NAMES, CONCEPTS, AND ABILITIES:
PLATO ON NAMING AND KNOWING

DISSERTATION

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* * * * *

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Writing a dissertation is hard. Living with someone who is writing a dissertation is harder. I dedicate this to Patti. I only hope that I did as well on the first task as she did on the second.
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In my dissertation, I shall argue that abilities (δύναμεις) play a crucial role in Plato's philosophy. I shall develop this theme by showing how the concept of an ability is a key concept in Plato's theory of naming, his theory of knowledge, and his early theory of the unity of the virtues.

In the Cratylus, Plato holds the apparently paradoxical view that names are both conventional and non-conventional. In Chapter I, I shall argue that what Plato's position comes to is that two different, conventional sets of marks and noises that "play the same role" or "have the same meaning" (e.g., 'red' and 'rot') express the same non-conventional thing in the soul, i.e., two conventional tokens express the non-conventional concept. I shall further argue that for Plato, to have a concept is to have a certain kind of ability (δύναμις) i.e., the ability to use linguistic tokens.

In the second chapter, I shall argue that the ability to give a definition and adequately defend that definition is a necessary condition of knowledge for Plato. I shall then go on to argue for the much more radical claim that this ability to define and defend is not merely a necessary condition of knowledge, and is not merely a sufficient
condition of knowledge, but that it is what it is to have knowledge for Plato.

In the third chapter, I shall consider a serious objection to the view that knowledge is an ability for Plato. The objection is: Knowledge, for Plato, is some type of "quasi-perceptual" act of awareness (perhaps acquaintance) of the Forms. It isn't a linguistic ability at all, it is an occurrent quasi-perceptual act. (Runciman, Ross, Cherniss, Robinson, and others have held this view.) Support for this view is alleged to be in the "vision" passages of Republic and Symposium and the recollection passages of Meno and Phaedo. I shall carefully examine those passages and argue that, in fact, the texts support the claim that knowledge is an ability rather than the claim that it is a quasi-perceptual or even a "diaphanous act" of awareness. I shall not, of course, be arguing that there are no occurrent acts of awareness for Plato. What I shall be arguing is that these acts are not quasi-perceptual or diaphanous in character, but rather are actualizations of a linguistic ability and are linguistic in character.

In the fourth chapter, I shall explicate the two most recent attempts to understand Plato's early doctrine of the unity of the virtues (the positions of Vlastos and Penner). I shall argue that a common shortcoming of both Vlastos' and Penner's analyses is, different as they are, the failure to account for Plato's discussion of abilities in the early
dialogues. I go on, in the fifth and final chapter, to remedy this by proposing an account of the unity of the virtues. On that account, each virtue or excellence is an ability, and the thesis of the unity of the virtues is that each one is the same ability.
I. PLATO'S THEORY OF NAMES

The first listing in Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon under 'δόμων' is 'name.' Appropriately, in both the Jowett and Fowler translations of Plato's Cratylus, 'δόμων' is usually translated as 'name.' Several interpreters of Plato have pointed out that this is somewhat misleading insofar as 'δόμων' has a wider application than 'name.' The term 'δόμων' is often used much like the English word 'word' since nouns, verbs, and adjectives are all considered ὄνόματα (names) by Plato in the Cratylus. Both subject terms and predicate terms are names for Plato. This view is also reflected in Aristotle who claims (On Interpretation 16b20-21) that verbs (ῥήματα) by themselves are names (ὄνόματα). Plato's list of ὄνόματα includes proper names (e.g., 'Hector' and 'Apollo'), general terms (e.g., 'man,' 'soul,' 'fire,' and 'justice'), adjectives (e.g., 'advantageous' and 'profitable'), and verbs (e.g., 'to flourish').

Although the preceding kinds of claims are frequently made by interpreters of Plato, no interpreter, to my knowledge, has recognized that, in a far different sense, 'name' and 'word' are ambiguous. Put briefly, the sense in which they are ambiguous is the sense in which 'horse' and 'pferd' can be considered either the same name (word) or different
names (words). I shall argue that Plato was quite aware of this ambiguity and used it to develop several subtle and important points.

This chapter will have the following structure: In the first section, I shall discuss the ambiguity of 'name' by making use of the type/token distinction which was introduced by C. S. Peirce and sophisticated in a number of ways by Wilfrid Sellars. In the second section, I shall show that Plato was aware of the ambiguity of 'δομος,' and that, in fact, the ambiguity itself is a key issue in the exchange between Socrates and Hermogenes. Furthermore, in my interpretation of Plato in that section, I shall make use of the type/token distinction as it is drawn by Sellars. But it is important to recognize that I am neither claiming that Plato's theory of names is the same as Sellars' theory, nor am I claiming that Sellars got his theory from Plato. I am merely using a distinction drawn by Sellars as a means of shedding light on certain difficult passages in Plato. The goal of this chapter is explication of Plato's theory of names in the Cratylus, and having the type/token distinction before us will, I think, be helpful in trying to accomplish that goal. In the third section, I shall relate the ambiguity of 'name' and the type/token distinction to Plato's discussion of certain kinds of Forms, i.e., Forms appropriate to things. In the fourth section, I shall give cash for the promissory notes concerning the type/token distinction as it
was previously drawn. Since in doing so, I shall be using the Sellarsian notion of linguistic roles, or, speaking loosely, concepts, I shall be arguing that Plato has a doctrine of concepts. (I mean, therefore, to argue against those who think that for Plato, awareness of Forms is non-conceptual.) In the fifth and final section, I shall apply my results to a traditional controversy among Platonic scholars concerning the correctness of names. In that section, I shall note that in the Cratylus, Plato presents two theories about the correctness of names, i.e., that names are correct by nature and that names are correct by convention. The question arises as to which of those two theories Plato held. The secondary literature on the Cratylus has Plato opting for very different alternatives: some interpreters have claimed that Plato held a version of the nature-theory and some interpreters have claimed that Plato held a version of the convention-theory. By drawing on the developments in sections 1-4, I shall propose a third answer. I shall claim that, since 'name' is ambiguous, asking whether Plato's theory of names is natural or conventional is an ambiguous question. In one sense of 'name,' Plato held that names are correct by convention. In another sense of 'name,' he held that names are correct by nature. Thus, the traditional debate is misconceived insofar as one can't ask the question about Plato's theory of the correctness of names until one disambiguates the word 'name.'
1. The Ambiguity of 'Name'

In order to explain the ambiguity of 'name,' it will be necessary first to discuss the type/token distinction. The distinction was originally drawn by Peirce. He distinguished a Sinsign or token from a Legisign or type. According to Peirce, a Sinsign or token is a single, a simple, "actual existent thing or event which is a sign." And a Legisign or type is a "law that is a sign." The law is normally a linguistic convention. In order to avoid confusion, I propose, following Sellars, to expand the Peircean distinction into a trichotomy. I shall distinguish tokens, token classes, and types. As I am using terms, a token will be a particular linguistic item consisting of either a string of marks or a sequence of sounds. The following string of marks between the inverted commas is a token: 'red.' The preceding token is a different token from the following one: 'red.' They are different occurrences of similarly shaped marks. Due to their similarity of shape (or sound), I should like to say that they are members of the same token class. I shall stipulate that two tokens are members of the same token class if and only if they are related by similarity of shape or sound.

For certain purposes, it is important to distinguish between marks that are similarly shaped and marks that are differently shaped. For certain other purposes, it is important to divide language in such a way that marks and
noises which "have the same meaning" or "play the same role" are grouped together. If we are discussing language as written, 'red' and 'RED' are members of different token classes, for the shapes of the tokens are quite different. But 'red' and 'RED' do have the same meaning or play the same role. 'RED' and 'red' are, therefore, tokens of the same type. As I am using terms, two tokens are tokens of the same type if and only if they have the same meaning or play the same role. (Throughout this chapter, I shall use the terms 'token,' 'token class,' and 'type' as I have just defined them.)

On the preceding categorization of language, 'red,' 'rot,' and 'rouge' are different tokens, for they are different occurrences of marks. They are members of different token classes, for they are dissimilarly shaped marks. But they are all tokens of the same type. The terms 'red,' 'rot,' and 'rouge' all have the same meaning or play the same role in different languages. Since they are tokens of the same type, there is a sense in which they are all the same name or the same word. Two chess pieces that are made out of different material which play the same role are considered the same chess piece. Thus, a plastic piece which only moves on diagonals is a bishop, and a wood piece that only moves on diagonals is a bishop. In spite of the fact that they are made of different material, since they play the same role, they are the same chess piece, i.e., both are bishops.
Similarly, 'red' and 'rot,' although made of different linguistic materials, play the same role and in that sense can be considered the same name.

The categorization of linguistic expressions according to role has been developed by Wilfrid Sellars. In order to distinguish tokens from roles, he has adopted a notational device called "dot quotes." Dot quotes are common-noun or predicate forming operators. Sellars puts it this way: "dot quotes are used to form the common nouns which refer to the items which play the role played in our language by the design illustrated between them." Thus, 'red* is a common noun which is realized as 'red,' 'RED,' 'rot,' and 'rouge,' for they all play the same role as the design between the dots. In this way, 'red' can be considered a type of which 'rot' and 'rouge' are tokens. Sellars makes just this proposal in "Abstract Entities" (and has used and developed it in much of his writing since the late fifties): "Thus 'red' is a type which is shared by the English word 'red,' the German word 'rot,' and the French word 'rouge.' Therefore, given this drawing of the type/token distinction, 'red' and 'rot' are tokens of the same type. There is, therefore, a sense in which 'red' and 'rot' are the same word.

We are now in a position, following Sellars, to make the following moves: Just as we can say that this piece of wood is a pawn, we can say that this token 'red' is a 'red'.
By saying that a certain piece of wood is a pawn, we are characterizing that piece of wood as something which plays a certain role in a certain game. By saying that 'rot' is a 'red', we are characterizing that token or members of the token class as playing a certain role in a certain language. A dot quoted expression is a sortal predicate which is truly (or falsely) applied to linguistic tokens.

We can now see how 'name' is ambiguous. 'Name' is ambiguous insofar as it can be used to pick out either tokens, token classes, or types. The question, "Are 'red' and 'RED' the same name or different names?", is ambiguous. They are different tokens, for they are two occurrences of marks that occupy two different places on the page. In written English, they are members of different token classes, for they are dissimilarly shaped marks. In spoken English, they are members of the same token class, for they are similar in sound. And they are tokens of the same type, for they play the same role or have the same meaning. 'Name' can therefore be used to signify a token, a token class, or a type. The terms 'red' and 'rot' are different names in the token and token class sense of name but are the same name in the type sense of name.

With the preceding distinctions in mind, I shall attempt to establish the following in sections 2-5 of this chapter. Plato holds that 'name' or 'ὄνομα' is ambiguous, i.e., he holds that different sets of marks and noises that play the
same role in different languages can be considered either the
same name (in a sense analogous to that of type) or different
names (in a sense analogous to that of token class). Plato
thus holds a distinction analogous to the type/token class
distinction. Working from that distinction, Plato holds
that names are both conventional and non-conventional.
Assuming that the analogy holds in the relevant respects,
name tokens, i.e., the individual marks and noises, are
conventional, but name types are not conventional. This can
best be seen (I shall argue in Sections 3-5) as the claim
that name tokens are conventional but that the concepts they
stand for are not conventional. I shall argue that for
Plato, if two tokens are tokens of the same type, i.e., if
they play the same role, then they express the same concept.

2. The Ambiguity of 'διόμα' for Plato

In beginning this section, I shall try to show that
Plato recognized the ambiguity, i.e., he recognized that
there are two possibilities. The two possibilities are: two
names that play the same role in different languages can be
considered either the same name or different names. At
385d-e, Plato states the doctrine that the same-role-playing-
names in different languages are different names in the mouth
of Hermogenes as follows:

Yes, Socrates, for I cannot conceive of any
other kind of correctness (δροτητα) in
names than this; I may call a thing by one
name, which I gave, and you by another, which you gave. And in the same way, I see that states have their own different names for the same things (οὐτῷ δὲ καὶ ταῖς πόλεσιν ὥσπερ ἰδίᾳ ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς κεῖμενα ὀνόματα), and Greeks differ from other Greeks and from barbarians in their use of names.\textsuperscript{13} (Emphasis mine.)

The Hermogenean position, then, is that, for example, 'horse' and 'pferd' are different names for the same things. Even though they play the same role in different languages, they are still different names in virtue of the fact that they are a different set of marks and noises.\textsuperscript{14}

Socrates immediately responds to Hermogenes with a long, intricate argument (385e-390e) in which he discusses Protagoras, instruments, and Forms. Plato is obviously trying to establish a number of points in this argument. I shall not attend to all of them. But one important feature of the argument to which I shall attend is the following: Socrates attempts to convince Hermogenes that there is an important sense in which different sets of marks and noises which play the same role may be considered one and the same name. Or, in the terminology of section 1, two tokens of different token classes may be tokens of the same type. I shall not discuss this entire argument in detail, but emphasize and comment on the aspects of it which are central to my thesis.

To begin with, we must inquire: What is the function of a name for Plato? Plato suggests that a name is an instrument or tool (δργανον) at 388a. Anagnostopoulos
underlines this nicely in response to Robinson by claiming: "And, of course, all that Plato means by 'tool,' whether constructed or not, is that it has a certain function, that it is used for a certain purpose." Thus, just as a saw is a tool or instrument whose function is to cut, and a shuttle is an instrument whose function is to separate the mingled threads of warp by means of the woof, the name is an instrument whose function is to separate things according to their nature and to teach (388b). Socrates claims (388b-c): "A name, therefore, is an instrument for teaching and for the separating of reality ("Ονόμα ἀρα διδασκαλικόν τι εστίν ὁργανον διακριτικόν τῆς οὐσίας) just as a shuttle is of the woven." The function of a name is separation and classification. By using names, we classify things, i.e., we separate one kind from other kinds. We call all animals of a certain kind 'horse' thereby separating the horses from the cows, sheep, pigs, and other animals. This invites comparison with Plato's doctrine of collection and division (συναγωγή) and διαιεσθέ) in which a dispersed plurality of kinds of things is brought together and recognized as falling under a higher kind, (e.g., as horse, cow, and pig are all collected together and recognized as falling under animal), and the reverse of that process, i.e., dividing a kind into more specific kinds. 

It is, of course, clear how names would serve as an instrument in this process of dividing reality, for we would
call the same kind of thing by the same name and different kinds of things by different names. Consider, for example, Timaeus 83c: "...to all which symptoms some physician, perhaps, or rather some philosopher who had the power of seeing in many dissimilar things one nature deserving of a name has assigned the common name of bile." (Emphasis mine.) In the Timaeus passage, names are used to collect things with a common nature. A passage in the Philebus yields a similar result. In that passage (18b-d), Theuth, who was given the unlimited variety of human sounds, was able to pick out and distinguish three different kinds, i.e., vowels, sounded consonants, and mutes.

...in the end, he found a number of things, and affixed to the whole collection, as to each single member of it, the name 'letter.' (Literally, he named [ἐπωνύμασε] each and all of them letters.) It was because he realized that none of us could ever get to know one of the collection all by itself, in isolation from all the rest, that he conceived of letter as a kind of bond of unity, uniting as it were all these sounds into one...18

Once again, names are used to collect things according to their nature. And, of course, names are not used only to collect, but also to divide. For example, at Sophist 223c-224c, the art of selling is divided into two parts, selling one's own products and selling or exchanging the works of others. In turn, the art of exchange is divided into the sale of food for the soul and sale of food for the body. At 224a, the Stranger points out that a seller of food for the soul is "quite as truly called [or named, ὁρθῶς λέγομεν]..."
a merchant as he who sells meats and drinks." The Stranger goes on to say that the two should be "called by the same name." After the division is completed, Theaetetus identifies this merchant who deals in the sale of the knowledge of virtue as the Sophist. Theaetetus claims (224c): "He must be the Sophist, whom we are seeking; no other name (δύναμι) can possibly be right." Thus, just as a name is the instrument used in collection, it is also the instrument used in division. All this supports my claim that for Plato, a name is an instrument whose function is to separate and classify things according to their nature.

Once it is seen that the essential function of a name for Plato is to divide reality, one is tempted to say that the particular set of marks and noises (i.e., tokens of a token class) used is not a matter of great importance. It doesn't matter if we call each animal of the kind horse 'horse' or 'pferd.' It is only important that we call all horses by the same name and all non-horses by a different name or different names. Whether the name is 'horse' or 'pferd' is trivial. As I shall argue in the following paragraph, Plato, too, saw this point. In fact, supposing, for the moment, that Plato did see it has a certain amount of explanatory power for section 388e-390e of the Cratylus. In this section, Plato argues that name-makers must be expert artisans (389a) under the supervision of dialecticians (390d). Surely the expertise is not needed in inventing new
marks and noises. Almost any literate person can do that. Rather, Plato is emphasizing the function or role-playing aspect of names. The role of a name is to divide reality. You don't need an expert to invent sounds, but you do need an expert to "carve reality at the joints," i.e., discover the true objective taxonomy concerning a certain subject. Thus, since names are instruments in dividing reality, i.e., perform the function of dividing reality, only an expert, i.e., one who can divide reality properly (the dialectician) can be a name-maker.

We must now show that Plato does indeed make the point that the important feature of a name qua name is the role it plays, not the combination of marks and noises it is made up of, and furthermore, that two different sets of marks and noises that play the same role can legitimately be called the same name. It will be recalled that Hermogenes claimed that different states have different names for the same things. Socrates responded with a long argument in which he showed how a name ought to be construed on the model of an instrument. At the conclusion of this argument Socrates states (389d):

Then, my dear friend, must not the lawgiver also know how to embody (τὶθεναι) in the sounds and syllables that name which is fitted by nature (τὸ ἐκάστῳ φυσεῖ περιφυκὸς δυναμ) for each object? Must he not make and give all his names with his eye fixed upon the name itself (αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο ὁ ἐστὶν δυναμ) if he is to be an authoritative giver of names? And if different law-givers do
not embody it in the same syllables, we must not forget it on that account; for different smiths do not embody the form in the same iron, though making the same instrument for the same purpose, but so long as they reproduce the same idea, though it be in different iron, still the instrument is as it should be, whether it be made here or in foreign lands, is it not? (Emphasis mine.)

I must delay comment on parts of this passage until the next section. But what is important for the purposes at hand is the analogy that, just as iron is used to make instruments or tools (we see from 389c that the iron is used specifically to make bores), so sounds and syllables are used to make tools (names). Two smiths can make two bores out of different iron, i.e., out of different parts or pieces of the same stuff (iron). Similarly, two name-makers can make two names out of different sounds and syllables, i.e., out of different parts or pieces of the same stuff (sounds and syllables). Now, as Plato says, different smiths can make the "same instrument for the same purpose" in different (pieces of) iron. The same holds for different name-makers who can make the same name out of different (pieces of) sounds and syllables. Two instruments can have different shapes, but if both have the same function or purpose, e.g., if both have the function of drilling holes, then they are the same instrument, i.e., both are bores. Similarly, two instruments (e.g., 'horse' and 'pferd'), can be made out of different "pieces" of sound, but if they have the same function, they are the same instrument or name. This is,
of course, similar, to the Sellarsian point that just as two different pieces of iron can both be bores, two different pieces of sound can both be 'horse·s.

As we have already seen, for two names to have the same function is for them to divide reality in the same way. If two names (tokens of different token classes) do divide reality in the same way, they are the same name (tokens of the same type) in just the way that two tools of different shapes that perform the same function are the same tool. Thus, by using the model of instruments, Socrates can oppose Hermogenes' original statement and go on to claim that there is a sense in which different sets of marks and noises may be considered the same name. Socrates continues (390a):

On this basis, then, you will judge the law-giver, whether he be here or in a foreign land, so long as he gives to each thing the proper form of the name, in whatsoever syllables, to be no worse law-giver, whether here or anywhere else, will you not? (Emphasis mine.)

Plato's point seems to be that the piece of material an instrument or tool is constructed out of is relatively inessential. One can put the proper form of a name in different syllables. What is essential for a tool's being the tool that it is is that the tool perform a certain function or play a certain role. Differently shaped hammers made from different iron are the same tool if both perform the function of hammering nails. Similarly, if two names play the same role (separate the same kind from the other
kinds) regardless of whether the pieces of material (marks and noises) they are made of is different, they are the same name. This point is made most forcefully at 394a-b:

But variety in the syllables is admissible, so that names which are the same appear different to the uninitiated, just as the physicians' drugs, when prepared with various colours and perfumes, seem different to us, though they are the same, but to the physician, who considers only their medicinal value, they seem the same, and he is not confused by the additions. So perhaps the man who knows about names considers their value and is not confused if some letter is added, transposed, or subtracted, or even if the force of the name is expressed in entirely different letters. (Emphasis mine.)

Just as differently shaped hammers are the same tool, and a red and green liquid the same remedy, 'pferd' and 'horse' are the same name. Charles Kahn makes this point by using the following sets of names: 'man' and 'homme,' 'king' and 'roi.' Kahn claims that for Plato "the two pairs of English and French words represent only two names, strictly speaking." But Kahn does not tie this up with Plato's claim (388b-c) that a name is an instrument for the separating of reality. On my view, 'man' and 'homme' are, for Plato, instruments that have the same function, i.e., they separate reality in the same way. It is because they are instruments with the same function that they are the same name. For Plato, two sounds play the same role or are the same name when they divide reality in the same way.

Hermogenes' "unconventional conventionalism" is the position that you give something one name, (call it by
one sound), I give it another name (call it by another sound). Greeks call a horse 'hippos,' English speakers, 'horse.' Giving names is arbitrary; there is no correctness or incorrectness involved. Now, someone who wants to defend a theory that names can be correct or incorrect can respond to Hermogenes in one of two ways. He can argue that some sounds are actually better or more correct as names for certain objects than other sounds. Or he can argue that Hermogenes has a naive conception of what it is to be a name, and argue for a more sophisticated conception of names. In the argument with Hermogenes, Socrates makes the latter move. (Much latter in the dialogue, Plato tries the former move, but clearly sees that it fails.)^ Hermogenes' claim is that a name is a sound, different people use different sounds, and there is no correctness or incorrectness involved. Plato responds by showing that a name is not merely a sound. It is a sound that plays a certain role or has a certain function. The function of a name is to divide and classify. If a name cuts up the world poorly (incorrectly), it is a poor (incorrect) name. For example, there is a sense in which 'barbarian,' i.e., non-Greek, is an incorrect name (Statesman 262d-e). In that passage, Plato argues that to divide human beings into Greeks and non-Greeks is an arbitrary classification which does not carve reality at its joints as, perhaps, dividing human beings into males and females would.
In section 1, I argued that 'name' is ambiguous as between tokens, token classes, and types. Plato sees 'ὄνομα' as ambiguous in a similar way. There is the Hermogenean conception of name as mere sound, (where two names are the same when they have the same sound, i.e., are members of the same token class), and the Platonic conception of name as role played by certain sounds, (where different sounds that play the same role are the same name, i.e., tokens of the same type.) The ambiguity is between names as sounds and names as roles.

