchos.*

It is the side of difference that turns out to need the most emphasis at the outset, given the current state of "Socratic Studies", so I have been working first of all to show that these inseparably-interrelated questions are intractably different, in that they resist subordination to each other and assimilation to uniform treatment, instead defining a polarized structure in their singular relation. Because this relation, as it holds the two questions simultaneously together and apart, is articulated in terms of some fundamental *negations*, I think it is apt to refer to it as *duality*, but the point of this note is not to justify that identification, which involves various interpretive details. What follows, though, if the demonstration (1-3 above) is successful?

1. At minimum, it reconfigures or replaces received understandings of the *elenchos*, and puts "Socratic studies" on a philosophically interesting foundation, perhaps for the first time. I intend to score some scholarly points here, but they're preliminary to my main point.

2. If the two questions really are equally fundamental and distinct operators of the *elenchos*, this fact indicates a deep appreciation of the difference in logical form between, as

[1]The choice of Frege in this note provides one (particularly simple) way of spelling out the connection, but Frege is far from the only essential node through which to factor the arrow from Socrates to diagonalization. Equally imperative connections can be made through Hegel, Peirce, and Heidegger, even before arriving at a more explicit consciousness of the relations with Lacan and Badiou.

we might say, concept and object, or sense and reference[2]—whose first formulation is usually attributed to Frege, particularly in the Anglophone analytic literature. In notable contrast, Frege himself—a real philosopher—credits Plato with an understanding of the difference,[3] though not, of course, with his own contribution—the invention of a formal notation for tracking it.[4] So a second, still-scholarly, point is to hyperlink ancient and contemporary logical reflection by recovering and amplifying Frege's acknowledgment against the historical forgetfulness of Frege's heirs; to fill out the case for Plato's appreciation of the difference more thoroughly than would be possible solely on the basis of Frege's offhanded remark. (In fact it is the other way round: Frege's acknowledgment will not strike a reader as particularly significant who has not learned to see the difference operating not only in a brief exchange in the *Hippias Major*, but in each instance of *elenchos*.) But again it's possible to go further. A "Plato anticipates Frege" historical thesis, though probably offensively radical to historians of philosophy, and possibly consequential for narratives about philosophical progress, is not my central philosophical point either.[5]

[2]Of course, these are not simply "the same" difference, but the very articulation of the difference between these differences involves us in problems that point back to the *elenchos* and forward toward diagonalization. The sense/reference difference, one says, is drawn with respect to a concept, while the concept/object difference clearly isn't. Except that both sides of this distinction are unstable. On the concept/object side, one has Frege's paradox by which it is impossible to mention a concept at all, so that "concept" seems to be the worst possible name, precisely because it is a name. The concept/object distinction thus proves to be only a distinction on the side of the object, and not one that succeeds in indicating the concept. The difference, then, is not external to the concept. Is it then internal? No, for the sense/reference scheme envisaged relies on the correspondence schema of Basic Law V: the internal claim to distinguish sense from reference dissimulates a vicious circle properly called ideological, that is, the distinction of sense and reference proves to be only a distinction on the side of the concept, which does not succeed in indicating the object. It would not be too much to say that the gathering of this infinitely bifurcating difference between object and concept into a single univocal difference is the project of systematic philosophy. The post-systematic alternative is that the referent, taken not as corresponding to but as subverting and generating sense at the diagonal, is more real than the internal object called "external".

[3]Frege, [Notes for Ludwig Darmstaedter], written, as Beaney notes, "seventeen years after the emergence of the contradiction that undermined Frege's logicism". *The Frege Reader* 362 [273]

[4]The latter is Frege's own modest conception of his aim and primary contribution to philosophy. Plato's inscription of this duality is, I will argue, not formal in Frege's sense but metalogical, which involves throwing mathemes into direct contact with the semantically and pragmatically rich language latent in the "ordinary" human situations from which philosophy arises.