3. Forms Appropriate to Things in Plato

In this section, I shall further explain my suggestion that Plato had something analogous to the type/token distinction in mind in the Cratylus by connecting it with Plato's discussion of Forms appropriate to things. Previously, I claimed that for Hermogenes, two different sets of marks and noises that have the same function or play the same role are different names (which is analogous to the Sellarsian point that they are members of different token classes). But Socrates points out that there is a sense in which different sets of marks and noises that have the same function are the same name (which is analogous to the Sellarsian point that they are tokens of the same type). In this section, I shall argue that Plato ties the notion of playing the same role or having the same function to the
notion of having a share of the same Form. We have already seen that for Plato, if two pieces of wood have the same function—if they both, for example, have the function of separating threads—then both pieces of woods are shuttles. Plato points out at Cratylus 389b that all shuttles must have a share of the Form, The Shuttle Itself. Therefore, all pieces of wood that play the role of separating threads have a share of the (same) Form, The Shuttle Itself. In this section, I shall further argue that the same holds for names, i.e., if two sounds have the same function—if they both separate things according to their nature—then both sounds are names. And just as all shuttles have a share of the Form, The Shuttle Itself, all names have a share of the Form, The Name Itself. But the analogy extends further. There are different kinds of shuttles and different kinds of names. It is the burden of this section to show that for the Plato of the Cratylus, there are specific Forms under the common generic Form, The Shuttle Itself, e.g., the Forms, The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Fine Linen and The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Thick Wool. Similarly, there are specific Forms under the common generic Form, The Name Itself, e.g., the Forms, The Name-Appropriate-for-Horse (Name-of-Horse) and The Name-Appropriate-for-Cow (Name-of-Cow). Thus, a particular piece of sound (or a particular mark) that divides reality is not merely a name (it doesn't merely have a share of the Form, The Name Itself), it also is a name of or...
appropriate to something (it also has or is a share of the Form, Name-Appropriate-for-X). So, two different sounds that play the (same) role of separating horses both have a share or are shares not only of the Form, The Name Itself, but also of the Form, The Name-Appropriate-for-Horse. Thus, playing the same role (being tokens of the same type) involves having shares of the same Form for Plato. I shall try to substantiate these claims in this section.

In a recent article, Brian Calvert argues that "in the first passage, [389a-390e], we are introduced to a different kind of non-sensible entity, akin to the Form, but whose main distinguishing feature is its plurality, as opposed to the unity characteristic of the 'Classical Form.'" Calvert analyzes 389a-390e and argues that in that section Plato not only discusses Forms and concrete particulars, but a third kind of entity called either 'The Nature' (ἡ φύσις) or 'The Proper Form' (τὸ προσῳκον ἐνδος). Although I think Calvert is quite wrong about the status of Natures or Proper Forms (I think he is wrong in claiming that they are a third kind of entity), his findings do shed some light on the problem I am working on. I shall accordingly briefly review his arguments and then discuss the disagreements.

At 389a-b, Plato claims that if a shuttle is broken, the carpenter will not remodel a new shuttle after the broken one, but rather look to the Form (ἐκέννο τὸ ἐνδος) which is properly called 'The Shuttle Itself' (αὐτὸ ὁ
Then whenever he has to make a shuttle for a light or a thick garment, or for one of linen or of wool or of any kind whatsoever, all of them must contain the form of shuttle, and in each of his products he must embody the nature which is naturally best for each.

Calvert's claim is that Plato is making a distinction between the Form (τὸ ἐἶδος) and the Nature (ἡ φύσις). The passage just quoted does seem to indicate just such a distinction. Calvert argues his case as follows:

His use of μέν... δὲ... is at least a prima facie indication that we are meant to see some contrast. All shuttles must have the ἐἶδος of shuttle, but in each actual product must be embodied the φύσις which is best for the job in hand. In other words, the notion seems to be that while all shuttles have the same ἐἶδος they do not all have the same φύσις. The φύσις of the shuttle made for weaving thick woollen garments is different from the φύσις of that made for weaving those of light linen material. (Emphasis his.)

After having made the point for shuttles, Plato immediately generalizes (389c): "And the same applies to all other instruments. The artisan must discover the instrument naturally fitted for each purpose (τὸ φύσις ἐκάστω περικεφαλής ὁργανὸν ἐξευρόντα) and must embody that in the material of which he makes the instrument..." (Emphasis mine.) After making the generalization, Plato applies it to names (389d-390a): "Then, my dear friend, must not the lawgiver also know how to embody in the sounds and syllables that name..."
which is fitted by nature for each object? Must he not make and give all his names with his eye fixed upon the name itself, if he is to be an authoritative giver of names." (Emphasis mine.) In this section Plato discusses bores, shuttles, instruments, and names. In each case, there is something fitted by nature (φύσει πεφυκός), and the thing fitted by nature is always fitted to or for something ('ἐξάστω' appears in each passage in the dative). For example, there are names fitted by nature for the various kinds and shuttles fitted by nature for the various kinds of material (linen, wool, etc.). Each of these things that is fitted by nature for something, Calvert calls a 'Nature,' or alternatively, a 'Proper Form.' These terms are taken from 389c and 390a-b. Calvert summarizes his findings as follows:

Certain parallels between the accounts of the making of names and of shuttles are apparent. In the making of names, the lawgiver 'looks to' (βλέποντα) 'the name itself' (πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο Ὄ ἐστιν ὁνομα) just as the carpenter looked to the shuttle itself. In sounds and syllables, corresponding to the wood of the shuttle, the lawgiver embodies 'that name fitted by nature for each object' (τὸ ἐκάστῳ φύσει πεφυκός ὁνομα). Similarly, the carpenter has embodied 'the shuttle fitted by nature for each kind of weaving.' A different but, I take it, equivalent formulation for this is given at 390 a and b. What is embodied in letters and syllables is described as 'the proper form of the name' (τὸ τοῦ ὄνοματος εἴδος τὸ προσήκον) and that which is embodied in wood to make a shuttle is now called 'the proper form of shuttle' (τὸ προσήκον εἴδος κερκίδος).
Every shuttle has a share of the Form, The Shuttle Itself. But that doesn't mean all shuttles are identical, for some shuttles have different natures from others, e.g., some are made to weave thick wool, some fine linen. Once again, this can be seen as related to collection and division. All animals have a share of the Form, The Animal Itself, but there are different kinds of animals (just as there are different kinds of shuttles). In the later dialogues, Plato divides Animal into Land Animal and Water Animal, and then divides each of those kinds into sub-kinds. In the Cratylus, Plato also sees the need for this. All shuttles are similar insofar as they have a share of The Shuttle Itself. Nonetheless, Shuttle can be divided into kinds, each kind having (or being) a different nature. So, each particular shuttle is not merely a shuttle, but a shuttle with a specific nature.

As Plato points out, the same holds for names. All names have a share of The Name Itself. But Name can be divided into different kinds with each kind having (or being) a different nature. I shall argue that for two names to have the same nature is for them to have the same function, i.e., divide reality in the same way. But in order to do that, I must first ask: Why did Plato draw this distinction between Natures or Proper Forms and Forms? What work does the distinction do for him? Calvert, who so carefully argues
that this distinction does not exist in the text, has no idea why. He claims:

But the fact that so little is said, together with the fact that the Proper Form is not taken up again at the end of the dialogue, inclines me to the opinion that the most likely answer is that the distinction of which Plato himself may have been only half aware, merely reflects bewilderment in his thought at the time of writing the Cratylus. 30

I should like to propose an alternative interpretation. Although my interpretation is somewhat radical, it is consistent with the text, and does make sense of a distinction in Plato which Calvert sees only as "bewilderment in his thought." I shall spend the rest of this section and the next laying out and defending this interpretation.

In beginning, let me make two comments about the Greek text. The first comment concerns the Greek term, \( \text{προσφέγγων} \) (proper). As we have already seen, Plato uses the expression "Proper Form" (\( \tau\sigma \text{προσφέγγων} \epsilon\delta\sigmaς \)) at 390 a and b. He invokes Proper Forms in the discussion of names and shuttles. The term \( \text{προσφέγγων} \) means proper, fitting, or appropriate. For example, at Republic I, Polemarchus defines justice as rendering to each his due. In explicating this, Socrates points out that to give someone his due is to give him what is proper (or fitting or appropriate), i.e., \( \tau\sigma \text{προσφέγγων} \) (Republic I, 332b-c). In the Cratylus, Forms are spoken of as proper or appropriate. The point to be noticed is that they are or must be appropriate to or for something. In the ontology of the Cratylus, there is not only the Form,
The Shuttle Itself, there are also the Forms, The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Fine Linen and The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Thick Wool. I shall call these Forms which are appropriate to or for things "Proper Forms," or sometimes more perspicuously "Forms proper to (appropriate to) things." On my interpretation, the Proper Forms, The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Thick Wool and The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Fine Linen are specific Forms under the common genus, The Shuttle Itself. The same holds for the generic Form, The Name Itself. That Form is divided into specific (or proper) Forms, The Name-Appropriate-for-Horse (Name-of-Horse), The Name-Appropriate-for-Cow (Name-of-Cow), etc. This differs greatly from Calvert's interpretation in which Proper Forms are considered a third kind of entity, i.e., neither Forms nor sensibles. My interpretation is preferable for two reasons. First, it makes sense of Plato's use of the term 'εἰδος' (Form). On Calvert's view, Forms Proper to things are not Forms but rather a third kind of entity. On my view, they are just what Plato says they are, i.e., Forms. Secondly, my interpretation links Plato's program of dividing generic Forms into specific ones (collection and division) to the Cratylus.

The preceding ties in with the section on Natures (389b-390a) as follows: Just as Plato says there are Forms appropriate to things, he says at 389c that there is a Nature (φόσις) naturally fitted to each (εἷκαστῳ πεφυκός) thing.
The φύσει ἐκάστῳ περικός construction is used frequently from 389b-390a. For Plato, there is a Nature (it may be a Shuttle-Nature, Name-Nature, or Bore-Nature), which is naturally fitted to each thing just as we saw that there is a Form appropriate to each thing. Calvert is correct in identifying the Natures at 389 with the Proper Forms at 390, but what Calvert does not emphasize is that the Natures or Forms are appropriate to or naturally fitted to each thing.

My last comment concerning the Greek text is the following: We have seen that Plato holds that different sets of marks and noises which play the same role may profitably be considered the same name; and that they are embodiments of the same Proper Form or share in the same Nature. Actually, to say that they are embodiments of the same Proper Form is somewhat misleading. What Plato actually says is that the Proper Form or Nature is put into (τίθημι, 389c-d) the sounds and syllables by the lawgiver, or alternatively, the Proper Form or Nature is given to (ἀποσίδωμι, 389c, 390a) the sounds and syllables by the lawgiver. Fowler (and Calvert following him) translate both 'τίθημι' and 'ἀποσίδωμι' as 'embody.' This is a somewhat loose translation, and what is lost in such a translation is the fact that an active role is being taken by a person (the lawgiver) in the giving of form to sounds and syllables. Plato never says (merely) that a set of sounds and syllables embodies a Proper Form or Nature; what he says is that a person puts a Proper Form in
a set of sounds and syllables. The importance of these two
textual comments shall emerge shortly.

Let me now proceed to my interpretation. In his recent
book, Plato on Knowledge and Reality, Nicholas White (in the
section on the Cratylus) suggests that naming and knowing are
similar in the following way: Real knowledge, for Plato, is
of the Forms, and real names, for Plato, are names of the
Forms.31 Let me expand this suggestion by pointing out two
ways in which naming and knowing are analogous. In the
Charmides, (165c), Plato states that knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) must be knowledge of something. The way in which medicine
and architecture differ (Charmides 165c-d) is that although
both are knowledge, one is knowledge of health, the other
knowledge of building. At Parmenides 134a, Plato reiterates
that position in claiming that different knowledges
('ἐπιστήμαι' is used again) are of different beings (τῶν
δυνάμεων). (And in this passage, the knowledges are themselves
Forms.) The idea that knowledges are of things, it seems
clear, holds also for names, i.e., names, too, are of things.
'Horse' and 'cow' are both names, and do not differ in their
both being names; they way in which they differ is that they
are of (or appropriate to) different things. 'Horse' and
'pferd' are names of the same things. Just as the Form,
Knowledge Itself, is divided into the Forms, Knowledge-of-
Carpentry, Knowledge-of-Shoemaking, Knowledge-of-Arithmetic,
etc., The Form, The Name Itself, is divided into the Proper
Forms, Name-of-Horse (or, as I called it earlier, Name-Appropriate-for-Horse), Name-of-Cow (Name-Appropriate-for-Cow), etc. This, I think, is the picture Plato is drawing at Cratylus 389-90. There is the generic Form, The Name Itself, and it is divided into (specific) Proper Forms, Name-of-F (Name-Appropriate-for-F), Name-of-G (Name-Appropriate-for-G), etc. Each of these Forms which is appropriate to or for something is, in turn, placed or put into (by the lawgiver) different sounds and syllables. Name-of-Horse is put into the English word 'horse' and the German word 'pferd.' Just as the Shuttle Itself is divided into the Proper Forms, The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Fine Linen and The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Thick Wool, The Name Itself is divided into the Proper Forms, The Name-of (appropriate to)-Horse, The Name-of (appropriate to)-Cow, etc. Each of these Proper Forms is then put into sounds and syllables (in the way in which the Shuttle-for-Fine Linen is put into wood). The first analogy, then, is that just as one knowledge is different from another in virtue of the fact that the two knowledges are of different objects, one name is different from another in virtue of the fact that the two names are names of different objects.

The second part of the analogy between names and knowledges is the following: Only people can know something; similarly, only people can name something. Inanimate objects and non-human animals have neither the capacity to know nor
to name. We can describe this in Platonic terms as follows: Let me represent the many different Forms in Plato as 'The F Itself,' 'The G Itself,' etc. (or as 'F-ness,' 'G-ness,' etc.). There are also many Knowledges in Plato; let me represent them as 'Knowledge-of-F,' 'Knowledge-of-G,' etc. The different Knowledges are all Forms (Parmenides 134a). But, of course, the Form, Knowledge-of-F is a different Form from The F Itself. Without worrying for the moment about precisely what "shares" are, or exactly what 'participates' means, we can say that, for Plato, things in the sensible world have shares of Forms, or participate in Forms. Thus, we can analyze the claim "Phaedo is tall" as 'Phaedo has Tallness in him,' i.e., 'Phaedo has a share of The Tall Itself,' or alternatively, 'Phaedo participates in Tallness.' Similarly with Knowledges. If Phaedo knows geometry, Phaedo has (a share of the Form) Knowledge-of-Geometry in him. The obvious point I wish to make concerning this is that although trees, buildings, giraffes, and people can all have a share of Tallness, only people can have a share of Knowledge-of-Geometry (or any other Knowledge Form) in them. Strictly speaking, for Plato, knowledge, wisdom, thinking and deliberation are all conditions of soul. As Plato says at Timaeus 30b, there can be no intelligence without soul. Thus, for Plato, only creatures with rational souls can have knowledge, i.e., only humans and gods are capable of knowledge. (But since Plato's major concern was
to give an account of human knowledge, and not with the knowledge of gods, for the purposes of this thesis, I shall treat 'creature with a rational soul' and 'human' as co-extensional.) Thus, only people can have shares of Knowledge Forms. The same doctrine, I should like to argue, holds for names, i.e., only people can have shares of Name Forms (only people can have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-F). And just as Knowledge-of-F is a different Form from The F Itself, Name-of-F is also a different Form from The F Itself. Only a rational or human being can know geometry and only a rational or human being can name a triangle. If something has a share of The Proper Form, Name-of-F, the thing which has the share must be rational, i.e., human. This is, of course, why I earlier stressed translating 'τιθήμι' and 'ἀποδίωμι' literally. What Plato repeatedly says at Cratylus 389-90 is that a person puts the Nature or Proper Form, Name-of-F, into sounds and syllables. Just as someone who knows geometry (has a share of Knowledge-of-Geometry) can put his share of Knowledge-of-Geometry into sounds (sentences), someone who can properly name horses (has a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Horse) can put his share of Name-of-Horse into sounds (Names).

My position, then, is the following: For a rational or human being to have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Horse in him is for that person to have a certain ability, the ability to divide Horse from the other kinds which in
turn involves the ability to pick out and name horses. These abilities may be manifested in many different languages. A German who has a share of The Name-of-Horse uses the name 'pferd' properly, and a Greek uses the name 'hippos' properly. Furthermore, if a person has the ability to name horses properly, in "whatever sounds and syllables," then I should like to say that he has the concept Horse. Therefore, to have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Horse, is to have the concept Horse. This concept can be put into a variety of different linguistic materials. The second analogy between names and knowledges, then, is that just as only a human being can have a share of Knowledge-of-F, only a human being can have a share of Name-of-F.

I can now tie this up with the claims made in section 1. In that section, I claimed, following Sellars, that there is a sense in which 'red' and 'rot' are the same name. They both play the same role, i.e., they are both *red*s. Plato, too, claims that two names that play the same role or have the same function, i.e., that divide reality in the same way, are the same name. Also, we have seen that only human beings can have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-F. An f (e.g., a horse) does not have a share of the Form, Name-of-F (Name-of-Horse), rather f's (horses) share in the Form, The F Itself (The Horse Itself). Names, like knowledges, are in people. For someone to have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Horse, is for that person to have a certain ability,
the ability to properly use any term which plays the same role that 'horse' plays in English, i.e., to be able to use a 'horse'. One need not know English in order to have the concept Horse. He need only be able to properly use a name (word) which divides reality in the same way as 'horse.' 'Horse' and 'pferd' both stand for the concept Horse, both are 'horse's. To have the concept Horse is to have the ability to use a 'horse'. To have this ability is, I submit, for Plato, to have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Horse.

Let me now reinforce this interpretation by reference to some other portions of the text, specifically the etymological section. We saw before that names are instruments for dividing reality. The etymological section discusses the correctness of names. In this section, it is repeatedly stated (e.g., 395b and 396a) that a name is correct when it shows that nature (φύσις) of the thing named. At 422d, although 'φύσις' is not used, the same point is made: "Now the correctness of all the names we have discussed was based upon the intention of showing the nature of the things named." (Literally: "showing what each of the things [named] is." [οἷς δὲ λογίων οἷον ξαποτόν ἔτοι τῶν δινών])

What does it mean for a name to show the nature of a thing? Plato's answer is: A name shows the nature of an object when it is the name of the thing the object
is. At 393b, Socrates states: "It is right, I think, to call (κατάληγε) a lion's offspring a lion and a horse's offspring a horse. I am not speaking of prodigies, such as the birth of some other kind of creature from a horse, but of the natural offspring of each species after its kind." Thus, something is correctly named when it is put into its proper species or kind. In carving reality, we must do it at its joints, i.e., call the things of the same kind by the same name, (tokens of the same token class). Names are incorrectly given when nature is carved incorrectly. This will happen when we do not distinguish two different species properly and, for example, call all chipmunks and squirrels by the same name, or when we misclassify or misname a species and, for example, call whales fish, or when we try to name something non-existent, for example, demons or ghosts.

In the etymological section, we have thus far seen that names are correct when they show the nature of the nominee, and that we show the nature of the nominee when we call it the kind of thing it is. Right after it is stated that a horse's offspring should be called a horse, Plato goes on to say that it doesn't matter what marks and noises we use (393c-d): "and whether the same meaning is expressed in one set of syllables or another makes no difference." The horse's offspring should be called by the same set of marks and noises (different tokens of the same token class) as the
parent, but it doesn't matter if the marks and noises are 'horse' or 'pferd,' or any other set. Plato claims (394d): "To those, then, who are born in accordance with nature, the same names should be given." The following picture begins to emerge: Things with the same nature (the same kind of things) should be given the same name; and variety in letters and syllables does not prevent two name tokens from being the same name. If two tokens are the same name, it is because they perform the same function or pick out the same things.

The picture I have drawn of Plato seems to invite a rather serious objection. I should like to now state the objection and then respond to it. If my picture of Plato is accurate, isn't it the case that on Plato's view, it is impossible to tell if someone is using a name properly or improperly? In other words, if English speaking Jones sees a squirrel and calls it a chipmunk (or even an elephant), can't we say that, since different sets of marks and noises can be the same name, Jones is using the token 'chipmunk' (or 'elephant') as a name for squirrels? The question can be put in another way: Can't 'chipmunk' be a 'squirrel'? The fact that 'chipmunk' and 'squirrel' are different sets of marks and noises does not prevent them from being the same name. So, misidentification becomes undetectable. In fact, the preceding objection is, I think, what Robinson is worried about when he says the following:
This doctrine of what I may call the indifference of the syllables is disconcerting to me, and I imagine to most of my contemporaries... It seems to make the name into a ghost that may take any form, which seems to entail that 'Socrates' can have no way of apprehending this ghost, or of distinguishing between correct and incorrect embodiments of it. I have difficulty in believing that Plato thought it worth while to draw attention to such an absurdity.37

The objection is an important one. So, first I shall discuss the objection itself, and then I shall discuss what Plato says that is relevant as a response to the objection.

The objection has the following form:

(1) x is a 'horse' if and only if x plays the same role (has the same function) that 'horse' plays (has) in English.

(2) The role (or function) of 'horse,' for Plato, is to pick out horses.

(3) So, (from 1 and 2), x is a 'horse' if and only if x picks out horses.

(4) Suppose Jones sees a horse and calls it 'aardvark.'

(5) From 4, 'aardvark' picked out a horse.

(6) From 5 and 2, 'aardvark' played the same role that 'horse' plays in English.

(7) From 6 and 1, 'aardvark' is 'horse'. (Absurd!)

The problem with the preceding argument is step 5. Just because the role or function of a name is to pick out or refer to things, it does not follow that every time we use the name it succeeds in picking anything out. Plato thinks of names as instruments or tools that have certain functions. But as Plato recognizes at Republic I 352e-353e, just because
the function (or work) of a knife is to cut, it doesn't follow that every time we use a knife, we will successfully perform the work of cutting. Similarly with names. Just because the role of a name is to refer or pick out, it doesn't follow that we will succeed in picking out something when we use a name.