[5]The root of this scandal seems to me to be the implied mathematics of the professional historians' approach to history. Historians appear to be professionalized to distrust grand narratives, and to adopt the apparent alternative, *viz.* to use unmodified linear space and time as a metric of relatedness. On such a linear scale, the Socratic *elenchos* and diagonalization are distant. But it is a *logarithmic* scale that is perhaps most appropriate for studying certain developments of interest to philosophy. That is, historians' justified refusal of metanarratives that claim to give theories of everything can blind them to structures that are not *total* but simply *large*, particular processes (now sometimes called "big-historical") that might develop according to an *exponential* law. On a logarithmically scaled axis analogous to the one on which we might most appropriately graph fundamental developments in computational capacity (one, say, on which the emergence of language, writing, printing, the integrated circuit, and the internet are successive clicks) Plato lies, I suggest, just a click away from diagonalization. We can understand the interval of that click, in which the history of western philosophy is encompassed, neither as progress ("Plato anticipates Frege") nor as a succession of incomparable systems ("Plato's world *vs.* Frege's world")—both of which flatter

3. Rather my point is to learn from Plato's appreciation of the difference in form between these questions (the duality, the first instance of the thought of the Two in philosophy)—not as a stepping-stone to Frege, but as the way to an alternative, perhaps a radical alternative. If I am right, Plato appreciates some aspects of the duality *more* deeply than Frege does, and appreciates that it sets philosophy its proper problem—to conduct the only experiment that has ever been properly its own (call it the experiment of the Absolute, if you like, or simply that of Truth), namely, to see to what extent it is possible for concept and object to *correspond*. Significantly, Plato seems aware of the difficulty of the problem *before* attempting to solve it, while Frege gives us his solution first in the form of Basic Law V, the schema for the correspondence *a priori* of intensions and extensions. He never recovers philosophically from the discovery of the problem, the discovery that the scheme, rather than being an empty but sovereign logico-grammatical law, was a falsifiable thesis making a claim upon the Real. (One that the Real rejected, though in its refusal the Real is elicited in truth beyond Frege's imagination or desire; in this Frege's greatness in failure recapitulates that of the early Pythagoreans.) The true nature of the scheme is made apparent only in its simple but nontrivial refutation. This is Cantor's diagonalization, which reaches Frege in the new form articulated by Russell—his "paradox", or more correctly the theorem, known to Cantor, that there is no set of all sets. For Frege, the failure of the correspondence is the failure of his project, and of his vision of philosophy, and Russell in turn will not escape the experience of wanting to plug the hole in the system, only to fail on the side of completeness where Frege failed on that of consistency. Plato too, of course, wants the correspondence to work out, wants the one-all of cosmic harmony to obtain "as far as possible".[6] Those who have considered Plato the font of ontotheological thinking are not simply wrong or crazy; the desire is there in him, as it is in everyone.[7] But while nearly all philosophers who follow him in the West will cheat, appealing to his authority or to that of Christianity, Plato will (at least) let the problem of the duality be as hard as it is, certainly harder than Hegel admits, perhaps even harder than Frege or Heidegger allows it to be.[8] He—practically alone

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the human scale of the generations, be it as an iterative accumulation or as sovereign difference, the equally humanist myths of progress and of "incommensurable" worldviews—but only as the link between question and answer. The interval is what joins, by virtue of its formally verifiable truth and not of history in either of these ordinary senses, the Platonic question to what we can now recognize as its proper, Cantorian, answer. Complicating matters, the refutation of modern philosophy at diagonalization, the inauguration of the technological age, has been late in coming to philosophical self-consciousness. This is the standpoint from which the curious ambivalences of twentieth-century philosophy, and its obscure but obsessive awareness of a closure of metaphysics, become intelligible.

[6]The qualification is important, not only in the *Timaeus*.

[7] I follow Sartre here: desire is, prereflectively, desire of *being-in-itself-for-itself* , the synthesis of lacking and lacked.

[8]Plato wants ontotheology to work—in the sense that he *thinks* he wants this. (The limits of this substitution are the limits of the personality/ego.) This is normal. But it is exceptional that Plato also knows that what philosophy wants is *never* simply identical to what it thinks it wants, any more than these are identical in any other human activity. (In this context he repeatedly takes up the Pythagorean injunction against petitionary prayer, developing it into a theorem.) Plato, then, is reflectively interested in the difference between the truth of desire and its self-representation—and so he does not cheat, most of the time, in order to make his own (ontotheological) desire work out. The experience of the precise expression, and thus immanent failure and self-refutation of

up to Sartre, Bataille and Lacan—makes a true experiment of dialectic, *i.e.*, asks a question to which the answer has not been determined in advance, despite the clear evidence of his desire.[9,10]

Everyone knows what Plato lets himself desire the answer to be; what's under-appreciated is his writing of the question. Where his successors will allow the presupposition of correspondence to guide in advance what can be expressed, experienced, and experimented philosophically, Plato achieves (at least) a staging of the problem in its own proper expressive complexity. How much complexity is that? As little as necessary, quite little mathematically, but just enough, for it is apparently as difficult as the dialogues themselves to force that little bit of formal difference into reflective awareness in philosophical contexts recognizably relevant to human beings. To have inscribed this little lower bound on the complexity of the problem is a great achievement—it is enough to make Platonic dialectic cross the threshold of nontriviality. Accordingly, Plato's questioning is not simply an anticipation of what lies beyond the limits of the correspondence of concept and object, *i.e.*, diagonalization, but also the best *model* of its existential and ethical significance available to us, for it shows the roots in ordinary human cares out of which the question grows to which diagonalization truly and recognizably responds, and in this way is more closely related to it than all the philosophical "interpretations" of diagonalization that frame it with concepts whose significance is tied to their origin in the interval between Plato and Cantor, the interval of fantasy between the question and its truth. So the point is not merely, "Plato anticipates diagonalization" but,

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ontotheology which can be observed in his dialectic makes possible a much more radical departure from ontotheology than that *transposition* of it (into Nature, History, or Spirit) found in modern, apparently secular, thought. The elenctic difference, in contrast particularly with Aristotelian logic, contains that minimum expressive power necessary to carry through with the experiment honestly, and the logical expressiveness of this writing has such a force that the consequences exceed their author's desire and get themselves written simply because they follow, and show not what was imagined and wanted (the perfect) but something *better than the perfect,* which we might rightly call *the form of the good*.

[9]Philosophy transforms desire, even its own, by crossing the prereflective relation to value with a second relation to truth. Truth is not automatically or in every instance desirable. Truth is even first an object of anxiety, not of desire; so this crossing, rather than naively presupposing that "value of truth" to which Nietzsche was right to object, introduces unbearable torsion into the subject as its anxiety and the desire first determined as flight are forced into interaction. Here *beauty* and *form* play essential roles in the dehumanization of the subject, the triumph of desire over fear, that need to be clarified. In Plato's case, it is certainly fidelity to the capture of desire by the Socratic event that gives thought this ability (not automatic but rare and as evanescent as it is transformative) *to prefer truth, for a moment, even to what it prefers*.

[10]Of course, Plato has difficulties about self-reference that he has not overcome (and he freely says so). Yet, the work of the dialogues provides the difficulties themselves with models that are lost on the moderns, for whom the difficult is simply the name of an obstacle, and not the description of something true, perhaps even of what is most true for thinking. The result of this difference is that for us, after diagonalization has become explicit, Platonic thought still presents a great opportunity. It is structured by the difficulties themselves as much as by dated efforts to overcome them. It can be read as a welcoming of diagonalization. This is even its ethics of writing, as of prayer—not to cheat, not to wish for what you *think* would do you good, not to write simply what you *think* you would prefer to be true. Plato's modified desire—modified by the relation to truth—is for the truth about the ideal of reflexivity. Diagonalization is the form by which this truth appears. So *extensionally* (and, just as in logic, it's only by allowing both intension and extension their competing rights *in desire* that something interesting can happen) Plato's desire is for diagonalization.

"Plato gives us, in his anticipation (something before the formalism) the coordinates of an interpretation (something after the formalism)."