Furthermore, concerning the "indifference of syllables," Plato is very careful in the Cratylus to distinguish between the making or inventing of names and the using of names. 385-388 discusses the use of names while 389-391 discusses the invention of names. The section in which Plato emphasizes the point that the letters and syllables that make up a name are not important is the section in which Plato is discussing the invention of names. If a biologist discovers a new species, it doesn't matter what marks and noises he uses to christen the species. But it doesn't follow from this that once the name of the species becomes a part of English, I can successfully use another set of marks and noises to pick out that species. There is a sense in which the particular marks and noises a name is composed of is insignificant. We could have used the mark 'nam' instead of 'man.' But once a set of marks and noises becomes a name in a language, we are not free to use another set for similar purposes.

It is interesting to notice in this connection that Hermogenes confuses the two positions outlined above. He
confuses the position that names have a conventional usage and the position that any person can use any sound to have any meaning (385a). It is clear, though, that Plato does not confuse the two, for he gives separate arguments against the two very different positions. In arguing against the position that any person can use any set of marks and noises to mean anything (the Humpty Dumpty view) Plato points out that a consequence of this view is that we cannot distinguish true from false claims (385b-d). If all names are correct or true, then since statements are merely combinations of names, all statements must be true. But this can't be. So some names must be incorrect or false, i.e., the Humpty Dumpty view is wrong. For my purposes, it is not important to discuss the merits or demerits of the preceding argument. It is important, though, to point out that although this is Plato's argument against the Humpty Dumpty view, it is not his argument against conventionalism. In the argument against conventionalism, Plato claims that names ought to be seen as tools for the dividing of reality, and the dividing of reality correctly is not a matter of convention. I think it is fair to say, in response to the original objection, that Plato holds the Humpty Dumpty view for the invention of new names, (any set of sounds and syllables will do), but does not hold it for the use of names. Once a name becomes conventionally appropriate, then if we are members of the
linguistic community in which it is appropriate, we must use that set of sounds and syllables.

With the preceding objection out of the way, we can now conclude this section. We have just seen that a correct name for Plato will be a set of marks and noises that is used to pick out all and only the members of a natural kind, i.e., a name that carves reality at the joints. Thus, 'horse' seems to be a correct name. And so does 'pferd.' Since they pick out the same natural kind, they have the same function, and are thus on Plato's criteria, the same name. Let us now tie up the etymological section with the section on Proper Forms. 'Horse' and 'pferd' are both correct names, and they are the same name (tokens of the same type). 'Horse' and 'pferd' are both 'horse's. Therefore, both tokens stand for the same concept, the concept Horse. As we have seen, the only kind of thing that can have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Horse, is a person, and to have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Horse, is for a person to have a name-of-horse in one's soul, i.e., to have the concept Horse. This concept, in turn, can be put into a variety of different linguistic materials (tokens of different token classes). Put schematically, the claim I am making is the following: One and the same Proper Form (Name-of-F) has been put into different tokens of different token classes (a and b) if and only if a and b are dissimilar in shape and sound, but a and
b are both *F*s. If a and b are both *F*s, then they play the same role, i.e., they divide reality in the same way.

4. Concepts in Plato

The existence of names (and knowledges) is necessarily tied to the existence of persons. Strawson claims that words don't refer, people do. The idea is, of course, that a sound qua sound is not a name, the sound must play a certain role in intersubjective discourse in order to be a name. (Plato hints at this at Cratylus 424b-d where he claims that there is more to being a name than simply being a sound made by a human being.) For Plato, knowledges are in people. Euclid has a share of the Form, Knowledge-of-Geometry, in him. When Euclid knows that 2+2=4, it is not the proposition that 2+2=4 that knows, it is Euclid. Similarly, if Euclid names a figure a triangle, it is not the sound that names, it is Euclid. It is only in a derivative sense that the sound is a name, just as it is in a derivative sense that the proposition is a (piece of) knowledge. Names, then, strictly speaking, like knowledge, are in people. It is therefore, persons who have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-F. And for a person to have a share of The Name-of-F in him is for that person to be able to divide the kind (Form) F from the other kinds, which includes the ability to pick out and name f's. If one has these abilities, then one has
the concept F. And, of course, the abilities can be manifested in different languages.

Sellars argues that concepts are linguistic objects in the same way that the pawn is a chess object. "Just as the pawn can be realized in material objects of different shapes, sizes, and composition, so the concept Father can be realized in different linguistic materials or sign designs." The concept Horse can be realized by 'horse,' 'pferd,' or 'hippos.' A claim similar to Sellars' is in Aristotle:

Words spoken are symbols (σημεῖα) or signs of affection of impressions of the soul (τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπειδήματος); written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.

Aristotle's point is that spoken sounds differ in different languages, but the "concepts" or mental affections the sounds are signs of are the same for all men. 'Horse' and 'pferd' are different sounds that play the same role or stand for the same concept. It is hard not to see Aristotle as very close to Plato on these matters.

Plato, at Theaetetus 189e-190, and Sophist 263e-264, characterizes thought as inner speech. The inner episode analogous to a sentence is δόξα or judgment (Theaetetus 190a, 190c). And it seems reasonable that the inner episode analogous to a name is a concept. At Sophist 261-262, Plato
distinguishes naming from saying or stating. In order to say or state, the proper linguistic vehicle is the sentence. In order to name, the proper linguistic vehicle is the name. The *Theaetetus* and *Sophist* tell us that the "inner sentence" is a judgment. It seems that the "inner name" ought analogously to be a concept. This view links the *Sophist* and *Theaetetus* closely to the *Cratylus*. The link is: for someone to have an "inner name" in him is for that person to have a share of a Proper Form, Name-of-Something, in him. If someone has the inner name of horse in him, he has the concept Horse. This concept can be put into different linguistic materials (tokens of different token classes). So, having the concept Horse is having the ability to properly token a 'horse'.

5. The Type/Token Distinction Applied to Plato's Theory of the Correctness of Names

Given what has been said in sections 1-4, I can make my points in this section briefly. The beginning of the *Cratylus* consists of an argument between Socrates and Hermogenes in which Socrates argues against Hermogenes' conventionalism. At the end of the dialogue, Socrates argues against Cratylus' naturalism, i.e., the position that names are correct by nature. The question that has been asked is: Which position was the one Plato held? Did he hold that names are correct by convention or correct by nature?
The traditional literature on the Cratylus gives different answers to this question. But I should like to argue that the question itself is misconceived. The question is ambiguous for it could be asking about either tokens, token classes or types. And Plato gives, appropriately, different answers to those questions.

Concerning the question of the correctness of the tokens, Plato gives the same answer as Aristotle, i.e., that marks and noises are purely conventional. The point is made several times from 434d-435d. And it is clear that in this section, Plato is discussing tokens and not types, for the theory he is refuting is the theory that names sound like the things they name. He must be talking about tokens here, for name types, being roles or concepts, have no sounds. So, at the end of the Cratylus, Plato makes the point that the correctness of marks and noises, i.e., tokens, depends upon convention (435c):

I myself prefer the theory that names are, so far as possible, like the things named; but really this attractive force of likeness is, as Hermogenes says, a poor thing, and we are compelled to employ in addition this commonplace expedient, convention, to establish the correctness of names.

Since token classes are simply sets of tokens, the correctness of a token class, just as the correctness of each member of that class, will depend upon convention. Plato's point is that when we are talking about names qua marks and noises, the correctness of those marks and noises viewed
either as individual marks (noises) or as the class of similarly shaped marks (similar noises) depends upon convention. So, Plato's answer to the question of the correctness of names as token classes is the same as his answer to the question about the correctness of names as tokens, i.e., the correctness depends solely upon convention.

Tokens and token classes are conventional for Plato, but as we saw before, more goes into the making of a name than inventing sounds and marks. Tokens are embodiments of types or expressions of concepts, and although each particular embodiment may be conventional, the type embodied or concept expressed is not. That is why experts are needed. Different tokens of the same type are tokens of the same type because they play the same role or have the same function. Now, each token that plays a certain role is conventional, but the role it plays is not conventional. Thus 'horse' is a conventional mark which plays the role of picking out horses. 'Pferd' plays that same role. The role of picking out a natural kind is a non-conventional or natural role played by conventional tokens. 'Horse' and 'pferd' are both 'horse's. They both express the concept Horse. This concept, which is not conventional, can be put into different, conventional linguistic materials. Ultimately, for Plato, marks and noises are conventional, but the concepts they express are not.
In this chapter, I argued that Plato has what one might call a doctrine of concepts. A person has the concept Horse, for Plato, when that person has a share of the Form, Name-of-Horse in his soul. When a person has a concept, he has a certain set of abilities, in particular the ability to pick out and distinguish horses. This theme will be important in the following two chapters. In those chapters, I shall be arguing that for Plato, to have knowledge requires having concepts. For example, to know what Justice is, for Plato, involves (a) having the concept Justice and (b) having the second order ability adequately to define Justice (which would, on a Sellarsian interpretation, come to having the ability to state the role played by the term 'justice').

In the next two chapters, I shall compare the relative merits of my interpretation that knowledge involves conceptual abilities as indicated above with another traditional interpretation of Plato, i.e., the interpretation that knowledge, for Plato, is a direct, non-conceptual, immediate "quasi-perceptual" act of awareness.
FOOTNOTES

1. For example, in the opening discussion of the dialogue between Socrates and Hermogenes (383a-384a), 'δυομα' occurs six times and 'δυοματα' occurs twice. Fowler translates all six occurrences of 'δυομα' as 'name' and both occurrences of 'δυοματα' as names.' This pattern continues throughout the dialogue. Fowler's translation appears in the Loeb edition of the Cratylus.


3. I have taken that list of names from the etymological section of the Cratylus. See 393a, 399b-d, 409d-410b, 412c-413b, 414a-b, and 417a-c.

Or it could mean that awareness of the Forms is non-propositional (or non-conceptual). None of the authors I mention give a characterization of direct acquaintance; so it is difficult to tell which of the two alternatives they are opting for. If they are maintaining the latter thesis, i.e., that acquaintance is a non-propositional, non-conceptual act, then this chapter can be seen as an argument against their thesis. I shall discuss this in much more depth in chapters II and III.


'Death' is ambiguous as between type and token. Plato recognized that and used it in order to show that name types (roles or concepts) are natural, but name tokens (marks or noises) are conventional.


8. Ibid., p. 102.


10. Ibid., p. 233n, fn.

12. Nothing I say in this chapter directly depends on the dating of the Cratylus. The issue is controversial. Nevertheless, I am prepared to argue that the Cratylus is a fairly late dialogue, (i.e., post-Phaedrus). At 424b-d, Socrates is clearly employing if not the method of collection and division, at least the method of division. I take this to be strong evidence in favor of a late dating. Nicholas P. White in Plato on Knowledge and Reality (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1976), pp. 125 and 131 also dates the Cratylus late. So does G. E. L. Owen (but only in passing) in "The Place of Timaeus in Plato's Dialogues," Classical Quarterly, 2 N. S. (1953), p. 85, fn. Charles Kahn proposes a fairly early dating for the Cratylus in "Language and Ontology in the Cratylus," in Exegesis and Argument, ed. by E. N. Lee, A. P. D. Mourelatos, and R. M. Rorty, (Assen: Van Gorcum and Comp., 1973), p. 154. Kahn pays the price for the early dating, though. Consider how he struggles in the following passage, (pp. 162-63): "We are indeed introduced (in the case of the shuttle) to the idea that several specific Forms may fall under one generic Form. That should not be so surprising, though it is perhaps a point not elsewhere made in the middle dialogues, where the unity or uniqueness of each Form is generally stressed." The idea of ordering Forms in something like a genus-species hierarchy (i.e., collection and division) first appears in the Phaedrus. It would seem easier to date the Cratylus at approximately the same time as the Phaedrus than struggle with an apparently anomalous passage. The most sustained argument for an early dating appears in an article by J. V. Luce, "Date of the Cratylus," American Journal of Philology, LXXXV (April, 1964), pp. 136-54. Crombie, op. cit., p. 323, and Ross, op. cit., pp. 4-5, both admit that there is conflicting evidence and do not try to arbitrate the issue.

13. All translations of the Cratylus are based on Fowler's translation in the Loeb Classical Library.

14. For my purposes, it is not important to discuss whether Plato was more interested in language as spoken or language as written. For an interesting argument on this topic, see Gilbert Ryle, "Letters and Syllables in Plato," Philosophical Review, LXIX (October, 1960), pp. 431-50; and D. Gallop, "Plato and the Alphabet," Philosophical Review, LXXII (July, 1963), pp. 364-76.


16. Phaedrus 265d-e.
19. All Sophist translations are Cornford's.
20. See Phaedrus 265e and Statesman 287c.
21. Norman Kretzmann interprets this passage in a similar manner in "Plato on the Correctness of Names," American Philosophical Quarterly, III (April, 1971), pp. 126-38. Kretzmann does not claim that 'horse' and 'pferd' are the same name, but he does say that they "embody the same model correct name" in the same way that 'Es regnet' and 'It's raining' may be said to embody the same proposition." (See pp. 129-30.) The analogy is an instructive one. For more on the "model correct name," see footnote 40.

22. Kahn, op. cit., p. 165. Furthermore, my discussion of the function or role of a name is in some ways similar to Kahn's discussion of the "sign relation." On p. 172, Kahn says: "By a sign relation I mean an ordered pair \{N,0\} such that N is a phonetic configuration in a particular language, say G (for Greek), such that O is a definite objection or kind of thing, and such that speakers of G regularly make use of N in order to identify O and to distinguish it from other objects or kinds." Kahn does not go on to tie this in with Plato's doctrine of collection and division. This is undoubtedly due to Kahn's belief that the Cratylus is early, (see footnote 12). Nevertheless, the idea of identifying an object as of a certain kind and distinguishing it from "other kinds" is at least an anticipation of collection and division. Also, Kahn's condition that speakers of G must "regularly" make use of N in order to identify O" is too strong. Speakers need only occasionally make use of N. For example, speakers of English don't regularly make use of "homo sapiens" in identifying humans; they regularly make use of expressions such as "human" and "person." Nevertheless, "homo sapiens" is, on Plato's account, a word or name.

23. Weingartner coined this expression, op. cit., p. 10.
24. In section 425d-427d, Plato does present the view that some sounds are actually better or more correct for certain objects than other sounds, i.e., he presents onomatopoetic view in which names are better which sound like the things they name. But at 434c-435c, Plato presents a counter-example to the onomatopoetic view, i.e., he presents a good name which does not
imitate phonetically the object named. But Anagnostopoulos correctly points out (op. cit., pp. 731-36) that this only shows that although sounding like the thing named can't be a necessary condition of correct naming, it might still be a sufficient condition. Anagnostopoulos' claim is correct concerning the counter-example. But there is another passage in the Cratylus, specifically 423b-c which clearly indicates that for a noise to sound like a thing is also not a sufficient condition for that noise to be a name of the thing. In that passage, Socrates says that people who imitate sheep and cocks and other animals are not naming those animals. This shows that imitation is not a sufficient condition. And, as Anagnostopoulos agrees, the counter-example shows it not to be a necessary condition. Thus, Plato does adequately refute the onomatopoeic theory.

25. Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 130, holds that 'hippos' and 'cheval' are "tokens not of one type but of two types." Kretzmann's point is undoubtedly that 'horse' and 'cheval' are not tokens of the same phonetic type, (in my terminology, they are not members of the same token class). And, of course, his point is accurate. But as Kahn points out, op. cit., p. 164, although they are not of the same phonetic type, they are of the same semantic type. On my view, their being of the same semantic type means that they have the same meaning or play the same role. And for two terms to play the same role for Plato is for them to divide reality in the same way.

27. Ibid., p. 27.
28. Ibid., p. 28-29
29. Sophist 220.
30. Calvert, op. cit., p. 34
31. White, op. cit., p. 145. I develop the analogy between naming and knowing quite differently than White. The path I take is one that was originally suggested to me by Robert Turnbull.
32. Phaedo 100c, 101c.
33. This is, I take it, the spirit of Phaedo 102b-d.
34. See *Phaedo* 79c-d, Republic I 353d, and *Theaetetus* 185d-e.

35. I am in agreement with Kahn who states, op. cit., p. 163: "the right name is the one that shows the essence of the thing, or what-it-is."

36. This objection was suggested to me by William Lycan, and I profited from discussion concerning it with Dan Turner.


38. Against the Humpty Dumpty position, see 385a-c. Against the conventionalist position, see 386e-390e.


40. Only one other interpreter of the *Cratylus* has suggested that there is a doctrine of concepts in the dialogue. Norman Kretzmann puts forth that position in "Plato on the Correctness of Names." I am greatly indebted to that article. But our positions differ as to the status of Natures or Proper Forms and their relation to concepts. What Calvert and I have called a 'Nature' or 'Proper Form,' i.e., a Form appropriate to something, Kretzmann calls a 'model correct name.' On page 130, Kretzmann identifies the model correct name with "that name which is naturally fitted for each thing." Calvert argues on p. 29 that the name naturally fitted for a thing ought to be identified with the Proper Form of the thing. And, as I have already argued in this paper, Proper Forms are Forms. My position, then, is that the model correct name X. (i.e., The Proper Form, Name-of-X) is a Form. Kretzmann resists this move, he doesn't identify the model correct name with Forms. But this severs the connection between The Name Itself and The Name-of-F, The Name-of-G, etc. Just like The Shuttle-for-Thick Wool and The Shuttle-for-Fine Linen are specific Forms under the more generic Form, The Shuttle Itself, The Name-of-F and The Name-of-G are specific (proper) Forms under the generic Form, The Name Itself. Kretzmann not only resists this move, but goes on to claim (p. 131): "Plato himself provided no explanatory identification for the model correct name, and the theory can and probably should be expounded with the ontological status of the model correct name left unexplained." (Kahn, op. cit., p. 162 makes a similar remark in claiming that the relevant section of the *Cratylus* [389-390] is not designed to answer certain ontological questions about the Forms).
But if model correct names are in fact Proper Forms, they must be Forms. And we know from other dialogues about the ontological status of the Forms. Furthermore, since Kretzmann identifies model correct names with concepts, the ontological status of concepts must also be left unexplained. On my view, though, to have the Concept Horse is to have a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Horse. Yet on Kretzmann's view, even though Plato has a doctrine of concepts, it is not linked to his doctrine of The Name Itself (and Name-of-F, Name-of-G, etc.). This is extremely odd, since the section in which Kretzmann finds the doctrine of concepts (388-90) is the very section in which Plato discusses Forms and Proper Forms. Kretzmann is entirely correct in finding a doctrine of concepts in the Cratylus, but he does not sufficiently link the notion of having a concept of something with having a share of the Proper Form, Name-of-Something. This linkage is important for it ties up Plato's doctrine of the Form, The Name Itself, with "inner names" or concepts. Furthermore, my view can account for Plato's own analogy between Shuttles and Names. On Kretzmann's view, as far as I can tell, there is nothing analogous to the model correct name for shuttles. On my view, the model correct name is a specific Form analogous to The Shuttle-Appropriate-for-Fine Linen.


43. Aristotle, On Interpretation 16a4-9, translated by Harold Cooke.


45. See footnote 5. As far as I can tell, one of the most difficult problems for interpreters of the Cratylus has been the onomatopoetic section (425d-427d). (See footnote 24.) The difficulty is that almost all interpreters of Plato have identified the theory that names are correct by nature with the onomatopoetic theory.
But this is wrong. The onomatopoetic theory is concerned with name tokens, (i.e., specific noises). Now it may well be the case that name tokens do not imitate the things they name, (i.e., the onomatopoetic theory is false), yet there still may be a natural correctness for names, i.e., for name types. Just because the onomatopoetic theory is false, it doesn't follow that there is no natural correctness for names.

In Chapter I, I pointed out that Plato argues for the existence of Name Forms in the *Cratylus*. Different tokens in different languages, e.g., 'red' and 'rot', can have a share of the same Name Form, in this case, Name-of-Red. Furthermore, I argued if a person has the ability to use a token, then that person has a certain linguistic or conceptual ability. A person who has the ability to use the token 'red' has the concept Red. So does the person who has the ability to use the token 'rot.'

In this chapter and the next, I should like to relate the previous considerations to Plato's theory of knowledge. In this chapter, I shall argue that knowledge, for Plato, necessarily involves the use of names and concepts, i.e., that the ability to use language is a necessary condition of knowledge for Plato. I shall then go on to argue for the much more radical claim that a certain kind of linguistic or conceptual ability is not merely a necessary condition, but it is also a sufficient condition. Specifically, I shall argue that the ability to give a definition of a Form along with the ability to adequately defend that definition is what it is to have knowledge (and hence both necessary and sufficient for knowledge) for Plato.
In Chapter III, I shall consider the two major objections to my view, viz.: (a) Plato's theory of recollection is incompatible with my interpretation, and (b) Plato's view that knowledge is "vision" of the Forms is incompatible with my interpretation. I shall conclude Chapter III by answering criticisms (a) and (b).

1. Linguistic Abilities as Necessary for Knowledge

At Cratylus 388a, Socrates claims that a name is an instrument or tool (δργανον). At 388b-c, Socrates specifies the function of that tool. The two principal functions of a name are to divide reality (διακριτωκρον της ουσιας) and to teach (διδασκαλικον). This passage is closely related to Republic I 353. In the Republic passage, Socrates says that the function (δργον) of something (an instrument) is "that which can be done only, or done best, by means of it." (Republic I 352e.) Socrates then gives examples of instruments (δργανα) such as the eyes, ears, and knives. The function or work of the eyes is to see, of the ears, to hear, and of a knife, to cut. In the case of the eyes and ears, they are the only instruments through which we can see and hear. In the case of the pruning knife, it is not the only instrument with which we can trim the branches, but it is the instrument that will do the best job (353a). Since the name is also a tool or instrument with a function, the same must also be true of it, i.e., the name is an
instrument that can only, or at least best, perform a certain function. We have seen from Cratyclus 388 that the function of a name is to divide reality. It follows, then, that either the only way to divide reality is with a name, or at the very least, the best way to divide reality is with a name. One cannot divide reality, i.e., the Forms, without using names, or at least, one cannot do it well.