5.2 Diagonalization and Its Doubles: For a Response to Dialetheism and Paradoxico-Criticism

Two classes of objections can be raised to my naming of diagonalization as so central for thought and existence that it deserves non-ironic consideration for the title "form of the good". 1) The great majority arise from the difficulty which people, including philosophers, have imagining a metamathematical form to be relevant to philosophical concerns at all. I address those throughout in the only way possible, by bringing the philosophical and metamathematical texts into greater intimacy and mutual dependency. 2) But there are also direct challenges to the position in favor of a closely related one, which I take to be one of philosophy's doubles, as Critian to Socratic reflection. These come from philosophers who have taken a metamathematical turn themselves, but who pose paradox and inconsistency as alternatives to diagonalization and incompleteness as philosophical paradigms. Since this would seem to be a very obvious way to take up the disclosure of metalogical duality, that is, to see what happens when one attempts to place one's thinking voluntarily on the side of inconsistent completeness rather than on the side of consistent incompleteness, the strategy merits careful consideration. The most significant examples known to me are the proposals of Priest ("dialetheism", the most systematically articulated, relying on systems of paraconsistent logic), Petersen ("diagonal method", the closest to dialectic), and Livingston ("paradoxico-criticism", the closest to Plato and contemporary continental philosophy). All attempt to place thinking on the completeness side of the metamathematical duality of consistency *vs.* completeness, affirming that there are real paradoxes, or true contradictions—and just as importantly, that these despite or perhaps because of their paradoxicality succeed in thinking absolute totalities in the only way possible, namely by participating in the contradictions. (Priest calls such true paradoxes "dialetheias" at points, in order to distinguish them from merely-apparent paradoxes.) Priest and Livingston concur on an additional important point which is topological: true contradictions arise at, and only at, "limit" cases. Petersen's corresponding thesis is that every function (including negation, addition by one, *etc.*) has a fixed point. On the provisional "other side" of the issue would seem to line up Badiou, Grim, and myself: those for whom ontology is characterized by a consistent thought of the detotalized-totality of incompleteness.

Despite the variety of philosophical-historical associations invoked, the inspiration for these positions is fundamentally Kantian. (*Cf.* Priest, who says as much at the beginning of *BLOT*). For Kant, every empirical situation is completely rule-governed—that is to say, consistent and incomplete, or as Kant says, "conditioned"—while attempts to think the totality as a whole are by hypothesis complete and by the antinomies revealed to be inconsistent. For Kant, the solution lies in the transcendental turn: since metaphysics is antinomian, the naive use of metaphysical concepts is to be replaced by their transcendental mention. While Priest and Livingston describe their stance toward the paradoxes as a realism, they nevertheless retain the crucial transcendental topology—the difficulties arise *only* at the limit. This produces the impression that in passing from the consistent to the inconsistent, we are

passing from the ontic to the ontological. *Interpretively*, as I suggested to Livingston in the mid 2000s, this is quite correct: the working of canonical texts, particularly of continental philosophy, perhaps particularly of Deleuze, Agamben, Derrida, and, to an extent, Lacan, can be modeled in this way. It is natural for post-Kantians who want to affirm the possibility of a philosophical ontology to accept the Kantian metalogical distribution: empirical consistent incompleteness totalized and bounded by a transcendental inconsistent completeness, and to toy with dropping the transcendental hedge and affirming the paradoxes as directly ontological. But the naturalness of this inherited distribution does not by itself argue for its correctness. By contrast, my position also embraces Kant's observation that the desire or drive of Reason is for the unconditioned as the totality of conditioned phenomena, but holds that this desire is subject to a *logical experience* of refutation and conversion, a change in the structure of value, even though it be, in one sense, nothing but the infinite negation of the original posit.

As is by now quite familiar, Badiou's strategy for responding to this position is to refer to three irreducible orientations of thought. It is likely that Badiou's wisdom exceeds mine on this point, but the orientational gambit amounts to admitting that philosophical positions that he wishes to reject are nevertheless globally irrefutable, and possibly incommensurable. By contrast, I wish to argue that ontotheology and constructivist pragmatism are rationally apprehensible as *mistakes*, in fact probably two sides of one mistake, rather than two separable mistakes. (Compare on this apparently-esoteric point what any reader of the Platonic dialogues begins to see: the deep complicity from a logical point of view of traditionalist and Eleatic positions with the sophistical and paradoxicophilic positions which seem to be their polar opposites). Finally, I maintain that dialetheism and paradoxico-criticism repeat this mistake with their claim to take diagonalization into account, and thus to add a second post-Cantorian orientation of thought.