Which position, then, is Plato's? Does he hold that using names is a necessary condition for dividing reality and teaching, or does he hold the weaker position that using names is the best way to divide reality and to teach? Anagnostopoulos argues that Plato holds the stronger position that the instrument, the name, is a necessary condition of the action, the dividing of reality and teaching. I find his argument persuasive. It is as follows:

At 387D10 Socrates says: 'And, again what has to be cut (§ δει τεμνειν), we said, has to be cut with something (§ δει τα τεμνειν).' And he proceeds, using the identical construction § δει --, § δει τα --, where the blanks are to be filled with the same action verb, to show that weaving and boring must (§ δει) be done with something. And again 'what has to be named (§ δει όνομαξειν) has to be named with something (§ δει τα όνομαξειν)'? (387E4). That is, something is necessary for the performance of any action. He then proceeds to show that what is necessary for the performance of some action is the instrument for that action: 'SOC: And what is that with which we have to bore (τρύπαν) HER: A borer (τρόπανον). SOC: And that with which we weave (κεραίζειν) HER: A shuttle (κερκίς). SOC: And that with which we must name (όνομαξειν) HER: A name (όνομα).
SOC: Right. A name also, then, is a kind of instrument (*dpyavov*). 1 (388A). It is clear now that Plato understands by 'instrument' for a certain action F that f whose use is a necessary condition for performing action F.4 (Emphasis Anagnostopoulos'.)

Anagnostopoulos is correct. In the *Cratylus*, Plato is committed to the view that one cannot divide reality or teach without using the proper instrument, the name. This fits well with the *Republic* passage insofar as the name is much more like the eye than it is like a pruning knife, i.e., without the eye(s), we cannot see, whereas without the pruning knife, we still may be able to cut a branch (it may be difficult, but possible, to cut the branch with a pocket knife). But without names, we cannot name and hence cannot distinguish or divide. Just as the eye(s) are necessary for seeing, the name is necessary for naming and distinguishing.

At *Republic* V 477, Socrates distinguishes knowledge from ignorance and opinion. Knowledge is directed toward (ἐπ’ ὧν) what is (πῶς ὁντι). Ignorance is directed toward what is not (μὴ ὁντι). And opinion is directed toward what is intermediate or in between (μεταξὺ) (Republic 477a). To put it another way, the objects of knowledge are the things which really are (the Forms), while the objects of opinion are the objects between Being and not-being (the changing objects of sense perception). Knowledge is of the Real or of the Forms.5 And, surely, no one can know the Forms unless he can properly distinguish them from one another or divide them from one another. In discussing the Form of
the Good, Socrates says (Republic VII 534b): "The man who cannot by speech (reason, τῷ λόγῳ) distinguish (διορίσασθαι) the Form of the Good from all others...such a man you will say does not know the Good itself, nor any kind of good."

Being able to distinguish or divide the Form of the Good from the other Forms by means of reason or speech (τῷ λόγῳ) is a necessary condition of knowing the Form of the Good. Later Plato invents a method called collection and division (συναγωγή and διαίρεσις) for distinguishing or dividing the Forms. It is Plato's view that one cannot attain knowledge without practicing the method of collection and division. For example at Phaedrus 266b, Socrates says: "I myself am a lover of these divisions and collections, that I may gain the power to speak and think...and it is those who have this ability [to do collection and division] whom for the present I call dialecticians." And even more dramatically, at Philebus 16c, Socrates describes collection and division as "the instrument through which every discovery ever made in the sphere of the arts and sciences has been brought to light." The dialectician or man who knows is the one who can properly divide up the world of Forms. Dividing up reality properly is a necessary condition of knowing for Plato. And we see from Cratylus 388 and Republic 353 that one cannot divide up the world of Forms without names, i.e., using names is a necessary condition for dividing reality. But if one cannot divide reality, one
does not know. Therefore, one cannot know the Forms without using names. Being able to use names is a necessary condition of knowing for Plato.

One is able to separate threads only if one uses the proper instrument, i.e., the shuttle (Cratylus 388). Similarly, one is able to separate reality (the Forms) only if one uses the proper instrument (the name). But since being able to use names properly is a conceptual ability, it follows that the having of a certain conceptual ability is a necessary condition for dividing the Forms properly. And since one knows only if one can divide the Forms, we can conclude that the having of a certain kind of conceptual ability is a necessary condition of knowing. Knowledge, for Plato, essentially involves the use of names, concepts, and language. As we have already seen, even distinguishing the Good is done by means of λόγος.

Being able to properly use names is a conceptual/linguistic ability. And I have just shown, using the tool analogy, that it is the sine qua non of knowledge. But the tool analogy is just one piece of evidence for the view that a certain kind of linguistic ability is a necessary condition of knowledge. There is much more evidence. Let me begin presenting the evidence by discussing the earlier, Socratic dialogues. In those dialogues, Socrates frequently posed questions of the form "What is X?", e.g., "What is Piety?", "What is Justice?", etc. And, in those dialogues,
an interlocutor's inability to answer Socrates' "What is X?" questions is taken to show conclusively that the interlocutor does not have knowledge about that subject. Even though Meno thought he knew what virtue was before he met Socrates, it appears after questioning that he does not (Meno 80). Similarly, Nicias claims that not being able to answer Socrates' questions about courage shows that both he and Laches are "equally ignorant of the things which a man with any self-respect should know," (Laches 200a). In the Charmides, where no one can answer Socrates' questions about sophrosune, it is concluded that they don't know what sophrosune is, (Charmides 175a-b, 176a-b). Since inability to say what something is is taken to show a lack of knowledge, it is clear that the ability to say what something is is a necessary condition for knowing what it is. This is most strikingly put at Laches 190c: "And that which we know, we must surely be able to say (tell)." A certain kind of linguistic or conceptual ability viz., the ability to answer Socrates' "What is X?" questions is a necessary condition for knowledge. Without this conceptual ability, Socrates feels justified in claiming that the interlocutor does not know what he is previously claimed to know.

This ties up with Plato's insistence that the expert (the man who has knowledge) is the man who is able to speak well on the subject of his expertise. In the Ion, Ion claims that although he can speak well on Homer, he cannot
speak well on Hesiod, Archilochous or any other poet. Socrates replies (Ion 532c): "It is plain to all that not from art and knowledge (τέχνη καὶ ἴσωστημα) comes your power to speak concerning Homer. If it were art that gave you power, then you could speak about all the other poets as well."¹¹ The expert on poetry, the man who has knowledge, is the man who can speak well. In the Hippias Minor, Socrates claims that the experts in arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy are those who are best able to speak both truly and falsely about their respective subjects. For example, at Hippias Minor 367d, Socrates says that the one who knows, i.e., in this case, the geometer, is the one who is "most able to speak both falsely and truly about diagrams."¹² Socrates goes on to say that this is true of all the knowledges or sciences. The expert in all arts and sciences is the man who is most able to speak well, i.e., say what is both true and false about a subject. Again, having a certain kind of linguistic ability appears to be a necessary condition of being an expert (a person who knows).

The previous sorts of claims are not only made in the early dialogues that I have cited, but continue to be made in the middle dialogues. For example, at Phaedo 76b, Socrates asks: "If a man knows certain things, will he be able to give an account (λόγον) of them, or will he not?"¹³ Simmias answers: "Unquestionably he will, Socrates." And at Republic VII 534b, Socrates says: "And you also
call a dialectician the man who can give a reasoned account (λογόν) of the reality of each thing? To the man who can give no such account, either to himself or another, you will to that extent deny knowledge of his subject?" Glaucon answers: "How could I say he had it?" At different times, we have seen that Plato explicitly endorses the following claims: The ability to use names is a necessary condition of knowledge; The ability to answer "What is X?" questions is a necessary condition of knowledge; And the ability to "give an account" is a necessary condition of knowledge. Knowledge, for Plato, essentially involves a certain kind or certain set of linguistic/conceptual abilities.

Exactly which linguistic abilities are required for knowledge? In the early dialogues, Socrates demanded an answer to "What is X?" questions. If an interlocutor was able to properly answer, say "What is Piety?", this was taken to be prima facie evidence that he knew what piety was. But giving an appropriate definition of piety is not sufficient for knowledge of it, for one could memorize the proper definition of piety without understanding it or without being able to adequately defend it. For example, Nicias was able to give the proper definition of courage in the Laches, but his inability to defend his definition showed that he did not know what courage is.

In addition, when one knows, he cannot be persuaded out of his beliefs. Knowledge provides the tether,
(Meno 97e-98a). When one knows what X is, he can give an account (definition) of X, he can respond to alleged counter-examples to his definition, he will not be persuaded out of his beliefs, he can relate what he knows to other appropriate topics, and in general, can speak well on X. For purposes of brevity, let me call that entire set of abilities "the ability to define and defend."

Thus a more precise statement of my claim is that the ability to define and defend is a necessary condition of knowledge for Plato. In discussing knowledge of the Good, Plato tells us the following through Socrates (Republic VII, 534b):

And you also call a dialectician the man who can give a reasoned account (λόγον) of the reality of each thing? To the man who can give no such account, either to himself or another, you will to that extent deny knowledge of his subject?—How could I say he had it?—And the same applies to the Good. The man who cannot by reason (λόγῳ) distinguish the Form of the Good from all others, who does not, as in a battle, survive all refutations, eager to argue according to reality and not according to opinion, and who does not come through all the tests without faltering in reasoned discourse (λόγῳ)—such a man you will say does not know the Good itself, nor any kind of good.

Thus Plato, in the Republic passage, explicitly endorses the claim that the ability to define and defend is a necessary condition of knowledge.

Thus far, I have argued only that for Plato a certain conceptual ability (the ability to define and defend) is a
necessary condition for knowledge. Plato holds that the name is the tool which divides reality. And, in order to divide reality (which one must be able to do if one knows), one must use the instrument that does the work, i.e., the name. I then argued that this fits well with Plato's repeated insistence that a) if one cannot speak well on a subject, then one doesn't know about the subject, and b) the expert is the person who can speak well on his field of expertise.

2. Linguistic Abilities as Sufficient for Knowledge

Thus far, I have argued that, for Plato, a certain conceptual ability (the ability to define and defend) is a necessary condition for knowledge. But is it also a sufficient condition? Someone may admit that, for Plato, if a person knows the Form, The F Itself, then he can give a definition of The F Itself but deny that the ability to give a definition is sufficient for knowledge. In fact, interpreters who hold that knowledge is a "quasi-perceptual" act of awareness of the Forms would deny that the ability to define and defend is sufficient for knowledge. On their view, let me call it the "quasi-perceptual view", knowledge of a Form just is the "seeing" or "grasping" of that Form, i.e., to be acquainted with a Form is what it is to know a Form, and is therefore both a necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge. And a holder of the
quasi-perceptual view might go on to say that once one has "seen" or "grasped" a Form, a consequence of that act of "vision" is that the person would then be able to give a definition of that Form. In fact, on the quasi-perceptual model, "seeing" the Form explains how it is that a person is able to give the correct definition of that Form. For example, Nicholas White claims Plato "thinks that the Forms have some sort of clarity which can be apprehended by the mind, and which explains the fact that unqualified statements can be made about them."17 (Emphasis his.)

In what follows, I should like to argue that the quasi-perceptual view, however attractive it is, is mistaken, and that Plato's position is not merely that the ability to define and defend is a necessary condition for knowledge, but the much more radical view that the ability to define and defend just is knowledge for Plato, i.e., the ability to define and defend is both necessary and sufficient for knowledge. I shall therefore argue that Plato does not hold the view that knowledge is a quasi-perceptual act of acquaintance. I shall argue for my position in two stages. In this chapter, I shall present positive evidence that Plato did think of knowledge as an ability. And in Chapter III, I shall consider the quasi-perceptual model in some detail, arguing that it does not account for several of the texts of Plato including the texts it was originally meant to explain.
Plato seldom gives a characterization of knowledge and never gives what he takes to be the correct definition of knowledge. Even the *Theaetetus* ends without a definition of knowledge that Plato is willing to accept. The task of an interpreter is thus made quite difficult; the most one can do is piece together bits of information and see if the pieces fit together in a coherent pattern. As we have already seen, Plato does seem willing to link knowledge with certain conceptual abilities, such as the ability to "give an account", or the ability to answer "What is X?" questions. Does Plato ever define knowledge as the ability to define and defend? No, but in a serious epistemological passage in *Republic* V, Plato does characterize knowledge as an ability or δύναμις.

At *Republic* 475-476, Socrates distinguishes the lovers of sights and sounds from the lovers of knowledge. At 477a, Socrates points out that while knowledge is directed to what is, and ignorance is directed to what is not, opinion is directed to what is in between or intermediate. At 477b, Socrates states that knowledge and opinion must be different abilities or capacities (δυναμεις). Gosling argues that δύναμις ought to be translated as 'ability' rather than as 'faculty'. Socrates then goes on to characterize an ability (δύναμις) as follows (477c): "We shall say that abilities are a certain class (γένος) of things which
enable us to do what we are capable of doing (αὕτῳ δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς δυνάμεθα & δυνάμεθα)..."

Socrates then goes on to ask (477d): "Let us now go back, my good friend. Would you say that knowledge is an ability or how do you classify it?" Glaucon responds: "Among the abilities, and the most powerful of all."

Although Plato never defines knowledge, he does, in the Republic, characterize it as an ability. What kind of ability? As we have just seen, an ability is something which "enables us to do what we are capable of doing." And what is one capable of doing when one knows? As I have pointed out, when according to Plato one knows, he is capable of answering "What is X?" questions, he is capable of "giving an account", he is capable of using names, and he is capable of defending his definitions. The temptation to link these two kinds of claims is great. On the one hand, Plato characterizes knowledge as an ability. On the other, he says repeatedly that the man who knows is able to define and defend. If knowledge is an ability, and an ability enables us to do what we are capable of doing, and a person with knowledge is capable of defining and defending, it seems plausible that knowledge just is the ability to define and defend.

In other words, unless we find evidence to the contrary, the linkage of the claim that knowledge is an ability with the claim that the man who knows can define
and defend seems appropriate. But, as we shall see in Chapter III, there are several interpreters of Plato who do think there is evidence to the contrary. I shall spend all of Chapter III evaluating that evidence.

Before I end this chapter, there is one caveat I must make. I have argued that knowledge, for Plato, is the ability to define and defend. It may seem, with my talk of abilities, that I am turning Plato into a behaviorist. An objection of the following kind might be made against my interpretation: If knowledge is an ability, it is a disposition to behave. But knowledge, for Plato, isn't a mere disposition to behave or speak in certain ways. Plato frequently speaks as if sometimes we are **occurrently** aware of something or occurrently know something. One of the main advantages of the "quasi-perceptual" model is that it can account for occurrent cases of knowledge. Can a dispositional account of knowledge handle occurrent knowledge? The answer to this is, I think, yes. The fact that there are occurrent cases of dissolving does not entail that solubility is not a disposition. Similarly, the fact that there are occurrent cases of knowing does not entail that knowledge is not a disposition. Just as sugar can **manifest** its disposition to dissolve and occurrently dissolve, a person can manifest his disposition to define and defend and occurrently know. There **are**, for Plato, occurrent, datable cases of knowing. These cases occur when one
manifests his disposition, i.e., when one is occurrently defining or defending. There are, for Plato, acts of awareness of the Forms, but they are not unstructured, diaphanous, quasi-perceptual acts, rather they are linguistic acts. And, of course, a linguistic act need not go on out loud, it can go on silently. At Theaetetus 189e-190a and Sophist 263e, Plato tells us that thought is inner speech.

Thus, my disagreement with the holders of the quasi-perceptual model is not the disagreement as to whether knowledge is dispositional or occurrent. The quasi-perceptual view and the ability view both hold that there are occurrent knowings for Plato. The disagreement concerns the character of those knowings. On my view, knowledge has a linguistic character. In Chapter III, I shall more carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each interpretation.
1. Although the word 'Greek' does not appear in the Cratylus passage, Plato frequently discusses "what we do" with a particular instrument or tool. At 388b1, Socrates asks "What do we do (δρομεν) when we weave?" At 388b7-8, Socrates asks: "The name being an instrument (δραματων), what do we do (ποιομεν) when we name?": It seems fairly clear that Plato is employing the concept of function without using the exact word.

2. At Cratylus 388b-c. All Cratylus translations, as in Chapter I, are based on Fowler's translation.

3. All Republic translations are Grube's.


5. This point is also made at Parmenides 134a. I discuss it in greater detail in Chapter I, p. 23.


7. All Phaedrus translations are Hackforth's.

8. All Philebus translations are Hackforth's.


10. All Laches translations are Jowett's.
11. All Ion translations are Cooper's.

12. All Hippias Minor translations are Jowett's.

13. All Phaedo translations are Hackforth's.

14. The "What is X?" question is usually linked to Plato's early dialogues. This, though, is quite misleading. The main question of Republic is "What is Justice?", the main question of Theaetetus is "What is Knowledge?", the main question of Sophist is "What is a Sophist?", and the main question of Statesman is "What is a Statesman?".

15. Nicias' definition of "courage" at Laches 195e is almost identical to Plato's own definition at Protagoras 360d and Republic 429b-c.


III. THE SHORTCOMINGS OF THE QUASI-PERCEPTUAL MODEL
AS AN INTERPRETATION OF PLATO'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

In Chapter I, I argued that Plato has a doctrine of
Name Forms, and a corresponding doctrine of concepts. I
used this in Chapter II to argue that being able to use
names and concepts is a necessary condition of knowing for
Plato. I then argued for the more radical thesis that a
certain kind of conceptual ability, i.e., the ability to
give a definition and adequately defend the definition is
not only a necessary condition of knowledge for Plato, but
rather that the ability to define and defend just is what
knowledge is for Plato.

A major criticism can be leveled against the preceding
interpretation of Plato. Several interpreters of Plato have
claimed that knowledge, for Plato, is some kind of "quasi-
perceptual" act or state of a person, a "vision" or recol-
lection of the Forms. Once a person has had a "vision" then
that person knows, and having had a "vision" somehow
explains or accounts for the fact that the person is able
to give and defend definitions. We can, for example,
explain that Simmias is able to give and defend the proper
definition of The Equal Itself by pointing out that Simmias
has "grasped" or "seen" or (perceptually) recollected the
Form, The Equal Itself. The reason that I am able to describe what a telephone is is that I have seen a telephone. Similarly, or so the line goes, the reason that Simmias is able to define The Equal Itself is that he "saw" or "grasped" or (perceptually) recollected it. But on my model, a model which does not appeal to acts of "vision," knowledge just is the ability to give and defend definitions. The following question may then legitimately be asked of my interpretation. "How does one acquire such an ability if not by previously "grasping" a Form?" It is to that important objection that I should like to turn my attention to in this chapter.

The structure of the chapter will be as follows: in section 1, I shall give a general characterization of the quasi-perceptual model. In section 2, I shall argue that Plato did not hold the quasi-perceptual model. In section 3, I shall argue that the quasi-perceptual model does not even adequately explain the passages it was designed to account for, viz., the recollection and vision passages of Plato. And in section 4, I shall propose an answer to the question about how one acquires the ability to define and defend for Plato.

1. The Quasi-Perceptual Interpretation of Plato

Plato is frequently portrayed as a philosopher who holds that knowledge is some sort of quasi-perceptual act or state of awareness in which the soul is aware of or
"grasps" the Forms. For example, Runciman says: "Plato seems actually to think of knowledge as a sort of sixth sense, that is to say, a sort of mental touching..." Later, he says that for Plato, knowledge is "knowledge by acquaintance," or "knowledge must be acquired by the direct apprehension of things in themselves." Runciman is an advocate of what I shall call "the quasi-perceptual view" in which knowledge is an act of awareness which is "like" an act of vision or an act of grasping (hearing, tasting, and smelling metaphors are infrequently used by both Plato and his interpreters.) On the quasi-perceptual view, although knowledge is not perception, it is like perception. Consider the following description of Nicholas White's:

It is in the Republic that Plato's metaphors of 'looking to' and 'seeing' and 'viewing' the Forms comes into its own. Although he does not believe that what is involved is literally sight, he does want to claim that it is possible to do something like seeing Forms, and that it can be done somehow in greater or lesser degrees. (Emphasis his.)

This kind of description of the quasi-perceptual view immediately raises a question: In what way is knowledge like seeing, viewing, and grasping? The answer that defenders of the quasi-perceptual model give is something like the following: Knowledge is like perception in that it is direct and immediate. In several respects, knowledge of the Forms is like Bertrand Russell's doctrine of acquaintance with universals in which there is a direct, immediate "grasping" of a thing (a universal). Consider the
following characterizations of the quasi-perceptual view (the emphasis in these characterizations will be mine): Cherniss claims that for Plato "the special faculty of knowledge is characterized by direct contact of subject and object." Lutoslawski claims: "Plato constantly uses metaphorical expressions taken from the senses of sight and touch to denote the immediate character of his highest knowledge." Bluck calls the relation "direct acquaintance." So does Gulley. Cornford says: "noesis is constantly compared to the immediate act of vision and suggests rather the direct intuition or apprehension of its object." Robinson claims that Plato's major mistake is viewing knowledge as "a sensing without organs, a kind of touching with spirit hands, a kind of 'extra-sensory perception!' Ross calls the relation "direct and immediate."

At this point, a great deal of commentary is needed. The terms "direct," "immediate," and "acquaintance" are ambiguous and philosophically loaded. Whose analysis of "direct, immediate acquaintance" are these interpreters presupposing? Is the contrast between direct and indirect the contrast between being an eye-witness to a crime as opposed to hearing about it later (indirectly)? (Theaetetus 201b). Or is it the contrast between seeing something with the naked eye as opposed to seeing it through colored glasses or through a microscope? There are similar difficulties with the contrast between immediate and mediated. An act of
awareness can be immediate in the sense that it is non-inferential (not mediated by any process of inference), or non-conceptual (not mediated by concepts), or non-linguistic (not mediated by linguistic occurrences). Consider Russell's description of acquaintance: "We have acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths." Are the interpreters of Plato who hold the quasi-perceptual model saying that for Plato, acquaintance with the Forms is not mediated by any process of inference or any knowledge of truths?

Unfortunately, we get very little in the way of commentary on behalf of the interpreters of Plato who hold this quasi-perceptual view. There is almost no description or characterization of what the notions of "direct" and "immediate" come to for Plato. It is as if by saying that knowledge, for Plato, is an act of direct, immediate acquaintance of the Forms, they are explaining Plato's views on knowledge; and furthermore, it is apparently an explanation which is itself in no need of explanation. But, as I have already indicated, nothing could be further from the truth. "Direct" and "immediate" are ambiguous terms amenable to several different interpretations.