In responding to these positions, I adopt a variety of poison-pill strategy. I claim that the interpretation of diagonalization put forward by the friends of paradox (at least in many core instances) works just as well in an additional case known to be fallacious, so that if we accept the interpretation in these given cases, we ought to accept it in this other. But as we cannot do so with the fallacious case, the work is reversed: we are committed to hunting down the equivocation in the other paradoxical forms which corresponds to the fallacious inference in the known case. We can dub the poison pill *the pseudo-paradox of the computables.* The claim is then that if the core arguments of *Beyond the Limits of Thought, Diagonal Method and Dialectical Logic,* and *The Politics of Logic* are correct, then they would have to admit this pseudo-paradox as a genuine dialetheia/paradox/fixed-point, and conversely, when the spell of the pseudo-paradox is broken in the case of the computables, it goes some way toward breaking the spell in the core instances of these works as well. I must emphasize, however, that the poison-pill to which I refer is well-known, certainly known to Priest, Petersen, and Livingston, so that, if it has the function I suggest, it can only be that its central function as a paradigm for paradoxophilic orientations has somehow been overlooked. This is certainly consonant with the absence of discussion of it in the cited works, but this is not conclusive. It must be, in short, an "unknown known". The other possibility, of course, is that I have underestimated the formal and conceptual resources available to the friends of paradox for escaping this analogy.

The temptation to assert the undiagonalizable seems to me to be extended to us (though

unintentionally) by Gödel's remark of 1946:

> Tarski has stressed in his lecture (and I think justly) the great importance of the concept of general recursiveness (or Turing's computability). It seems to me that this importance is largely due to the fact that with this concept one has for the first time succeeded in giving an absolute definition of an interesting epistemological notion, *i.e.*, one not depending on the formalism chosen. [*Footnote added in 1965:* To be more precise: a function of integers is computable in any formal system containing arithmetic if and only if it is computable in arithmetic, where a function f is called computable in S if there is in S a computable term representing f.] In all other cases treated previously, such as demonstrability or definability, one has been able to define them only relative to a given language, and for each individual language it is clear that the one thus obtained is not the one looked for. For the concept of computability, however, although it is merely a special kind of demonstrability or decidability, the situation is different. *By a kind of miracle it is not necessary to distinguish orders, and the diagonal procedure does not lead outside the defined notion.* (Emphasis added)[11]

Gödel's remark is certainly responding to section 8 of Turing's original paper: "On Computable Numbers With An Application to the *Entscheidungsproblem*." I will turn to that text now. It already provides grounds, I suggest, for disputing the "miracle", and its twin, the paradox. It is so important as to be worth quoting at length:

> *Application of the diagonal process.* It may be thought that arguments which prove that the real numbers are not enumerable would also prove that the computable numbers and sequences cannot be enumerable. [Turing cites here an author who has succumbed to this mistake.] It might, for instance, be thought that the limit of a sequence of computable numbers must be computable. This is clearly only true if the sequence of computable numbers is defined by some rule.
>
> Or we might apply the diagonal process. "If the computable sequences are enumerable, let a_n be the n-th computable sequence, and let $\phi_n(m)$ be the m-th figure in a_n. Let β be the sequence with $1 - \phi_n(n)$ as its n-th figure. Sinceβ is computable, there exists a number K such that $1 - \phi_n(n) = \phi_K(n)$ [for] all n. Putting $n = K$, we have $1 = \phi_K(n)$, *i.e.*, 1 is even. This is impossible. The computable sequences are therefore not enumerable".
>
> The fallacy in this argument lies in the assumption that β is computable. It would be true if we could enumerate the computable sequences by finite means, but the problem of enumerating computable sequences is equivalent to the problem of finding out whether a given number is the [description number] of a circle-free machine, and we have no general process for doing this in a finite number of steps. In fact, by applying the diagonal process argument correctly, we can show that there cannot be any such general process.

[11] In a different setting, it is, I suggest, exactly this "undiagonalizable", that is, the extension of the concept "computable", which is taken as basis of a paradoxical Absolute. The intent is to produce an inescapable contradiction *only* at the limit, one which compels philosophical acknowledgment while leaving everything *else* just as it is. I would like to deflate the undiagonalizability of the computables in both forms.

> The simplest and most direct proof of this is by showing that, if this general process exists, then there is a machine which computes β. This proof, although perfectly sound, has the disadvantage that it may leave the reader with a feeling that "there must be something wrong". The proof which I shall give has not this disadvantage, and gives a certain insight into the significance of the idea "circle-free". It depends not on constructing β but on constructing β',whose n-th figure is $\phi_n(n)$...

Turing then proceeds to give the familiar proof, by diagonalization, of the unsolvability of the Halting problem. This "feeling that 'there must be something wrong"' is tied to a deep presumption of the shape of value and of a picture of thought's relation to the world, which Turing, of course, does not turn aside to explore. This is where Sartre, *e.g.,* is indispensable.