A second problem, closely related to the problem just discussed comes up. I began this discussion by pointing out that on the quasi-perceptual model knowledge is not
perception, it is "like" perception. I then asked "In what way is knowledge like perception?", and the answer seemed to be "Both are direct and immediate." I pointed out that as it stands, that answer is unclear. Nonetheless, a great deal more can and should be said. Forms, for Plato, are non-spatial, non-temporal, and non-material. In point of fact, they have no perceptual qualities. Forms cannot be seen, touched, or tasted. Even the Forms The Rough Itself and The Smooth Itself have no texture. In what sense, then (to slightly change metaphors), can they be "touched" by the mind's hand? In other words, if Forms have no perceptual qualities, in what sense is knowledge of them quasi-perceptual? What does knowledge of the Forms have in common with perception? Given that Forms are not quasi-colored, or quasi-loud, and that they have no quasi-smell, there seems to be just one answer (and I think this answer is related to discussions of directness and immediacy). When a person is aware of a Form, there are, of course, two objects involved. And there is a relation between those two objects. Similarly, when a person sees a chair or touches a grapefruit, there are two objects involved, and a relation between those objects. When a person has a vision, it is always a vision of something, a grasping is always a grasping of something. Perception is intentional, i.e., it is always of or about something. Similarly with knowledge. Knowledge is always
knowledge of or about something. For Plato, knowledge is of or about the Forms (Republic 478a).

The point I am trying to make is the following: Interpreters have said that knowledge, for Plato is quasi-perceptual or like perception. But, since Forms have no perceptual properties (and, presumably, no quasi-perceptual properties), the only way in which knowledge is like perception is that in both cases, a person is aware of an object. Jones is aware of two equal sticks now, he is aware of The Equal Itself later. And the way in which knowledge is like perception is that both are of objects, albeit different kinds of objects.

With the preceding in mind, the quasi-perceptual model seems to be on the horns of the following dilemma: On the one hand, to say knowledge is quasi-perceptual for Plato may be an interesting, substantial claim. If a quasi-perceptual theorist were to make the substantial claim, he would say something like the following: Knowledge is like perception in being direct and immediate. And to say that knowledge is direct and immediate is to say more than simply saying that knowledge is of the Forms. It is rather to make the substantial claim that not only is knowledge directly of the Forms, but it is also not mediated by anything (not mediated by inference, not mediated by concepts, not mediated by language, etc.). If this is the claim of the quasi-perceptual theorist, it is blatantly false. In Chapter II, I showed
that knowledge, for Plato, necessarily involves the use of names, concepts, and language. The idea that a person can have knowledge without concepts, language and the ability to define and defend is an idea Plato repeatedly and vigorously rejects. So, if the claim of the quasi-perceptual theorist is that knowledge is like perception in that it is immediate, i.e., not conceptually mediated, it is an idea Plato rejects.

The other horn of the dilemma is equally disastrous. It goes as follows: Knowledge is like perception in that both knowledge and perception are direct and immediate; but on this horn of the dilemma, all that is meant by direct and immediate is that both knowledge and perception are of objects. In other words, when we tried (on the other horn) to give substance to the notions of directness and immediacy, this led to an untenable interpretation of Plato, so on this horn, we will give little substance to the notions of directness and immediacy and let them stand simply for the relation of "of-ness." But, at this point, the quasi-perceptual model lacks almost all substantial content. Of course, knowledge, for Plato, is of the Forms. That is relatively non-controversial. A linguistic model can and must handle the notion of of-ness or intentionality. For language, too, is of the world. On the linguistic model, a person is aware of The Triangle Itself when he is saying out loud or to himself, e.g., "The triangle is a plane figure bounded by three straight lines." And in this case, his
knowledge is of the Form, The Triangle Itself, in just the way the linguistic expression is of The Triangle Itself. So, on this horn of the dilemma, the quasi-perceptual model gives a "safe but stupid" interpretation of Plato.

The dilemma I am proposing, then, is the following: Either the quasi-perceptual model is making a substantial claim or it is not. If it is making a substantial claim, i.e., if it is claiming that knowledge is unmediated by concepts, the claim is substantial but false. If, on the other hand, the quasi-perceptual model is not making a substantial claim, but just making the weak claim that knowledge is like perception in that both are of the world, then although it is making a claim that is true, it is quite uninteresting. (And not only quite uninteresting, but also quite misleading since to say that knowledge is quasi-perceptual seems to mean more than merely that knowledge is of objects.)

Thus far, I have given a general characterization of the quasi-perceptual model. It is the model that attributes to Plato the view that knowledge is like seeing or touching. And, on the quasi-perceptual view, knowledge is direct and immediate. Furthermore, I have argued that in trying to give the cash for "direct and immediate" the quasi-perceptual view turns out to be either clearly false or almost devoid of content. In the next section, I should like to pay some attention to some of the things Plato says about knowledge and perception in order to show that he was not nearly as
tempted by the quasi-perceptual model as some interpreters have thought.

2. Plato on Knowledge and Perception

In spite of the fact that Plato does frequently use visual and tactile metaphors to describe knowledge, I should like to argue that Plato did not seriously entertain the belief that knowledge was to be understood as something like perception. (It should be noticed in passing that the mere fact that Plato uses perceptual metaphors, in itself, doesn't commit Plato to a quasi-perceptual account of knowledge. As both Gosling and Cross point out, one can say some things like "your meaning is clear to me", "I see your point", and "I grasp what you are saying" without being committed to a quasi-perceptual analysis of knowledge.)

Let me now turn to some of Plato's own statements on the subject of knowledge and perception.

The dialogue in which Plato first introduced the "full-fledged" theory of Forms is the Phaedo. The first mention of the Forms is at 65d, and the entire passage is based on a particular contrast, i.e., the contrast between sensing or perception (αισθησεις) and reasoning or thinking (λόγος or διάνοια). The senses are a hindrance to knowledge (65b). Only when none of the senses intrude, and the mind, by itself, reasons (ἐν τῷ λόγῳ ἐστιν, 65c) does it apprehend reality or τῶν δεινῶν. Furthermore, clearest knowledge comes
through thought or thinking (διάνοια, 65e-66a) when no sense is permitted to intrude. This is Plato's first introduction to the Forms and it is interesting to note how vividly he contrasts knowledge through reasoning or thinking with perception by the senses. This is an odd introduction to a theory which is supposed to be quasi-perceptual. Knowledge is attained through thought or thinking which Plato tells us in Theaetetus and Sophist is inner speech.\(^{18}\)

The contrast between thought and perception occurs again in Parmenides when Parmenides says to Socrates (135e):

> When you were just now speaking to him, I was impressed that you did not allow the review to wander about concerning those things among the visibles but rather concerning those which one especially must grasp in argument and which one must believe to be Forms.\(^{19}\)

Forms are here spoken of as grasped in λόγοι. At Phaedo 78d, Socrates reintroduces the Forms in a similar manner:

> "Let us revert to those objects which we spoke of earlier. What of that very reality of whose existence we give an account when we question and answer each other."\(^{20}\) Plato reintroduces the Forms as those objects it is possible to give an account of (διάμεν λόγον) in question and answer. And in the misology passage of the Phaedo (90d), Socrates claims that if one detests and doesn't partake in discussions (λόγοι), he will be debarred from knowing the truth about reality (τῶν διανοων). Despite the fact that Plato does use visual metaphors, he doesn't hesitate to point out that
Forms are grasped in thought, thinking and conversation, and not in any perceptual manner.

The most important passage, for my purposes, is Theaetetus 184-187. It is here, I should like to argue, that Plato explicitly rejects the view that knowledge is a quasi-perceptual act. In this passage, Socrates is ending the long section of the Theaetetus responding to Theaetetus' answer to Socrates' question "What is Knowledge?" Theaetetus' first answer was "knowledge is perception (αίτησθαι)," (151e). In this section, Socrates not only argues that knowledge is not perception, but makes the stronger claim that knowledge could not be perception. And his argument applies not only to the physical eye, but also to the mind's eye. The passage begins with Socrates' distinction between seeing with the eyes and seeing through them.²¹ Socrates' point is that we see through the eyes, using them as instruments, but we don't see with the eyes, i.e., it is not the eyes themselves that see.

Socrates then goes on to point out that there are certain notions such as existence, non-existence, likeness, unlikeness, sameness, and difference, etc., which are not "perceived" by any particular organ but "the mind in itself is its own instrumentality for contemplating the common terms that apply to everything."²² (185d-e).

Socrates then goes on to conclude, (186b-c):
It is not true, then that whereas all the impressions which penetrate to the mind through the body are things which man and animal alike are naturally constituted to perceive from the moment of birth, reflections about them with respect to their existence and usefulness only come, if they come at all, with difficulty through a long and troublesome process of education...
If that is so, knowledge does not reside in the impressions, but in our reflection upon them. It is there, seemingly, and not in the impressions that it is possible to grasp existence and truth...thus perception and knowledge cannot possibly be the same thing.

In the preceding passage, Plato contrasts the mere having of sensations with actively classifying or conceptualizing. The mere having of sensations or impressions is a passive process that occurs in conceptless babies and in animals. But the passively receiving of sensations cannot possibly constitute knowledge. In order to know, for Plato, the mind must be actively classifying, judging, and comparing.

An act of acquaintance is an act of direct, immediate (i.e., non-conceptually mediated) awareness. In The Problems of Philosophy, Russell characterizes acquaintance as "logically independent of knowledge of truths."23 He goes on to say that "we have acquaintance with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths."24 In the Theaetetus passage just quoted, Plato is saying that we cannot have knowledge without inferring, classifying, and judging. And since acquaintance is independent of inference
and classification, i.e., it is a passive process that requires no activity on the part of the mind, it follows, as Plato says, that "perception and knowledge cannot possibly be the same thing."

The preceding is, I take it, a general criticism against perceptual theories of knowledge and applies equally well to mental eye theories of knowledge. For if the soul or mental eye merely "grasps" or "sees" a Form, this will not constitute knowledge unless the mind also actively classifies, employs concepts, and judges. The mere "seeing" of a Form no more constitutes knowledge than the baby's mere having of a "rabbit sensation" constitutes knowledge of rabbit on the part of the baby. In both cases, there is a lack of knowledge unless the mind is actively employing concepts. And this is Plato's point at Theaetetus 184-187.

On this matter, Gosling correctly points out that mental seeing cannot be knowing:

But any view that considers knowing just to consist in the mental seeing creates considerable difficulties. For the subject must be able to recognise the object as Beauty or Justice if knowledge is to do the work required.

In other words, if a person "sees" Justice but does not recognize it as Justice, that person does not know. There must be something on the side of the knower (i.e., some active conceptualization) in order to have knowledge. This description of Plato's purpose also fits well with Plato's
discussion of the aviary. The problem with the aviary account of knowledge is that a person can pick out a knowledge bird (a Form) without recognizing that bird as the bird it is. The mere "grasping" of a bird cannot constitute knowledge unless you already know what bird you have "grasped." This again leads us to the conclusion that perception and knowledge cannot possibly be the same thing.

At this point, the following objection may be lodged against my argument. It might be claimed that thus far, I have only shown that "seeing" is not sufficient for knowledge, but I have not shown that "seeing" is not necessary for knowledge. In other words, all my arguments are aimed at showing that passive "seeing" is not enough for knowledge. A holder of the quasi-perceptual view may then modify his position and say: "True, passive "seeing" is not enough for knowledge, but it is still necessary for knowledge."28

I should like to make two responses to the preceding argument. The first is an ad hominem in that it shows that the preceding argument may have disastrous consequences for a holder of the quasi-perceptual view. My argument runs as follows: A major virtue of the quasi-perceptual model is that it can account for Plato's visual metaphors. These quasi-perceptual acts of "vision" of the Forms are the paradigm cases of knowledge according to the quasi-perceptual model. But now it appears that these acts of "vision" are not cases of knowledge at all, but merely constitute
necessary conditions for the having of knowledge. In other words, the holder of the quasi-perceptual model cannot have it both ways and say "seeing" is merely necessary for knowledge but not sufficient, and then go on to say that a "vision" of the Forms is what it is to have knowledge (i.e., both necessary and sufficient for knowledge.)

My second response is the following. In ordinary cases of perceptual knowledge (e.g., knowing that the object before me is a chair), it seems that the perceptual ingredient is necessary but not sufficient for knowledge. Someone could see a chair without knowing that it is a chair, but no one could know that the object before him is a chair without any sensory input. So, the sensory input is necessary but not sufficient for knowledge. The problem with the preceding analogy to mental eye "seeing" of the Forms is that there is no analogy! What is the mental eye counterpart to the visual sensation? Seeing a chair may be necessary in order to know that it is a chair. But what happens when one "sees" The Chair Itself which has no texture, no color, no shape, and no size. Is there anything analogous to what happens when one sees a physical chair? How do we cash the "quasi" in "quasi-perceptual"? The point I am trying to make is that upon examination, the idea of "direct, immediate acquaintance" with the Forms is a rather empty metaphor. The only thing that "seeing" a universal has in common with seeing a physical object is that in
both cases, we have an awareness of an object. But if the
only substantial claim of the quasi-perceptual model is that
"seeing" a Form is the awareness of a Form, then the quasi-
perceptual model becomes uninteresting. For, as I argued
before, even a linguistic account of knowledge agrees that
knowledge of the Forms involves awareness of the Forms.29
The only difference is that on the linguistic analysis,
the awareness is structured.

I can now conclude this section. In the Theaetetus,
Plato claims that the mere seeing of an object cannot pos-
sibly constitute knowledge. For the same reasons, the mere
"seeing" of a Form cannot constitute knowledge. In both
cases, the mind must actively be employing concepts for
knowledge to be possible. This argument, by the way,
resembles the Cratylus argument which showed that one must
be able to use names in order to divide reality.30 In both
cases, Plato is pointing out that the mind must be actively
classifying (using names) in order to know. But, if this
is so, knowledge cannot be a mere "seeing" of a Form. In
order to know, the mind must be able to have certain
thoughts about the Forms. And, since thought is inner
speech, it follows that in order to think, the mind needs
language.
3. The Recollection and Vision Passages in Plato

I must now attend to the recollection and vision passages of Plato to show how they fit in with my general thesis, for as I mentioned before, they seem to contradict my view. The vision passages of Symposium and Republic seem to commit Plato to the view that knowledge is "vision" of the Forms, and the recollection passages of Meno and Phaedo seem to commit Plato to the view that once one recollects a Form, he is again brought to "see" it.

In section 1, I argued that Plato seems explicitly in the Theaetetus to deny that knowledge is a quasi-perceptual act (or state). But one can respond that by the time Plato wrote the Theaetetus he was beginning to change his mind, and surely in his middle period, the "vision" and recollection passages do seem to commit Plato to a quasi-perceptual model for knowledge. In what follows, I should like to argue that Plato did not change his mind (at least in regard to holding a quasi-perceptual model of knowledge) and that the "vision" and recollection passages do not commit him to such a model.

I should like to begin with a discussion of recollection. On the quasi-perceptual view, recollection is the process of recalling what one previously "saw" or "grasped." So, when one recollects, one is "seeing" or "grasping" again. And, of course, once one can "see" again, then he knows and is therefore able to give definitions and answer Socratic
questions. Let us see if the recollection passages of the *Meno* and *Phaedo* support this interpretation. First of all, what the slave boy in the *Meno* eventually recollects is a truth of geometry, i.e., that the square double the area of a given square is made on the diagonal of the given square. This already poses a problem for the perceptual model, for on the perceptual model what one sees are things, e.g., tables and chairs, and what the mind's eye "sees" are Forms, e.g., The Table Itself and The Chair Itself. But the slave boy is not grasping a thing, he is grasping a truth, i.e., he is not seeing but seeing that. Although the perceptual model may capture some of the flavor of the recollection passage in the *Phaedo* where what one recollects is an object, i.e., The Equal Itself, it does not seem to account for the *Meno* passage in which what is recollected is a truth rather than an object. And wouldn't we be better off with an interpretation which made sense of both passages?

The next thing to notice about the *Meno* is that the slave boy already admits to knowing what a square is, i.e., he knows something about squares, he can pick them out, knows that all the four sides are equal, etc. He at least has a rudimentary or "rough and ready" concept of square. If he didn't, Socrates would not be able to help him out. The slave boy has a rough and ready concept of square, he can use the word 'square' well enough in ordinary conversation, but he has never carefully analyzed the content of his
concept, i.e., he does not know what it is to be a square. This is, of course, the normal situation between Socrates and his interlocutors. They come to him having rough and ready concepts of justice, friendship, courage, piety, etc., but are found through careful questioning not to know what it is to be just, pious, courageous, etc. Although they can use the words, 'justice,' 'piety,' etc., well enough, they cannot define, characterize, or give an account of the terms.

Socrates and Plato both seemed to believe that through proper questioning, one could come to proper answers to "What is X?" questions, i.e., that if one thought about it and discussed it long enough, one could actually make progress and actually come to know what one was previously mistaken about.

With proper questioning, and with the interlocutor having the appropriate rudimentary concepts, he can be brought to see (see how easily the visual metaphor can be used, and harmlessly so) that e.g., a square with double the side of a given square will not be twice the area of a given square, or that paying back debts may be unjust, or that Helen may not be beautiful. Given the concepts they already have, they can be brought to recognize certain truths that they didn't previously recognize by skillful questioning.

What does the questioning involve? It involves drawing out the consequences of the information already implicitly contained in the concept. Once one knows that the area of a square is length times width (square any one side) one
can be brought to see that by doubling both the length and width, one will be quadrupling the area of a given square. Or once one recognizes that all just actions are good, then one can be brought to see that all cases of returning what one owes not good and thus not just. On my view, then, recollection is the process of deriving consequences from the concepts one already has. That is why Plato says (Meno 85c) that the slave boy's opinions were "somewhere in him" and recoverable, for he need do nothing but derive the consequences of what he already knows.

At the end of the recollection passage of the Meno, after the slave boy has been brought to see that the area of a square is doubled by building a second square on the diagonal of the first, Socrates says, (85c):

At present these opinions, being newly aroused, have a dreamlike quality. But if the same questions are put to him on many occasions and in different ways, you can see that in the end he will have a knowledge on the subject as accurate as anybody's.33

If knowledge is a quasi-perceptual act, and the slave boy has been brought to "see" how to double the area of a square, why would Socrates deny that the slave boy has knowledge? If knowledge is like perception, then once one "sees" then one knows. Yet the slave boy has been brought to see, and still doesn't know. He must go over it several times, ask himself more questions, etc. The perceptual model does not seem to be able to explain that.
On my model, the process of recollection is the deriving of consequences of the concepts one already has, and the slave boy has just derived certain important consequences from his concept of square. But he still does not know for he is not yet able (does not yet have the ability) to define and defend. He must go through several examples and answer many questions before he acquires the consistent ability to answer questions about squares. In order really to have an ability one must do some practice, whether the ability be a conceptual or a manual ability. Thus if knowledge is an ability for Plato, we can see why the slave boy does not yet know. If, on the other hand, knowledge is a "grasping" or a "seeing" of the right answer, the slave boy has already done that and yet still doesn't know.

If what I am saying is so, then the recollection passage of the Meno does not support the quasi-perceutal model of knowledge for Plato, but rather supports my view that knowledge is the ability to define and defend.

The recollection passage of the Phaedo yields the same results. The recollection passage of the Phaedo runs from 72e to 77a. It begins with Simmias' admission (73c) that to be reminded of something implies having known (ἐπισταθαι) it previously. He then goes on to admit that there is something different from the equal objects of the sensible world, i.e., The Equal Itself, (74a-c) which never appears unequal. Furthermore, the sensible equals remind Simmias of
The Equal Itself (74c-d). The last point is that the sensible equals are defective, inferior copies of The Equal Itself (74e). Thus, Simmias agrees that there is The Equal Itself, and that he is reminded of it, and that previous knowledge of it is necessary for one to realize that the sensible equals are inferior copies of it (which he does realize). On the quasi-perceptual view, Plato holds that souls, prior to birth, were "acquainted with" or "saw" the Forms, e.g., The Equal Itself, and forgot during birth what they previously "saw." Now, I would like to maintain that, if not prior to the recollection conversation, at least during it, Simmias is certainly being reminded of The Equal Itself. He agrees that it exists, that sensibles remind him of it, and that they are inferior copies of it. Clearly then, The Equal Itself has been brought back to mind for Simmias. Socrates, in fact, describes this process (76a):

The reason being that we found that it was possible for a person who had seen or heard or otherwise perceived an object to go on to conceive (have in mind, ἔχω σχέδη) another object which he had forgotten, something with which the first object was connected, either by resemblance or contrast.

Simmias has gone on to conceive or have in mind the other object (The Equal Itself) with which he compares sensible equals. If he has brought The Equal Itself back to mind, then on the quasi-perceptual model, it would seem that once again he has a picture of it in his mind's eye.
If the quasi-perceptual model is accurate, then Simmias (prior to birth) "saw" The Equal Itself, and Socrates has reminded him of it. In fact, Simmias' memory is so good that he is convinced that sensible equals are only inferior copies of it. In being reminded of it, he once again (on the quasi-perceptual model) has a picture of it before his mind's eye. So, he again "sees" The Equal Itself. And since knowledge is "seeing" or "grasping," it follows that Simmias knows The Equal Itself. There is only one problem with this interpretation: Simmias vigorously denies knowing what The Equal Itself is (76b). He denies knowing The Equal Itself not, by the way, because he doesn't "perceive" it, but rather because he can give no account (λόγος) of it. Socrates says (76b): "If a man knows certain things, will he be able to give an account of them, or will he not?" Simmias responds: "Unquestionably, he will, Socrates." To know a Form is to be able to give an account of it, no mention is made of "seeing" it with the mind's eye. Furthermore, if Plato does have a doctrine of "seeing" a Form with the mind's eye, there is every reason to believe that Simmias has accomplished at least that much (how else would he know that sensible equals are inferior copies?). Yet Simmias doesn't know The Equal Itself.

The Phaedo account parallels the Meno account. In both cases, Socrates' interlocutor has been reminded of something. The slave boy has been reminded that a square double the
area of a given square is built on the diagonal of the first square, and Simmias has been reminded that The Equal Itself exists. In both cases, they have been brought to "see" something. Yet in both cases, there is lack of knowledge. I submit, therefore, that the recollection passages do not commit Plato to the view that knowledge is "seeing" the Forms. On the contrary, the passages are inconsistent with the vision model.

Thus far I have argued that Plato has a doctrine of concepts and that knowledge is the linguistic ability to define and defend. Furthermore, I have argued that the recollection passages are consistent rather than opposed to my interpretation, and that recollection ought to be seen as that process of deriving conclusions from already accepted premises (or deriving consequences from what is already implicitly contained in the concepts we have) rather than as a quasi-perceptual "glimpse" of a Form. But what about Plato's vision passages in the Symposium and Republic? Is he not committed there to thinking of knowledge as a "vision" of The Beautiful or The Good? At Symposium 211a, Socrates says, quoting Diotima:

> And now, Socrates, there bursts upon him that wondrous vision which is the very soul of the beauty he has toiled so long for. It is an everlasting loveliness which neither comes nor goes, which neither flowers nor fades, for such beauty is the same on every hand, the same then as now, here as there, this way as that way, the same to every worshiper as it is to every other.34
This and similar passages in the Republic invite the reader to think that the foundation of Plato's epistemology is the "vision" of the Forms, in the Symposium, The Beautiful, in the Republic, the Good.

Before I investigate those passages, I should like to pose the following dilemma for the quasi-perceptual model. If knowledge, for Plato, is "vision" of the Forms, then either it is conceptual "seeing" or non-conceptual "seeing." If it is non-conceptual "seeing," then given what Plato says in the Theaetetus, it cannot be knowledge, for in knowing, the mind must be actively employing concepts and actively classifying. So knowledge for Plato cannot be non-conceptual "seeing." Then if it is "seeing," it must be conceptual. But if it is conceptual, where did we get the concepts from? For, on the quasi-perceptual model, the acquisition of concepts is explained by "seeing" the Form.

If knowledge is conceptual "seeing," we either have an infinite regress or a vicious circle. Let me explain: suppose we try to say that Jones knows what Justice is and that he has the concept Justice because he "saw" the Form Justice. It must have been a conceptual "seeing" for if it was non-conceptual, it wouldn't have been knowledge. But if it was conceptual, which concepts did he already have? Certainly he could not have had the concept of Justice, for if he did, then he had the concept without "seeing" the Form, and "seeing" it explains nothing. So, he must have
had other concepts, perhaps the concepts of Being, Same, and Different. But where did he get those concepts from? Either from "seeing" a Form or not. If he got them via some non-perceptual means, then again, the seeing metaphor explains nothing, for he acquired the concepts without "seeing" the Forms. If he got them by "seeing" the Forms, then it was either conceptual or non-conceptual "seeing." And the same problem comes up. If it was non-conceptual, then it couldn't be knowledge, since knowledge involves the mind being active. Then it must have been conceptual "seeing." The same old problem now rears its ugly head. Where did he get those concepts from? Thus, knowledge cannot be "seeing" the Forms.

Let us now turn to the vision passages in Plato. In the Republic, the "vision" of the Good comes temporally after a long and grueling process of education in mathematics and dialectic. One actually knows mathematics and is a competent dialectician before ever "seeing" the Good. In fact, knowing them is a necessary condition of "seeing" the Good. Similarly, in the Symposium, the "vision" of The Beautiful comes after one understands the beauty of the body, the beauty of the soul, the beauty of laws and institutions, and finally the beauty of the sciences (Symposium 210a-d). These "visions" come, if they come at all, only after a long process of learning, thinking, and contemplating. Then, for the lucky few individuals, there
comes an experience of suddenly understanding how the various isolated pieces of knowledge fit together into a large, coherent, harmonious pattern. It is the experience of finally "seeing how everything fits together."

When one looks at a painting of Dali's, for example, one sees the various parts in isolation first, then all-of-a-sudden sees how all the parts fit together. We even speak of "seeing" how the various parts of a musical composition fit together. (In fact, we don't speak of hearing how the parts fit together!) The metaphor of "seeing" how things fit together is a metaphor for understanding how various, isolated bits can be combined and interlocked to form a single, coherent pattern. When we speak of a vision, we are speaking of something vast and comprehensive in scope.

In the Republic, one learns mathematics and dialectic without the help of "visions." But Plato does want to reserve a special place for the supreme dialecticians who have finally succeeded in attaining a comprehensive understanding of how all the isolated bits of mathematics, astronomy, harmonics, etc., fit together into a coherent world view. This comprehensive understanding is analogous to a vision insofar as both are all-encompassing in scope, both come suddenly, and both have a certain harmony, structure, or order. This "vision" is as distant as possible from an immediate (non-conceptually mediated) act of acquaintance. This act of understanding can only come to a
person with a great deal of training in mathematics and logic. It is anything but a non-conceptually mediated "vision."

It is important not to overemphasize the role of the vision of the Good in Plato's epistemology. Prior to having that vision, many philosophers would, on Plato's view, have knowledge of mathematics and harmonics. The vision cannot, therefore, explain the acquisition of such mathematical knowledge. In fact, as we have seen, having a great deal of knowledge is a prerequisite for having the vision at all.

I can now conclude this section. The recollection passages in Plato seem incompatible with the quasi-perceptual model in that both Simmias and the slave boy "saw" but did not yet know. Both of them still needed to acquire the ability to define and defend. And even the vision passages do not describe anything like knowledge by acquaintance. Knowledge of the Good is not an act of immediate awareness. It is an act which is conceptually mediated. It is an act which is an act of understanding how various isolated bits of knowledge fit together into a coherent pattern. This act is in some respects analogous to a vision, but in almost no respects analogous to a diaphanous, immediate act of acquaintance.
4. Plato's Explanation of the Acquisition of the Ability to Define and Defend

We are now back to the original question that I asked at the beginning of this chapter. The virtue of the quasi-perceptual model was that it attempted to explain how it is that a person acquired the ability to define and defend, for on that view, "seeing" Justice explains how one can give a definition of Justice. In this chapter, I have argued that, in fact, "seeing" Justice does not explain the ability to define Justice. Then, how does Plato explain the acquisition of the ability to define and defend.

One must begin by learning one's own native language. The very first question that Socrates asked Meno concerning the slave boy was whether or not he knew Greek. Each of Socrates' interlocutors is a master of his own tongue. Cephalus has the rough and ready concept of justice, Laches of courage, Euthyphro of piety, etc. A person acquires his concepts, for Plato, as he learns his language. This is the cash for Plato's mythological Name-giver. The Name-giver stands for the actual language that a person is brought up with. Having the rough and ready concept of justice is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for knowing what Justice is.

As all of Socrates' interlocutors find out, having the rough and ready concepts are not enough for having knowledge. In order to know what Justice is, one must not only have the
concept Justice (know how to use the word 'justice'), one must also be able to state the role played by the word 'justice,' i.e., one must be able to give the correct definition of 'justice.' Given that one has the rough and ready concept of justice, how does one acquire the ability to define justice?

Plato answers that question for us in a passage on method, the deuterōs plous passage of the Phaedo (99d-100b). At 100a, Socrates says:

...it was on this path I set out: on each occasion I assume the proposition (λόγον) which I judge to be the soundest, and I put down as true whatever seems to me to be in agreement (συμφωνεῖν) with this, whether the question is about causes or anything else; what does not seem to be in agreement I put down as false.

In this passage, Socrates is describing a method he frequently uses. At Meno 82b, Socrates and the slave boy begin with certain propositions such as a square has all four sides equal. Then certain consequences are derived from this and it is seen that doubling the side will not double the area. Socrates and Charmides initially agree to the proposition that temperance is noble and good (Charmides 159b). Laches and Socrates initially agree that courage is a noble quality (Laches 192c). What is happening in these cases, and what Socrates is describing in the deuterōs plous is the following: Socrates and his interlocutors will begin at some point of agreement, they will find some
propositions which they both accept as true, and then by
deriving consequences, they will see whether or not the
interlocutor's "definition" is consistent with the truths
they originally agreed to. So, for example, Laches'
definition of courage as endurance of the soul turns out to
be false for it is inconsistent with the original claim that
courage is a noble quality. The reason for this is that
some cases of endurance are not cases of wise but rather of
foolish endurance (192d), and foolish endurance is not noble.
This strategy is also employed in Meno with the slave boy,
in Republic with Cephelus, in Charmides with Charmides and
elsewhere.

This methodological technique is, I should like to
argue, an explanation of how one acquires the ability to
define and defend. One begins, usually in the company of
a second person, by agreeing to a certain set of logoi
which seem obviously true, or to which they both agree, or
both. Then, by deriving consequences from these logoi they
attempt to see if certain other logoi agree or disagree
with the original ones. This, by the way, is not a tech­
nique for discovering the correct "definition," rather it
is a technique for testing definitions. So if someone
defines justice as paying back one's debts, Socrates shows
his interlocutor that paying back one's debts is sometimes
inconsistent with doing a good action, so it cannot be
justice, as all just actions are good. Even though this is
only a technique for testing, and not one for discovery, Plato's hope is that if one constantly practices the technique, one will eventually find a "definition" which really is consistent with the original logoi, which resists counter-example, which fits in with other logoi that one is willing to accept, etc.

Suppose a philosopher finally does come to know what justice is. He comes up with the proper definition (Justice is doing one's own work) and is able to properly defend this definition. How does one acquire this ability for Plato? By constantly trying different definitions on for size, seeing if they agree with the original logoi that he judges as soundest, deriving consequences from the original logoi and from the purported definitions, until he finally "sees" that justice really is doing one's own. But this "seeing" is not a quasi-perceptual act. It is the culmination of a lot of thought, conversation, and discussion.

Knowledge, for Plato, is the ability to define and defend. It is acquired not by any sort of metaphorical "vision" of a Form, but rather by the rather dull technique of testing definitions in order to see if they are consistent with the original hypotheses that the person judges to be the strongest. What if someone questions the original logoi themselves?

...if anyone were to fasten upon the hypothesis itself, you would disregard him, and refuse to answer until you could consider the consequences of it, and see
whether they agreed or disagreed with each other. But when the time can for you to establish the hypothesis itself, you would pursue the same method: you would assume some more ultimate hypothesis, the best you could find, and continue until you reached something satisfactory. But you wouldn't muddle matters as contentious people do, by simultaneously discussing premiss and consequences, that is if you wanted to discover a truth. (Phaedo 101d-e).

Again, the purely conceptual activity of deriving consequences, testing for consistency, testing for inconsistency, etc., are the tools one uses in discovering truth. No mention is made of "seeing" a Form. That is because if "seeing" a Form stands for anything for Plato, if it is an occurrent act of awareness, it is the act of actually giving or defending a definition silently or aloud.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid., pp. 12, 15.

3. Ibid., p. 21.


14. This argument was originally suggested to me by Robert Turnbull.


17. For example, Ross says: "In the Phaedo the Ideas play a much larger part than in any previous dialogue." Ross, op. cit., p. 22.

18. Theaetetus 189e-190a, Sophist 263e.

19. The Parmenides can usefully be seen as a critique of a Phaedo-type theory of Forms. See Robert Turnbull, "The Argument of Plato's Parmenides," (forthcoming) pp. 1, 3. All Parmenides translations are Turnbull's.

20. All Phaedo translations are Hackforth's.


22. All Theaetetus translations are Cornford's.


24. Ibid., p. 46.


27. Theaetetus 197c-200c.

28. I owe this objection to Charles Kielkopf, William Lycan, and Aaron Snyder, who all, at different times, have voiced it.

29. See Chapter III, p. 81.

30. See Chapter II, pp. 57-61.

31. I owe this idea to Robert Turnbull.
32. I owe the idea of "What it is to be an X" to Alexander Nehemas. The paper it is contained in is as of now unpublished: "Five Theories of Self-Predication in Plato."

33. Guthrie's translation.

34. Joyce's translation.


IV. VLASTOS AND PENNER ON THE UNITY OF VIRTUE

In Chapter I, I argued that a person who has the ability to token a "red", i.e., has a share of Name-of-Red in his soul, has the concept Red. The concept is an ability and that ability can be manifested in different languages. In Chapter II, I continued discussing conceptual abilities and argued that a certain kind of conceptual ability (the ability to define and defend) is knowledge, for Plato. In Chapter III, I compared this dispositional account with another account in which knowledge is seen as a quasi-perceptual act. I argued that the ability account fits better with the Platonic texts. I should now like to relate my discussion of abilities to another doctrine of Plato, a doctrine usually associated with Socrates, i.e., the unity of virtue. Briefly put, I shall be arguing that, for Socrates, each virtue is an ability, and it turns out that, on close inspection, they are really all the same ability. But this is a long story and must be divided into two chapters. In this chapter, I shall discuss the two most recent attempts to analyze this unity of virtue, viz, the analyses of Vlastos\(^1\) and Penner.\(^2\) In the next chapter, I shall present my own analysis in which I shall
relate the unity of virtue thesis to Plato's discussion of crafts and abilities.

1. Vlastos' Analysis of the Unity of the Virtues

In the Protagoras (and the Laches), Plato has Socrates present and defend the highly counter-intuitive thesis that all the virtues (justice, wisdom, courage, piety, and sophrosyne [a virtue which combines the qualities of self-control, prudence, and soundness of mind]) are one and the same. At some points in the Protagoras, this doctrine is stated in a strong fashion, e.g., at 329c Socrates endorses the claim that 'justice,' 'piety,' 'sophrosyne,' 'courage,' and 'wisdom' are "all names for one and the same thing." And sometimes, the doctrine is stated in a much weaker form, e.g., at 329e, Socrates endorses the claim that "if a man has one [virtue] he will of necessity have them all." The stronger claim that all the virtues are identical entails the weaker claim that if a man has one virtue, he will have them all, but the weaker claim does not, of course, entail the stronger.

In interpreting Plato here, it seems there are two major options. On the one hand, in order to eliminate some of the counter-intuitiveness of the strong claim, one could argue that Plato held only or was committed only to the weaker version, and that the stronger claim can and should be reinterpreted so that it is not quite as strong as it appears. Vlastos defends this approach. The second way of interpreting Plato is to argue that he did indeed hold
the stronger version, and then go on to show why the view is not quite as preposterous as it initially appears. Penner takes that option. As I see it, Penner attempts to make sense out of the texts as they stand, whereas Vlastos weakens, i.e., changes the texts in order to make sense of them. Vlastos himself admits:

> If history is an empirical discipline, so is the history of philosophy. And no one can practice the empirical method unless he is willing to submit even the most deeply entrenched presumptions—his own or those of others—to the arbitrament of factual data.

And the factual datum in this case is that Plato states the unity of virtue in very strong ways at certain points in the text of the Protagoras. If we can make good sense of Plato's strong claim, we are accounting for the factual datum in a better way than if we weaken or change the claims as they appear in the text.

I shall begin by presenting Vlastos' analysis. According to Vlastos, Socrates talks about the unity of virtue in three different ways. He calls the three different formulations "The Unity Thesis," "The Similarity Thesis," and "The Biconditionality Thesis." Briefly put, the claim of the unity thesis is that all the virtues are identical, the claim of the similarity thesis is that all the virtues are similar to one another in all respects, and the claim of the biconditionality thesis is that if a person has one virtue, he must of necessity have them all. Vlastos supplies
evidence that at different places in the *Protagoras*, Socrates expresses himself in these different ways. Vlastos then explains that the three theses

...are not treated in the next as logically disjoint tenets, but as successive moments in the elucidation of a single doctrine. That is how Protagoras himself understands them. At no point does he try to drive a wedge between them or play them off one against another. He accepts them as complementary expressions of a theory which he rejects and combats as a whole.7

Vlastos is certainly correct there. Ultimately, Vlastos' strategy is to argue that the unity and similarity theses, on any normal reading of them, are both preposterous, but the biconditionality thesis "is a transparently clear expression of a well-known Socratic doctrine."8 Thus, the proper interpretation of the unity of virtue is: Necessarily, if someone has one virtue, he has all the virtues. But since the three theses present a single doctrine, Vlastos argues that the similarity and unity theses must be reinterpreted in such a way that their meaning is identical with the biconditionality thesis.

Vlastos' task is two-fold. First, he must show that the unity and similarity theses, on any normal reading, are preposterous. (He needs this as a motivation for reinterpreting). And second, he must show how they can be reinterpreted to say nothing more than the biconditionality thesis. In the course of this chapter, I shall try to do the following: First, I shall show that Vlastos' argument
that the unity thesis is preposterous is a bad argument. It
involves an assumption which, though extremely interesting,
is false. I shall discuss this assumption in depth in sec­
tion 1 of this chapter. (Section 2 will be devoted to an
analysis of Penner's thesis on the unity of virtues.) In
Chapter V, I shall present an analysis of the unity thesis
(in its strongest form) which shows the thesis to be
insightful rather than preposterous. And, once we see that
the unity thesis is not preposterous, we shall no longer
feel the need to weaken or change it.

I agree with Vlastos that there is one theory being
argued for in the Protagoras. My disagreement with him
concerns whether the theory is the strong unity thesis or
the weaker biconditionality thesis. Notice, though, dis­
regarding issues of counter-intuitiveness, that my line
accounts for the text better. For, if Plato held the unity
thesis, I have no problem accounting for his stating the
biconditionality thesis, since the latter follows from the
former; and there is nothing odd or objectionable in stating
a weakened version of one's position in certain circum­
stances. The reverse, of course, is not true.

At Protagoras 329c, Socrates endorses the claim that
'justice,' 'piety,' 'sophrosyne,' 'wisdom,' and 'courage'
are "all names for one and the same thing." And again at
349b, Socrates endorses the claim that the five names "stand
for the same thing." Vlastos finds this "most surprising."9

The reason he finds it so is that

to claim that all five 'are names of' the
same thing would be normally understood as
claiming (1) the identity and (2) the
synonymy of the five virtues...but to make
either of these claims would be nothing
short of preposterous.10 (Emphasis his.)

Because of this understanding of the text, Vlastos, unwilling
to believe Plato would commit a howler, argues that when
Plato says that the five virtue words are names of the same
thing, what Plato really means is merely that if a person has
one virtue, necessarily he has them all.

Vlastos thus claims that, if 'justice,' 'piety,'
'sophrosyne,' 'courage,' and 'wisdom' all name the same
thing, then it follows that justice is identical with piety
which is identical with courage, etc., and 'justice' is
synonymous with 'piety' which is synonymous with 'courage,'
etc. R. E. Allen makes a similar claim with respect to
synonymy in his book on the Euthyphro; he claims:

Socrates attempts to lead Protagoras to
admit that the virtues are all names for
the same thing, that 'courage', 'justice',
'temperance', 'holiness', 'wisdom', and
'virtue' are synonyms.11

Vlastos is making two claims. The first claim is
clearly true, i.e., if A and B name the same thing, then
'A=B' is true. but it is not at all clear that the second
claim (the one with which Allen agrees) is true, i.e., if
A and B name the same thing, then A is synonymous with B;
in fact, there is good reason to believe it false. Co-referentiality of terms does not imply synonymy of terms. The terms 'the morning star' and 'the evening star' may well refer to the same thing, yet the expressions need not (and do not) mean the same thing or have the same meaning. Thus, even though Vlastos is right in saying that the view that 'justice,' 'wisdom,' 'piety,' and the rest all mean the same thing (are synonymous) is preposterous, there is not the slightest evidence that Plato held that view. Plato merely claimed that the virtue words named the same thing, he never said that the words had the same meaning.

In the Protagoras, what Plato says is that the virtue words are "names of the same thing," and the five names "apply to the same thing." Not once in the Protagoras, although Plato does have the linguistic resources available to him, does Plato say 'justice' and 'piety' have the same meaning. In fact, the Greek verb for 'means' (σημαίνω) almost never appears in the early dialogues. Socrates never asks Euthyphro for the meaning of 'piety,' he never asks Laches or Nicias for the meaning of 'courage,' etc. But Plato surely can ask that kind of question. In the Cratylus, he uses the word 'means' (σημαίνω) no less than twenty-six times. (The same word index of Plato which records those twenty-six occurrences, records no occurrence of the word in the Protagoras, no occurrence of it in the Laches, no occurrence in the Euthyphro, and one (innocuous)
occurrence in the Lysis.) In the etymological section of the Cratylus, Plato has Socrates say some of the following things:

For Lord (κυρει) and holder (ἐξοπλαστείο) mean (σημαίνει) nearly the same thing. (393a)

For χόρος means (σημαίνει) not child, but the purity and unblemished nature of his mind. (396b)

The name man (ἀνθρωπος) means (σημαίνει)... (399c)

The etymological section of the Cratylus is filled with locutions like 'means the same as,' 'means the opposite of,' and simply 'means.' Plato could, therefore, ask for the meaning of a word or name. Yet in the early dialogues, especially when he asks his "What is X?" question, he does not ask for the meaning of X. Thus, when Vlastos claims that the virtue words are not synonymous, we can agree with him; but it is strictly beside the point, for nothing Plato says in Protagoras needs to entail that they are synonymous. So, at least on the question of synonymy, there is no need to reinterpret something preposterous that Plato said.

We must now look to the second half of Vlastos' claim, i.e., the identity of the virtues is preposterous. At first blush, this seems blatantly question-begging. Prima facie, the claim that the virtue words name one and the same thing is the claim that all the virtues are identical. Presumably, Plato spends most of the Protagoras arguing for it. Vlastos' assertion that identity is preposterous, seems
therefore, a bit premature. Why give up on identity before even inquiring into what the identity is?

The reason Vlastos gives up on the identity thesis so readily does not show itself until the very end of the paper, for it is at that juncture that one of Vlastos' hidden assumptions comes to light. (And it is this hidden assumption which saves Vlastos' argument from being question-begging.) Once we see what the hidden assumption is, I shall attempt to show that the assumption is false and that Vlastos' rejection of the identity thesis cannot be sustained.

Vlastos thinks that it is obvious that justice can't be identical with wisdom or piety or temperance. Why? The answer is the following:

We know, to begin with, that Socrates thinks of 'Justice' as the name of a universal and that he does not think of universals as persons, nor yet as ontological dependencies of persons, such as the actions, decisions, dispositions, practices or policies of this or that person.13 (Emphasis mine.)

The reason that Vlastos thinks that justice can't name the same thing as piety is that 'justice' and 'piety' both name universals, and it is fairly clear that the universal, justice, is not the same as the universal, piety, and so, if 'justice' and 'piety' both name universals, they can't name the same universal. And, clearly, Vlastos thinks that for early Plato, 'justice' and 'piety' do name universals, or as he sometimes calls them, "abstract entities."14 Thus,
they can't name the same thing, so Plato couldn't have held the identity thesis, or so the argument goes. The cogency of Vlastos' thesis now can be seen to rest upon the assumption of Socrates' believing that the virtue words name universals. We must now treat that assumption.