Is there a "paradox of computability" (or on the extensional side, a "paradox of the computable numbers"?) Why or why not? It seems that there *is* a paradox of the computable numbers, and that it is of exactly the right form to serve as an exemplar and even a sharpening of the "limit" paradoxes of *BLOT*. To produce such a "paradox", we first list all the computable numbers, and then diagonalize out of this list to produce a number that is and is not computable. We know, it seems, that the first step, listing the computable numbers, is legitimate, for every computable number is computed by some Turing machine. The Turing machines are countable, and actually enumerable, because (by a reasonable hypothesis) syntax is. Therefore, there are exactly countably many computable numbers, one for each Turing machine which computes them, and we have seemingly attained the "Closure" condition for Priest's Inclosure schema—we have all the computable numbers. Next, we diagonalize out. (Note that Priest explicitly grants that diagonalization is the paradigm of his compound "Transcendence" condition.) The details of the diagonalization will depend upon the details of the presentation of the enumeration of the computables. In the simplest, though least elegant, case, we can take the computables to be enumerated digitally as infinite binary "decimals", adopting an unambiguous naming convention and adding zeroes or ones appropriately in the case of terminating decimals, and then changing the n-th digit of the n-th entry from one to zero or zero to one appropriately. (In this case, the function of addition ($+1$) coincides with that of negation.) Now, the resulting number is not a member of the set of computables, since it differs by at least one digit (that on the diagonal) from every member of the computables. Yet it is a member of the set of computables, since we have computed it by a very straightforward procedure. (And the procedure is indeed banally straightforward, consisting simply in the inspection of the diagonal and the modification of each digit. Since this procedure is effective, the new diagonal element is computed. This, then, cannot be where the problem lies.) So we have satisfied, it appears, the conditions for Inclosure: the modified diagonal number both is (Closure) and is not (Transcendence) a member of the set of computables. [12]

[12]Note immediately that on the classical interpretation of diagonalization, this paradox, if it were true, would result in there being not just one but *uncountably* many computable numbers, breaking all material dependence of computation upon syntax, since the entry on the diagonal cannot refer only to itself. But to concede that some philosophers take this as controversial, and prefer to refer not to an uncountable totality, but simply to a game in which, if you give me a correlation, I give you an element left out of the correlation, we can bracket this inference, or simply note it as a symptom that something is amiss. We defend the classical interpretation, but we do not need to make use of it here.

The fallacy lies in the inference from countability to listability. The countability of syntax suffices to ensure that we have *all* of the Turing machines corresponding to computable numbers listed, but if a list plausibly contains all *and only* the listed members, then one must also delete from this list those that produce no output: the non-halting ones. But this is impossible because of a previous instance of diagonalization, Turing's resituation of Gödel's first incompleteness theorem *i.e.*, the undecidability of the Halting Problem, or the inheritance of ignorance from a first-order knowledge function to the reflective function which simulates it. So the first step listed all the computable numbers, but not *all and only* the computable numbers. Once again, just as in the *Charmides*, the crux of the difficulty is not knowledge of knowledge but knowledge of ignorance. The construction of a totality in a suitable sense, both in itself (suitable for the Closure condition), and equally for the operation of the diagonalizer (the Transcendence condition) requires that all *and only* the elements of a certain kind be assembled. But the diagonalization *upstream* in the logical flow prevents precisely this. Now, in terms of procedures accessible to any existing programmer, be it human or machine, this set simply cannot be constructed. Any method that we have can guarantee at best that *all* the members or *only* the members of a nontrivial totality are assembled, but not both. And in absence of this, a diagonalizer is *not* guaranteed to lead outside the set. In fact, we can infer, on pain of contradiction, that it does not. (Somewhere, on pain of contradiction, neither the original function nor its modification corresponds to a halting machine, and at that point, the modified diagonal fails to differ in output from the unmodified function on that row. This place is the diagonal's point of insertion in computability.)