Vlastos does not argue for this assumption. He acts as if it were obviously true. Nonetheless, we do get some hints. In a footnote, he states: "I capitalize the names of the virtues and 'Virtue' wherever each of these terms functions as the proper name of an eidos or idea." And since Vlastos consistently capitalizes the virtue words, he believes that the virtue words, do, for early Plato, usually name an εἰδος or λογιά. Therefore, Vlastos must also believe that an εἰδος or λογιά is, for early Plato, a universal.

Perhaps the argument could be expanded to three premises and a conclusion:

(1) Each virtue word names an εἰδος or λογιά for early Plato.

(2) Just as an εἰδος or λογιά is a Form for middle Plato, an εἰδος or λογιά is a Form for early Plato.

(3) Forms, for Plato (early and middle) are universals.

So, (4) Each virtue word names a universal for early Plato.

(1) and (4) are explicitly stated by Vlastos, and (2) and (3) are the obvious enthymatic premises needed to complete the argument. (Allen explicitly endorses all four of the
I shall devote the rest of this section to criticism of the preceding argument.

Vlastos is claiming that each virtue word names a Form or universal. This fits very well with his insistence that on the identity thesis, each of the virtue words must have the same meaning. It is frequently alleged that, for Plato, Forms are "reified meanings." On this view, when Socrates asked the "What is X?" question, he was asking for the meaning of X. In the middle dialogues, Plato reified these meanings, making them Forms. Vlastos claims that early Plato also held that each virtue word names a Form. So, on the identity thesis, each virtue word must name the same form. And since Forms are nothing but reified meanings, it follows that, if all the virtues are identical and each virtue word names the same Form, then each virtue word must have the same meaning. Thus, Vlastos' claim that each virtue word names a Form fits very well with his claim that on the identity thesis, each virtue word is synonymous with every other virtue word.

I should now like to investigate the claim that each virtue word functions as the proper name of an ἐγνος or ἦσα for Socrates. For, as we have seen, Vlastos' views on synonymy and identity both rest upon that claim.

Although the claim that each virtue word names an ἐγνος or ἦσα is a commonplace in histories of Greek philosophy, it is an odd commonplace, one that has almost no
textual support. The terms 'εἰδος' and 'λόγος' occur rarely in Plato's early dialogues. According to Ast and Brandwood (the two word indexes to Plato) the word 'εἰδος' is found to occur once in Charmides, once in Laches, twice in Lysis, and twice in Protagoras; 'λόγος' is found to occur once in Charmides, once in Laches, twice in Lysis, and twice in Protagoras. In almost every one of the preceding references, both 'εἰδος' and 'λόγος' mean appearance or shape or look, e.g., the naked appearance or form of Charmides (Charmides 154d5), or the boy's appearance (Lysis 294e5), or the appearance of someone (look of someone), (Protagoras 352). I have found not one instance of 'εἰδος' or 'λόγος' in Charmides, Laches, Lysis, or Protagoras in which any of the virtue words is said to name or be a name of an εἰδος or λόγος. 'εἰδος' and 'λόγος' are simply not used in those dialogues to discuss the virtues. Vlastos capitalizes the virtue words throughout his article implying that in the Protagoras itself each virtue word functions as the proper name of an εἰδος or λόγος. Yet in the actual text of the Protagoras, no virtue word is ever used as a name of either an εἰδος or an λόγος. Vlastos' only evidence is taken from two passages in one early dialogue, the Euthyphro. At Euthyphro 5cd, Socrates states:

What sort of thing is the pious and impious, both with respect to murder and other things as well? Or is not the holy, itself by itself, the same in every action? And the unholy, in turn, the opposite of all the holy—is it not
like itself, and does not everything which is to be unholy have a certain single character (ίδεα) with respect to The Unholy. 18

And again at Euthyphro 6d-e, Socrates states:

Do you recall that I did not ask you to teach me about some one or two of the many things which are holy, but about that characteristic itself (αὕτο τὸ ἐδεχός) by which all holy things are holy? For you agreed, I think, that it is by one character (ίδεα) that unholy things are unholy and holy things holy....Give me an account of what this same character (ίδεα) is, so that I may look to it and use it as a standard (παραδείγματα), which, should those things which you or someone else may do be of that sort, I may affirm that they are holy, but should they not be of that sort, deny it.

Concerning these passages, Vlastos says:

What Socrates says of Piety in the Euthyphro—that it is a single idea, which recurs self-identically 'in' every pious act (5dl-2) and can be used as a 'standard' (παραδείγματα) by looking to which we can tell whether a given act is or is not pious (6e3-6)—he would say mutatis mutandis, of every one of the other four virtues. 19

And at the end of the paragraph, Vlastos supposedly quotes the Euthyphro by displaying the following: "'Piety is that eidos in virtue of which all pious actions are pious' (Euthyphro 6d)." 20 My first complaint is the following: Vlastos misrepresents the text twice in the brief quotes I have extracted from his article. First of all, Socrates never does say (as Vlastos alleges) of Piety in the Euthyphro that it is a single ίδεα, and he especially doesn't say it at 5dl-2, since the first occurrence of the word ίδεα is at 5d4. What Socrates does say at 5dl-2 is that the
holy, itself by itself, is the same in every action. Whether or not the holy is a single λοεα is not stated. Similarly with Vlastos' supposed quote from 6d. Socrates does not say that Piety is that εἶδος in virtue of which all pious actions are pious, what he says is simply that there is an εἶδος in virtue of which all pious actions are pious. Once again, just as we saw earlier that Socrates didn't say that Piety is a single λοεα, we see here that Socrates didn't say that Piety is an εἶδος. This may or may not be important, for it might plausibly be argued that, although Socrates didn't say what Vlastos claims he said, Socrates surely would have agreed to what Vlastos said. The problem with that is the following: The Euthyphro text is Vlastos' star (and only) piece of evidence from all the early dialogues that a virtue word functions as a proper name for an εἶδος and λοεα. And now it seems that even the Euthyphro text does not say quite as much as Vlastos needs it to say. Now even though the Euthyphro text gets close to saying what Vlastos alleges it says, is this enough? If there were other supporting early texts, surely it would be. But there are none. The claim that 'Piety' might be functioning as the name of an εἶδος or λοεα in the Euthyphro is not very impressive evidence for the claim that every virtue word does function as the proper name for an εἶδος or λοεα in the early dialogues.
My position is really stronger than I just portrayed it. Not only does Socrates not say that The Holy functions as the proper name of an ἔδος or ἱδα, he also explicitly contrasts the ἱδα (of The Unholy) with The Unholy in saying that everything unholy has a certain ἱδα "with respect to (κατά) The Unholy (τὴν ἀνοσιότητα)." (Euthyphro 5d) In this passage, it is impossible to treat 'τὴν ἀνοσιότητα' as functioning as the proper name of an ἱδα, for to treat it as such would lead to the following (almost gibberish);

everything unholy has a certain single Form (ἱδα) with respect to (κατά) [the Form] The Unholy. (5d)

If Vlastos is right and The Holy and The Unholy do function as proper names for ἱδα, then everything unholy has a certain ἱδα with respect to the same ἱδα. But this can't be right. Vlastos neglects the preposition 'κατά'. Plato thus contrasts ἱδα with The Unholy, so, on the Vlastos' interpretation, there would have to be two forms for The Unholy. (The argument I have just given depends upon the premise that we must treat The Unholy in a fashion parallel to the way we would treat The Holy. I shall defend this premise in a few pages. It is, I think, a premise that is absolutely demanded by the text.)

My second comment is the following: Suppose Vlastos is right, and 'Piety' does function as a proper name of an ἔδος in the Euthyphro. There is an easy explanation of that: The Euthyphro is, after all, the first dialogue of
Plato in which 'εἰδος' and 'λοιπά' appear to be used in a semi-technical way. This pattern continues in the Meno where 'εἰδος' and 'λοιπά' again are used as semi-technical terms. It is in the Phaedo (a middle dialogue) where 'εἰδος' and 'λοιπά' finally get transformed into technical terms for Plato. In fact, there are some remarkable similarities in the εἰδος passage of the Euthyphro and the λοιπά passage of the Meno. At Meno 72d7, Socrates says:

"Do you think there is one health of a man, another of a woman? Or is it the same characteristic (εἰδος) everywhere, if it is health, whether it is in man or in anything else?" And at Meno 72c6, Socrates says: "So too, then, with the virtues; even if they are many and of all kinds, all surely have some common character (λοιπά) by reason of which they are virtues..." Just as the holy is the same in every action, (Euthyphro 5d), health is the same in man or in any other creature (Meno 72d). And just as all unholy things have (ξυνά) a certain character (λοιπά) (Euthyphro 5d), all the virtues have (ξυνά) some character (εἰδος) (Meno 72c). The notions in the Euthyphro and the Meno are quite similar; in both cases the "Form" is said to be in its instances, or alternately, its instances have it. The vocabulary is the same. This is some evidence, at least, that the Euthyphro and Meno are fairly close in date. And notice I am not arguing for something very unusual. Arnim, Raeder, Ritter, and Wilamowitz all date the
Euthyphro after the Protagoras, the Laches, and the Charmides. Ross also date the Euthyphro after the Charmides and Laches. (He doesn't date the Protagoras). It is fairly common to date the Euthyphro after the dialogues in which the unity of virtue is argued for. So, even if 'piety' is used in the Euthyphro as a proper name for an εἵδος or λέεια, it does not follow that it was so used at an earlier stage in Plato's career, i.e., when he presented the unity of virtue. This is especially convincing when one recognizes that none of the virtue words is explicitly treated as the name of an εἵδος or λέεια in the Protagoras or Laches, the two most important texts for our purposes.

With the preceding in mind, it seems clear that the first premise of Vlastos' argument that each virtue word names an εἵδος or λέεια for early Plato is an extremely dubious premise. For on the one hand, the evidence Vlastos cites (which is all the evidence there is) does not say what Vlastos says it says. (And I have argued that it cannot), and second, even if it did, the evidence may well be irrelevant on the grounds that the dialogue that contains the evidence was probably written after the unity of virtue was formulated.

I shall briefly consider the second premise of the argument, i.e., just as an εἵδος or λέεια is a Form for middle Plato, an εἵδος or λέεια is a Form for early Plato.
The view is a fairly common one. For example, Nicholas White argues:

Our present question, then, is whether or not the early Plato thought that his philosophical investigations involved entities other than concrete sensible objects—quite regardless of whether he has a fully developed theory of what these entities were like.

There seems to me no doubt that in these works Plato talks as if he believed in such entities. When, for example, he asks in the Euthyphro 'What is holiness?' he takes no pains whatsoever to say that this manner of searching for definitions (and it is his typical manner, early and late) is a mere facon de parler. Nor does any of the other early dialogues, when indulging in such locutions, show any effort to soften their force...whatever we may think of the possibility of ignoring such entities in discussions such as Plato's, it is clear that this possibility did not occur to him. (Emphasis his.)

R. E. Allen agrees; in commenting on the Euthyphro, he says:

The eidos or idea of holiness is a universal, the same in all its instances, and something its instances have; it appears to be a condition for the existence of holy things, that by which—the dative is instrumental—holy things are holy; and it is a standard of paradeigma for determining what things are holy and what are not. In short the words eidos and idea here carry freight they do not ordinarily bear, and for that reason, commentators have often translated them as 'Idea' or 'Form'...

Now what does all this imply? It seems to imply something which is properly called a theory of Forms. That theory is, in the first place, a technical theory, a body of rules governing the practice of a useful art, that of dialectic. Thus, the question, 'What is holiness?' cannot be answered by examples, nor by specifying
a group of things some of which are unholy, nor by providing a distinguishing mark. It must be answered by an analysis of the essence of holiness, because holiness is a Form. (Emphasis mine.)

I don't have a great deal to say about these claims, but a few short comments are in order. As we have seen, the Euthyphro is the only early dialogue in which 'ελευθερία' and 'λεπτόν' function as possible candidates for Forms, and the Euthyphro may even be a transitional dialogue like Meno. Thus, the evidence that in the Socratic dialogues there is an "early theory of Forms" is meager, unless, of course, one wants to argue as Nicholas White, that in merely posing the "What is X?" question, Socrates is committed to a theory of Forms. This I find extravagant. For example, in the Protagoras, Protagoras gladly agrees that Justice is something, and Holiness is something. On White's criterion, not only must we make Socrates a conceptual realist, but also Protagoras. And we must do the same for Socrates' other interlocutors (e.g., Laches and Charmides). For they too are content with "What is X?" questions. Ought we commit a general, a sophist, and a young boy to a theory of abstract entities or Forms?

There is another disturbing consequence of holding that Plato had an early theory of Forms, the consequence being that one of the two Forms actually mentioned, and in fact the first Form mentioned in the Euthyphro is the Form,
The Unholy. This is something that Vlastos and Allen ignore, but the first occurrence of λόσια in the Euthyphro comes as follows (5d):

And the unholy, in turn, the opposite of all the holy—is it not like itself, and does not everything which is to be unholy have a certain single character (λόσια) with respect to unholiness...

And again at 6d:

For you agreed, I think that it is by one character (λόσια) that unholy things are unholy and holy things holy...

As we see, the very first occurrence of 'λόσια' comes in connection with The Unholy, and later The Holy and The Unholy are assigned identical status. Thus, if holy actions have a share of the Form, The Holy Itself, it is certainly also true that unholy actions have a share of the Form, The Unholy Itself. It seems to me more likely that Socrates held no theory of Forms than it is that he believed in the Form, The Unholy Itself. At Parmenides 130c-d, Socrates finds it absurd to think there are Forms corresponding to "undignified objects" such as mud, hair, or dirt.

There is another problem with understanding the term λόσια in the preceding Euthyphro passage as making reference to a Form (this is the problem I alluded to in my criticism of premise 1 of Vlastos' argument). Usually 'εὐσωκ' or 'λόσια', and 'The G (Itself)' are all taken to be expressions that refer to Forms for middle Plato. If we suppose that also to hold in the Euthyphro (and it is a key step in
Vlastos' argument that it does so hold), we run into a problem. Namely, the one I left hanging a few pages back. Let us suppose that The Holy and The Unholy really are Forms in the *Euthyphro*. (If The Holy is, The Unholy is since they receive absolutely parallel treatment in the *Euthyphro*.) If the terms 'The Holy' and 'The Unholy' refer to Forms, it is impossible that 'τὸ ἔα' also so refers. My evidence is taken from the first passage of *Euthyphro* in which 'τὸ ἔα' occurs. In that passage (5d), Socrates says: "does not everything which is to be unholy have a certain single character with respect to (κατὰ) The Unholy?" If τὴν ἄνοσιατητα (The Unholy) is taken to refer to a Form, τὸ ἔα cannot. For the passage distinguishes between the τὸ ἔα and The Unholy. Surely Socrates cannot be saying that there is a certain single Form (τὸ ἔα) with respect to (κατὰ) the Form, The Unholy. So, if 'The Unholy' refers to a Form, 'τὸ ἔα' cannot. On the other hand, if 'The Unholy' does not refer to a Form, neither does 'The Holy' at 5d since the two are treated as parallels. (And if The Holy doesn't Vlastos' argument falls apart.) In other words, the construction of the sentence at 5d does not allow us to treat 'The X' and the 'τὸ ἔα of X' as both referring to the same thing (and thus to the same Form). Yet Vlastos' thesis depends on the fact that they do, for he claims: "What Socrates says of Piety in the *Euthyphro*—that it is a single idea..." But, as I have shown, this is impossible.
I have now cast considerable doubt on the first two premises of Vlastos' argument, i.e., (1) each virtue word names an ἐὐδοκία or ἔθεα for Socrates, and (2) 'ἐὐδοκία' and 'ἔθεα' name Forms for Socrates (early Plato). In so doing, I have also cast considerable doubt on Vlastos' conclusion, i.e., each virtue word names a universal for Socrates. But this is the conclusion that Vlastos needs in order to motivate his paper. The overall structure of Vlastos' argument is as follows: If Plato meant the strict unity thesis in the Protagoras, then 'justice,' 'courage,' 'piety,' and the rest must name the same thing. 'Justice,' 'courage,' 'piety,' and the rest name universals. But the universal, Justice, is not the same as the universal, Piety; so Plato could not have meant the strict unity thesis. But Vlastos' reconstruction is very odd in that it attributes to Socrates a view which there is (almost) no evidence that he held (i.e., that 'justice' names a universal) in order to argue that Socrates didn't hold a view which he explicitly states and argues for (i.e., the strict unity of virtue).

What I am suggesting is that we give up the claim that the virtue words name universals and start all over again to see if we can make sense out of the identity thesis. Penner's paper has the virtue of doing just that. In what follows, I shall give Penner's analysis, and then go on in the next chapter to give my own analysis. On my view (a view which Penner explicitly criticizes), each virtue word
names an ability or δύναμις. And thus what Plato really argues is that there is really only one moral ability (viz., the ability to live a good life).

Before I give Penner's analysis, I should like to say one more thing about Vlastos' paper. As I have pointed out, Vlastos gets into difficulty by claiming that each virtue word names a universal. This troubles him too, and in a way, he shrinks from strict application of it. He notes that the statement "justice is wise" can hardly be interpreted as saying that the universal or abstract entity, Justice, is wise, for that would be a category mistake; so it must be understood as a "Pauline" predication claiming that everyone or everything that is just (necessarily) is wise, i.e., each instance of the universal but not the universal itself is wise. His use of the term, "Pauline," is based on suggestions made to him by Sandra Peterson, viz., a quotation from St. Paul: "Charity suffreth long and is kind." Vlastos' commentary on Paul's quotation is:

We may be certain that everyone who has ever read or heard that sentence before philosophical grammarians got hold of it, as a matter of course, to be predicking long-suffering and kindness of those who have the virtue of charity. It would have taken satanic perversity to construe the apostle to be imputing those moral properties to an abstract entity.27

"Charity suffreth long" is unpacked by Vlastos as "Everyone who is charitable is long-suffering," much as Sellars would unpack "The lion is tawny" as "All lions are
It would indeed be perverse to attribute to Paul the view that an abstract entity suffers. According to Vlastos, it would be equally perverse to attribute to Socrates the view that an abstract entity or universal is pious, so what he must be saying is that its instances are pious.

I think this argument actually does damage to Vlastos' own position. The reason that it is perverse to attribute to Paul the view that an abstract entity suffers is that we have no reason to believe that Paul himself either believed in or postulated abstract entities. So, just because he uses a term which might, on some other theory, refer to an abstract entity, it doesn't follow that he thought it referred to one. If, on the other hand, we find middle Plato saying that Beauty is beautiful, it is not perverse to read him as attributing a quality to an abstract entity. The reason it is perverse to attribute to Socrates the view that an abstract entity has qualities is not because such a view is a category mistake (for if that were so, we would have the same problem with Plato), but rather it is perverse because Socrates didn't have a theory of abstract entities. In other words, if someone (like Plato) did have a clearly articulated theory of abstract entities and Justice was a star instance of an abstract entity (as Vlastos seems to believe of Socrates), then, when Socrates says that Justice is wise, we would expect him to be attributing wisdom to the
abstract entity, Justice. Yet this is what Vlastos says Socrates can't possibly be doing (for it is a category mistake).

Vlastos appears to be claiming that Socrates takes 'Justice' as referring to a universal and also claiming at the same time that it can't refer to a universal but only its instances. Thus, 'Justice' refers to a universal, but, when saying, 'Justice is pious,' 'Justice' cannot so refer. When someone like Sellars says "'The lion is tawny' = 'All lions are tawny,,'" he is trying to reduce 'the lion' to 'lions,' so that we no longer need to be committed to some unusual abstract entity. On Vlastos' interpretation, the same does not hold for Socrates. He reduces "Justice is pious" to "All cases of justice are pious" but keeps Justice as a universal too.

Vlastos argued that Socrates could not have held the unity thesis on the grounds that an absurd consequence follows from the unity thesis, viz., that 'justice,' 'piety,' 'wisdom,' and the rest would all be synonymous with one another. I then pointed out that two words could refer to the same thing without the words' being synonymous. Why, then, does Vlastos think the unity thesis entails that all of the virtue words are synonymous? Vlastos thinks that each virtue word names an ἐνδος or an ἔννοια. An ἐνδος or an ἔννοια is a Form. And a Form is simply a reified meaning. So, if two virtue words name the same ἐνδος, then they name
the same Form, and therefore have the same meaning. Vlastos' argument depends upon the premise that each virtue word names an ἐὐδοκία or an ἀληθής. I have argued in this section, that for early Plato, Vlastos is wrong. Other than in the Euthyphro itself, the evidence is meager and inconclusive. Finally, the Euthyphro was probably written after the unity of virtue was formulated.

In the next section, I shall present an analysis of the unity of virtue which does try to make sense of the identity thesis, i.e., the analysis of Penner. My own analysis, although indebted to Penner's, differs from his on the subject of abilities. I shall present my analysis and tie it with the preceding chapters in Chapter V.

2. Penner's Analysis of the Unity of Virtue

In this section, I shall discuss the analysis of the unity of virtue given by Penner. Penner begins his paper as follows: "The thesis of this paper is highly unusual, yet it is perfectly straightforward. It is that when Socrates said 'Virtue is one,' he meant it quite literally!" Penner argues that one need not water down the identity Bravery=Wisdom=Temperance=Justice=Piety in order to make sense of it. Using Vlastos' terms, Penner claims that Socrates held the unity thesis, not merely the similarity or biconditionality thesis. Penner's key claim is the following: When Socrates asked "What is Bravery?", he
was not asking for the meaning of 'Bravery.' Rather:

His question was not (what has become) the philosopher's question, the question patiently explained to students reading Plato in introductory philosophy courses; it was not a request for a conceptual analysis (as usually conceived: the generating of a certain set of analytic truths about bravery). His question was rather the general's question, "What is bravery?"—that is, "What is it that makes brave men brave?" The general asks this question not out of interest in mapping our concepts, but out of a desire to learn something substantial about the human psyche. He wants to know what psychological state it is, the imparting of which to his men will make them brave. But then the general does not know in advance whether or not the psychological state in question will also make his men act wisely. If it does, then Socrates (on the view I am presenting) will have been right. Bravery, the psychological state which makes men brave, will be identical with wisdom, the psychological state which makes men wise.30 (Emphasis his.)

Penner clarifies this by saying that he interprets Socrates' question "What is bravery?" to be much closer to Freud's question "What is hysteria, really?" rather than Ryle's "What is a feeling, really?"31 Socrates is not doing logical analysis, but rather substantial psychology.