This splitting of presence seems figured by the divisions of the *Theaetetus*, particularly the distinction between two senses of "having".[13] Priest interprets Hegel, specifically the part of Hegel's argument against the false infinite which he takes to be salvageable: "To be bounded and to be truly conceived are, in a sense, the same thing. For if something is bounded it can be conceived as that which lies within the boundary; and if something is conceived it is bounded by the terms of the conception. Hence, an unbounded object is essentially the same as an inconceivable object. And we are back with the contradiction at the limit of [the] conceivable" (106) The text is valuable because the biconditional between boundedness and determinacy is so clear and, perhaps, naive. The fundamental importance of the image of the aviary, by contrast, is to underline that the bounded may still be dramatically *indeterminate*, unless, in addition to drawing a line around *all* the elements one seeks, one is sure that one has all *and only* those elements. And in absence of this, the formal cause of the correct internal division which separates the elements you want from those you don't, despite being only a partition of what is "present", may rest on a principle computationally in *excess* of anything contained in the totality one has. In the *Theaetetus*, this is the difference between "having" (*echein*) and "possessing" (*ktesis*). Having is a constructive criterion, possessing a nonconstructive, top-down partition. The two ends of mereology do not meet up. And this seems to be in accord with precisely what Cantor's Theorem requires us to think: The set of all parts is not only not identical to the whole; it is unquantifiably in excess of it. The further

[13]Effect on the rote critique of presence: it is not that being is reduced to presence that is the problem, unless by presence one means exclusively one side or the other of this duality, or the positing of a correspondence which overcomes it. (At different times, Heidegger seems to mean both of these.)

challenge for the metalogician, admittedly, is to explain why the intuitions underlying the Domain Principle do not validate the *existence* of the set of all-*and-only* the desired elements, *e.g.,* the computables, apart from the impossibility of producing it, even in principle. This difficult question may cause us to refine our intuitions about the boundary between ontology and epistemology.

5.3 The Arithmetical Hierarchy

The metalogical critique of imaginary hierarchies has been a theme throughout this investigation. Let us now speak of the kind of hierarchy that actually exists, and whose concept is metalogically valid. Of course, it is not a hierarchy of persons but of propositions.

It is's easy to see that a chain of n identically-quantified variables, for instance, $(\exists x)(\exists y)(\exists z)$ amounts to a single quantified n-tuple (here, $\exists(x, y, z)$). Also, that it makes no matter whether the quantifier is universal or existential (whether the principle in view is unity or totality, *to hen* or *to pan*); so long as as only *one* of them is in view, only what is thought (and not the thinking of it) increases in complexity. (A special sort of complexity: the banality of the procession of dimension.) It is not just any multiplicity, then, which makes matters difficult, as we recall. As long as the thinker is careful to avoid the slightest iterability in the concept (*e.g.,* Aristotle, Descartes), or the slightest appeal to both principles (*e.g.,* trivializing the Socratic question by reducing it to the *ti esti*), so long thinking seems to possess an unlimited "formal" power over multiplicity.

What must it be, then, which, even in the sandbox of a first-order speaking of number, records the refusal of being to cede to thinking an immediate and sovereign power to make one-over-many, and indexes an increasing resistance on the part of the content to being counted formally as *mere* content? *I.e.*, what must be the measure of the difficult, not only insofar as the latter is counted, making one out of the many all-too-easily, but in its rebound upon counting? What must be counted of the language of counting, in order to measure the multiple at the level of the concept, or the *difficult* proper (*to khalepon*)? (By this third formulation, we are able to confirm that we are on the terrain of metamathematics—the mathematics of the language of mathematics.) The question appears hopelessly general, but on the basis of the opening distinction of dimension from difficulty the hypothesis is actually immediate: let us count the number of times that the *difference* between the principles makes its appearance in the chain of quantifiers, and record this number as an index of the difficulty of speaking about number. Remarkably, this simple inductive leap gives us a full first-order categorization scheme, known as the arithmetical hierarchy.

That the duality of the principles shows itself in a particularly clear and simple way to be the formal cause of complexity, in beings and in thinking, is caviar to the metalogical Platonist. But one is immediately suspicious about reducing the trace of duality to something that can be unambiguously counted. Does this degree of clarity make the difficult too easy to localize, and thus to *avoid*, removing it across the boundary of thought's *necessary* experience, per the wishes of Meno, Critias, Protagoras. . . ?

No, again for a reason which we can reach *a priori* and confirm rigorously. Suppose there is a simple, expressively-unambiguous metric of computability. Can its effective application

march in step with its clarity? No, for in this way, it would solve too much of the halting problem at a single stroke, and contradict the consequences of diagonalization; we know that something must interrupt its straightforward application. Thus the essential irony of this definitive and ineffective system of measurement: we can state, through mere syntactic inspection, an *upper* bound on complexity, and I *suspect* we can even state that *normally* the upper and lower bounds coincide, meaning that the chance of a collapse of complexity leading to the possibility of insight is, in a way, infinitely remote. (This needs to be verified along with its relation to Chaitin's "halting probability" in a further, directly-mathematical inquiry.) Yet the interest of thinking is in nothing but this possibility of fulfillment, of the sudden collapse in which an articulable *logos* compresses the multiple beyond previous bounds; the event of insight (*anamnesis*). Thinking *must* bet against insight, and thus against itself, globally. Must—can—thinking then bet against itself locally? Does the truth of global, cosmic pessimism license taking this pessimism as the maxim of thinking's local act? Can it abandon the tension by which it maintains itself in the pursuit of insight? Can thinking place itself on the side of the hopeless complexity of being? Can it stop waiting for those events of insight in which the One is momentarily effective? Once again, the consequences of diagonalization's reconfiguration of local and global would be misinterpreted, I think, in this natural application. At least, it is provably impossible for thinking to be justified in taking this last step of wagering on the normal coincidence of upper and lower bounds of complexity. (In our time—2002 or 2003—the discovery that **Primes** is in **P**.)

Now the subject is implicated in the articulation of the arithmetical hierarchy at least as much as in the chain of signifiers. In both cases, we come to learn something essential about where we are, in a world in which there are signs (the world in which Socrates' other question, *peri tinos,* is possible and necessary). The arithmetical hierarchy speaks of the question of how to orient oneself in thinking, or better, of how thinking can orient itself in being.

What it shows has the character of an exception. The locality of thinking is not normal, for a thinking being is both totally exposed to chance and totally incapable of a genuinely random selection, at least when it comes to speaking of number. (The names of numbers, for instance, form a natural limit to the arbitrariness of the signifier.) Unless absolute idealism is true (in which case the problem vanishes, and presumably the temptation to a practical nihilism), thinking operates in a tiny bubble of exception. Were it elsewhere, it would be destroyed, and in this sense only we can understand the limited validity of the identification, from Nietzsche through Lacan, of the will to truth with a death drive. Thinking can *know* this non-normality of its own place, and knowing it does not amount to relocating. We can not relocate. No more than we can step out of the indexical expressions of the exception: be *there* rather than *here*, *then* rather than *now*, the *other* rather than *I*. Thinking cannot put itself in advance on the side of the event or in the place of the Other, especially not through an embrace of "paradox". (The forms of violence and obscurity which arise in this attempt have been noted.)

The torsion that the existence of thinking beings introduces into the computational hierarchy is effected not by an overarching paradoxical view, but by being there. What I rightly know is never realized normally in the place where I know, where I am. Further, the (global) law of this distorting exceptionality is knowable. The existence of my knowledge (whose proper *global* object is ignorance), is the material bar to its ordinary application, as

well as to its paradoxical supplement. The arithmetical hierarchy thus confirms, from out of metamathematics, what we have been learning since our first reading of the *Ion* and the *Charmides*, that knowledge forms a blind spot for itself, and from the *Meno* and the late dialogues, that this impasse of reflexivity is also a pass on the side of incommensurability.

The *existence* of knowledge has an additional meaning which can be interpreted within knowledge's own scope: not as paradoxical transcendence, but as bar to a global power of judgment. Completed, the analytic of *Dasein* purifies Platonism to the extent that it is purified by it; the being of *Dasein* is indeed care. About what? (*Peri tinos?*) The response, "about itself" (*peri heautou/heautes*), has not been clarified in the interval between Critias and Heidegger. Among the consequences of the retrieval of the two Socratic questions, as Two, is that it cannot be clarified except in relation to number and the Good—to those functions which intrinsically negate their maxima and to the truth *that* they so negate.

Appendix: A Bibliography on Plato's *Charmides*

To my knowledge, a comprehensive bibliography on the *Charmides* has never been assembled. Such a scholarly tool would benefit philosophers working on this neglected dialogue. The aspiration here is to completeness in English, and to omission of no major works in other languages. The bibliography is continually in progress, and is updated at `http://philpapers.org/browse/plato-charmides`.[14]

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14

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