The virtue of Penner's thesis is that he has suggested a way to interpret the strict identity view, a view which Socrates does seem to hold, in a way such that it is not preposterous. 'Justice,' 'Wisdom,' 'Piety,' 'Temperance,' and 'Courage' all refer to one and the same thing, that thing being a psychological state which causes men to act bravely, piously, wisely, etc. (Notice, of course, that
neither Penner nor Socrates is committed to holding that acting bravely is the same as acting piously, only that one and the same state of soul accounts for or causes those different actions.)

Penner claims: "I take the reference of 'bravery' in 'What is bravery?' to be simply that psychological state which explains the fact that certain men do brave acts—what we might call a theoretical entity." (Emphasis his.) There are two things to notice about this. The first is that Vlastos made the questionable claims that, if justice and piety were the same, it followed that 'justice' and 'piety' were synonyms. But, if Penner is correct, then we need not claim that 'justice' and 'piety' have the same meaning, rather only that they have the same reference, i.e., that they refer to the same psychological state or state of soul.

The second is that this view accounts for the practical nature of the two dialogues in which the unity of virtue is argued for. In the Laches, the question is clearly how to train the sons of Melesais and Lysimachus in order to make them brave. And notice, of course, that the question is directed to two Athenian generals. Socrates states the question at 190b: "Are not our two friends, Laches, at this very moment inviting us to consider in what way the gift of virtue may be imparted to their sons for the improvement of their souls (as the power of sight, added to
eyes, makes them see)." In the *Protagoras*, as Penner points out, the teachability of virtue is also a practical concern. Socrates asks Hippocrates and Protagoras exactly what skills Hippocrates will acquire if he studies under Protagoras. So it should not be surprising to find Socrates identifying virtue with a psychological state. Penner, then, has supplied us with a plausible clue as to how to make sense of the identity thesis without imputing a preposterous doctrine to Socrates.

In this chapter, I have tried to show that the unity of virtue may plausibly be interpreted as requiring an identity of reference, not of meaning. Furthermore, it is unfruitful to see the virtue words in the early dialogues as naming Forms for, if we interpret them as so naming, we run into insurmountable problems in accounting for the texts. In the next chapter, I shall present a positive analysis of the unity of virtue which will fit with what I argued in Chapters I-III. In that analysis, I shall agree with Penner that we must interpret Socrates as holding the identity theory. My disagreement with him will be on how the abilities or powers (*σώματα*) fit in the analysis. Penner, for certain philosophical reasons, refuses to let "dispositions" in the picture. I, for textual reasons, refuse to keep them out.


6. Ibid., pp. 418-426.

7. Ibid., p. 418.

8. Ibid., p. 425.

9. Ibid., p. 419.

10. Ibid., p. 419.


14. Ibid., pp. 426, 446.

15. Ibid., p. 415, fn.


18. All Euthyphro translations are Allen's.


20. Ibid., p. 420.

21. All Meno translations are Guthrie's.


23. Ibid., p. 10.


27. Ibid., p. 446.


29. Penner, op. cit., p. 35.

30. Ibid., pp. 40-41.

31. Ibid., p. 41

32. Ibid., p. 41.
V. THE UNITY OF VIRTUE: ARETE, TECHNE, AND DYNAMIS

In Chapters II and III, I argued that knowledge for Plato is an ability or power (δύναμις). Now, I wish to connect this with the most famous of all Socratic doctrines, viz., that virtue is knowledge. If virtue is knowledge and knowledge is an ability, it follows that virtue is an ability. This, I should like to argue, gives us a key to understanding the unity of virtue. If each virtue is an ability, and each virtue is the same as every other virtue, it appears that, according to Socrates, the ability to do brave acts is the same ability as the ability to do just acts, which is the same ability as the ability to do temperate acts, etc. As we have seen, Penner and Vlastos would, for different reasons, oppose this interpretation. But, I should like to argue, it fits best with the actual texts. Vlastos' interpretation is implausible because he cannot account for Socrates' statements of identity. Penner's account is better in that he makes sense out of the identity claims, yet his account is implausible insofar as he staunchly refuses (for what I take to be the wrong reasons) to acknowledge ability or δύναμις talk in Plato's dialogues. My account circumvents both of these difficulties.
The view I shall argue for is the following: Each of the virtues is a power of (ability in) the soul. The unity of virtues is, as Penner points out, not an identity of meaning (it does not entail that 'courage' means 'piety'), but an identity of reference ('courage' and 'piety' refer to one and the same thing). That thing that all the virtue words refer to is an ability or power of the soul. And if Socrates is right, the ability to do brave acts is the same ability as the ability to do pious acts. Each virtue is an ability, and it turns out, that each virtue is the same ability.

Concerning this view, Vlastos says:

We know, to begin with, that Socrates thinks of 'justice' as the name of a universal and that he does not think of universals as persons, nor yet as ontological dependencies of persons, such as the actions, decisions, dispositions, practices or policies of this that person. (Emphasis mine.)

I should like to argue, on the contrary, that Socrates does think of justice as a disposition of a person. Penner, too, wants to eschew talk of dispositions or as he calls them "tendencies," and instead discusses "states of souls." On Penner's view, it is philosophically more pleasing to do away with talk of abilities; all we need to talk about are actions and the (non-dispositional) psychic structure which causes or explains the action. To speak of abilities in addition to actions and structures would be an ontological extravagance. Unfortunately for Penner's purposes,
Plato himself seems to feel no hesitation in talking about δύναμις. In fact, at Sophist 248d-e, Plato makes power or ability (δύναμις) the mark of the real:

I suggest that anything has real being that is so constituted as to possess any sort of δύναμις to affect anything else or to be affected...I am proposing as a mark to distinguish real things that they are nothing but power (δύναμις).\(^5\)

In what follows, I shall present evidence that Socrates, too, willingly identified the virtues as powers or abilities. Before I do that I should like to consider what I take to be a major reason that Penner dislikes dispositions. Penner accepts the "presupposition" that "dispositions are numerically distinct if and only if they lead to different kinds of behavior."\(^6\) Naturally, if someone holds that dispositions are distinct if and only if they lead to different behavior, and the obvious truth that pious behavior is different from brave behavior, then he can't hold that piety is the same thing as bravery (if he thinks piety and bravery are dispositions). A contradiction has arisen, so Penner concludes that piety and bravery are not dispositions. But one might better give up the claim that dispositions are distinct if and only if they lead to different kinds of behavior. And since Socrates did talk about virtues as abilities, and never, so far as I know, said that abilities are distinct if and only if they lead to different kinds of behavior, it is more tempting to give up the claim about
the distinctness of dispositions than it is to give up the claim that virtues are dispositions.

In light of the preceding, consider the following fiction: Writing is a very different kind of activity (behavior) from speaking. Speaking involves making certain kinds of noises with one's mouth, whereas writing involves making certain kinds of marks on paper. In spite of their vast differences, suppose we were to find out that people who write well (clearly, coherently, etc.) also speak well (clearly, coherently, etc.) and that people who speak well also write well. (I am not, by the way, asserting the truth of the previous claim, I am just putting it forth as a story to shed light on something else.) Suppose further that we conducted some research and discovered that people write well if and only if they speak well. After a while, we may begin to think that there is some sort of necessary connection between writing well and speaking well, so that we would accept the Vlastovian biconditionality thesis, i.e., even though speaking and writing are different, it is a necessary truth that people speak well if and only if they write well. At this point, let us suppose that Platates enters the picture and points out that speaking and writing aren't simply activities, they are skills or abilities (δύναμις) possessed by people. These skills or abilities eventuate in (cause) certain types of behavior such as the
putting of marks down on paper or the making of noises with
the mouth. Now if we think of writing as an ability or
skill (or art) and further think that one speaks well if and
only if (by necessity) he writes well, would it not be
tempting to say that, contrary to first impression, writing
and speaking are, after all, the same ability. In fact, we
could propose that writing and speaking are one and the same
skill in order to explain why it is that people who write
well speak well and vice versa. It would not be implausible,
given the circumstances I have mentioned, to suppose that at
bottom there was just one ability (some sort of conceptual
ability which involved the clear organization of thoughts)
which was the cause of both (i.e., the disposition whose
actualizations are) speaking and writing well.

The point of the story is clear. There is no prima
facie reason to think that one and the same skill or ability
cannot lead to very different types of behavior. So, even
though speaking and writing are different activities, they
are the same in the sense that they are (or are expressions
of) the same ability. The analogy is clear. Even though
acting justly is a different activity from acting
courageously, couldn't it be that justice and courage are
not merely activities, but are more properly spoken of as
abilities (or skills or arts, i.e., τέχνες)? As I will
show shortly, Socrates does speak of them in that way.
Thus, if we were to discover that a person acts bravely if
and only if he acts justly, what is to prevent us from explaining this by saying that there is really only one ability or skill or craft involved (say, the skill or craft of living well), and this skill eventuates in or causes just, brave, pious, temperate, and wise actions. And to say justice is bravery is to say that they are the same skill or ability.

I should now like to offer textual support for the claim that virtues are, for early Plato, abilities. In a famous passage (Republic I 353b-c), Socrates discusses the relationship between virtue (excellence, ἀρετή) and the work or function (ἔργον) of something. The eyes and ears have a specific work or function, and could not perform their function well if they lacked their own specific virtue or excellence. Socrates says (353c): "Whatever operates will do its own work well by its own virtue and badly by its own defect." In general, of things with a function, by their specific excellence they function well and by their specific defect they function badly or defectively. Having an ἀρετή is a matter of performing well. Ἀρετή seems to be a skill or ability of something to do its work well. On this point, Michael Kubara says: "Since a dynamis enables a thing to do whatever it can do, and an arete enables it to do whatever it can do well, clearly, an arete is a good dynamis." Kubara correctly points out the relationship
between an ἄρετὴ and a δύναμις: A virtue is an ability, in particular, the ability of something to perform its work well. This theme is emphasized in several early dialogues. At Lesser Hippias 375d-e, Socrates claims (three times) that justice (a virtue or excellence) is a power (δύναμις) of the soul. At Charmides 158e, Socrates tells Charmides that the virtue temperance abides in Charmides. He repeats that claim at 159a. At 161a, Socrates says that the presence of temperance makes men good. Just as in Lesser Hippias, the virtue, justice is seen as a power or ability of soul, in the Charmides, the virtue temperance is seen as something that abides in people and makes them good, i.e., a power of the soul. In the Laches, two men, Lysimachus and Melesias, approach two Athenian generals, Laches and Nicias, in order to ask them a question. Lysimachus and his friend are very concerned with raising their sons properly, and want to know the best way to train and improve their sons. And, by asking two generals, they hope to find out how to make their sons brave, and hence ask the specific question whether teaching their sons to fight in armor will make them brave or not. The dialogue starts on a very practical note. (Although the Laches may be the most spectacular example of an early dialogue's opening with emphasis on a practical note, most of the early dialogues do the same. In the Euthyphro, the question what is piety is asked in order to help both Socrates and Euthyphro win their court cases.
In the **Protagoras**, the question is whether or not Hippocrates should study under Protagoras. Even in the **Charmides**, the search is directed at discovering whether or not Charmides is temperate, for only then will Socrates know how to cure his headache.)

The men in **Laches** are concerned with teaching their sons to be brave. Socrates realizes this and puts the point succinctly at 190b: "Are not our two friends, Laches, at this very moment inviting us to consider in what way the gift of virtue may be imparted to their sons for the improvement of their souls?" Virtue, once again, seems to be a power to improve souls. In fact, at 190a-b, Socrates is drawing the analogy that just as sight can be imparted to the eyes, virtue can be imparted to the soul. (We know from **Republic** V 477c that sight and hearing are the paradigm cases of power or abilities (δύναμις).) Finally, in order to help Laches in answering the "What is courage?" question, Socrates himself illustrates with another question, i.e., "What is quickness?" In Socrates' answer, he alleges that quickness is a power or ability (δύναμις), the ability to accomplish much in a little time (192b). Then he says to Laches: "So, now try and tell me on your part, Laches, about courage in the same way: what ability (δύναμις) is it?..." (192b.) It seems fairly evident, then, that in the **Laches**, **Charmides**, and **Lesser Hippias**, virtue itself and
the several virtues (i.e., courage, justice, and temperance) are all to be taken as abilities or powers of the soul.

If virtue is an ability, it is important to see what kind of ability it is. I began this chapter by pointing out that, for Socrates, virtue is knowledge. So virtue must be a knowing kind of ability, or, as I shall call it, a "rational ability." For example, at Protagoras 360d, Socrates defines courage as "knowledge of what is and is not to be feared." At Republic IV 430b, Socrates gives almost the identical definition (and in the Republic passage, Socrates explicitly states that courage is an ability or δυναμίς). At Lesser Hippias 375d-e, Socrates endorses the claim that justice is knowledge (he also associates it with being a δυναμίς). At Protagoras 361, in summing up his position, Socrates claims that justice, temperance, and courage alike are knowledge. On this subject, Gulley says:

One of Socrates' fundamental doctrines is the thesis that virtue is knowledge. This is the thesis that knowing what is good is a necessary and a sufficient condition of possessing goodness and hence of doing what is good. Aristotle presents this as a fundamental Socratic thesis (E.N. 1144b, E.E. 1216b). So do Xenophon (Mem. III ix 5) and Plato (Prot. 352a ff.).

Virtue, then, for Socrates, is a rational ability, i.e., an ability which essentially involves knowledge.

If virtue is an ability that involves knowledge, it is appropriate to ask: Knowledge of what? At Charmides 165, medicine is characterized as the science (knowledge) of
health, and architecture as the science (knowledge) of building. Every art or knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) must be knowledge of something. At Charmides 165c, Socrates says that "temperance or wisdom, if it is a species of knowledge, must be a science, and a science of something." Sprague characterizes this by saying that for Plato, knowing is a "tinon" word, i.e., knowledge is always of or about something. If carpentry is knowledge of building, and medicine is knowledge of health, what knowledge is virtue knowledge of?

Unfortunately, there is no lengthy discussion of this in Plato, particularly none in early Plato. The most we get are hints. One of the most important clues comes in Laches in the discussion between Socrates and Nicias. At 194c, Nicias tells Socrates that he remembers an excellent saying which he heard from Socrates' own lips. The saying was (194d): "every man is good in that in which he is wise..." Socrates immediately agrees. Nicias concludes that courage is a kind of knowledge. Socrates then asks (194e): "Knowledge of what?" At 195, Nicias tells us that courage is knowledge of what is to be feared. That Socrates and Plato both accept this definition is clear from Protagoras 360d and Republic IV 430b. Nicias then agrees that courage is a part of virtue. This is, of course, the premise that destroys Nicias. Socrates then gets Nicias to agree at 198c that knowledge of the fearful and the hopeful
is simply knowledge of future goods and evils, and then gets him to agree that any knowledge must be knowledge of not only the future, but also the present and the past, e.g., medicine knows about health in the past, present, and future. So if courage really is a science, and a science of future goods and evils, it must also be the science of past and present goods and evils. Socrates says (199b): "Courage like other science is concerned not only with good and evil of the future, but of the present and past, and of any time." Thus, courage is knowledge of good and evil. But from this, Socrates concludes (199d): "But then, my dear friend, if a man knows all good and evil, and how they are and have been and will be produced, would he not be perfect, and wanting in no virtue, whether temperance or holiness?" (Emphasis mine.) Thus, if courage is knowledge of good and evil, then it is not merely a part of virtue (as we saw, Nicias agreed to that), but it is all of virtue. If this passage is to be taken seriously, and I see no reason why it should not be, we see that Socrates characterizes virtue as knowledge, and knowledge of good and evil. Thus, just as medicine is knowledge of health, virtue appears to be knowledge of good and evil.

In the Charmides, Critias defines temperance as knowledge of self, and then later as knowledge of knowledges. Based on the definition of temperance as knowledge of other knowledges, Socrates asks Critias which knowledges must the
knower know about in order to be happy (174b). Critias answers: Knowledge of good and evil. Socrates then complains that Critias has been leading Socrates around in a circle, never telling him the truth. For if temperance is knowledge of good and evil, it is not knowledge of all other knowledges, but of one subject matter only. Socrates then claims at 174c that without this science of good and evil (which he also characterizes as the science of human advantage) nothing will be well or beneficially done. Socrates seems to accept Critias' claim that temperance is the science of good and evil. What he disagrees with is Critias' claim that temperance is the science of other sciences. In Tuckey's commentary on the Charmides, he admits that Socrates' real position is clearly that knowledge of good and evil (knowledge of the Good) is the knowledge that makes man happy, and is identical with temperance. This is also what we saw the Laches said about courage (and about virtue). Thus, at least in these two dialogues, we get hints that courage, temperance, and all virtues are knowledges, and what they are knowledges of is good and evil.

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that each virtue is an ability, and that according to the unity of virtue, each virtue must be the same ability. We now see that Plato was tempted to characterize both temperance and courage as knowledge of good and evil. This fits perfectly with what I have been saying. In Chapters II and III, I argued that
knowledge is an ability. And since virtue is knowledge, each virtue must also be an ability. And if all the virtues are the same, then each virtue must be the same ability. The Charmides and Laches support this in that they characterize both courage and temperance as the same rational ability. My view is then that piety, temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice are all the same rational ability, i.e., each one is knowledge of good and evil. Penner also holds that each virtue is knowledge of good and evil. Our disagreement is over whether or not knowledge is an ability.14

Thus, the unity of virtue is a strict identity. Courage and justice really are the same thing, they are the same ability, i.e., knowledge of good and evil. But this is an identity of reference, not of meaning. 'Courage' and 'justice' refer to the same ability, but they don't have the same meaning.

If virtue is a rational ability, what good does it produce? What is the product or work of virtue, as the house is the product of carpentry and the shoe of cobbling? Surely, virtue must produce a good. The answer to this is, as far as I can tell, that the good that virtue produces is living well, a consequence of which is happiness, εὖδαμονία. The clearest statement of this is Republic I 353d-354a:

The soul, has it a work which you couldn't accomplish with anything else in the world, as for example, management, rule, deliberation, and the like? Is there anything else than soul to which you could rightly assign
these and say that they were its peculiar work?—Nothing else.—And again life? Shall we say that too is the function of the soul?—Most certainly, he said.—And do we not also say that there is an excellence or virtue of the soul?—We do.—Will the soul ever accomplish its own work well if deprived of its own virtue, or is this possible?—It is impossible.—Of necessity, then, a bad soul will govern and manage things badly while the good soul will in all these things do well.—Of necessity.—And did we not agree that the excellence or virtue of the soul is justice and its defect injustice?—Yes.—The just soul and the just man then will live well and the unjust ill?—So it appears, he said, by your reasoning.—But, furthermore, he who lives well is blessed and happy, and he who does not the contrary.—Of course.—Then the just is happy and the unjust miserable.15

The virtue of the soul, i.e., justice, enables the soul to do its work well, i.e., live well, and to live well is to be happy or have εὖδαμονία. At Gorgias 506-507, Socrates claims that the orderly soul is temperate, and therefore, "just, brave, and pious" and therefore "completely good, and the good man must do well and finely whatever he does, and he who does well must be happy and blessed."16

The good that virtue produces is living well or happiness. Virtue is therefore a rational ability or power of the soul that produces happiness. Once we see that each virtue is a certain kind of ability that essentially involves knowledge of standards (good and evil) and that produces a good (happiness), we see that it is close to saying that that virtue or δρατη is really τέχνη (art, skill or craft). Turnbull gives the following characterization of techne:
The concept of a techne or craft is that of an ability (or set of abilities) which is exercised in actions (either as such or on materials) in accordance with a standard or standards which brings about some good or other.17

Each virtue or excellence is an ability that does involve knowledge of standards (good and evil) and does produce a good (happiness). Thus, there is a sense in which each virtue is an art or skill. The doctrine of the unity of the virtues is then, each virtue is an art or skill, but, it turns out, they are not different skills. Justice, courage, piety, wisdom, and temperance are one and the same skill (τέχνη).

If we think of each of the virtues as an art or skill, we can draw the following analogy with the other arts or skills. Consider the art of medicine. There are several excellences in the art of medicine, e.g., cauterizing wounds, diagnosing, and prescribing medicine. An art is not related to its excellences as a genus is related to its species. If an animal is a member of the genus mammal, it will be a member of only one species of mammal. An animal cannot be both a dog and a cat. This is not true in the case of the relation between an art and its excellences. If someone practices the art of medicine, he will not only be able to cauterize wounds, but also able to diagnose, prescribe medicine, etc.
There are (at least) two distinct sense to the word 'part.' Dog is a part of mammal in the genus-species sense in which, for example, a specific animal is part of mammal if and only if it is either a dog or a cat or a whale...but not more than one. There is another sense of 'part' (the art-excellence sense) in which cauterizing is a part of medicine, but in this case, a person is a member of the "genus" doctor if and only if he is a cauterizer and a diagnoser and a prescriber...

As we have seen, Plato is willing to speak of virtue as an art. Although there is no explicit reference to a τέχνη βίου, one is tempted to think, that for Plato, there is an art of living or an art for man. On this point, Sellars says:

The first thing to notice is that reference to an art or craft of living are at their most explicit in the controversies with Callicles in the Gorgias, and with Protagoras in the final stages of the dialogue of that name. The conception of such an art or craft becomes less explicit (though evident to the discerning eye) in his constructive account of how life is to be lived in the Republic, and particularly, in the Philebus.18

Sellars overstates the case. The references are not as explicit as he claims. Nevertheless, Sellars does capture the spirit of Plato. The entire discussion between Callicles and Socrates centers around how one ought to live one's life, and Socrates' argument depends upon justice's being a real and not a sham art.19 The same is true in Republic I in
the argument between Socrates and Thrasymachus. There is, then, at least some, if not conclusive, evidence in Plato that there is an art of living which is the supreme art of man which has under it the sub-arts or excellences of courage, justice, temperance, etc.

We have seen that the relation between an art and its excellences is not the same as the relation between a genus and its species. Someone is a doctor if and only if he practices the excellences of diagnosing and cauterizing and prescribing, etc. Similarly, one is a practitioner of the art of living if and only if he practices the excellences of justice and courage and temperance and piety and wisdom. Yet this seems too weak. To say that someone is a practitioner of the art of living if and only if he has all five excellences seems closer to the Vlastovian biconditionality thesis (if a person has one excellence, necessarily he has them all) than it does to the identity thesis (all five excellences are really the same excellence).

But we can make the preceding argument stronger. Consider the excellences of cauterizing and diagnosing. A person is a doctor if and only if he practices both excellences. Yet this seems to entail that there are two distinct excellences. In response to this objection, I should like to point out, that on Platonic grounds, the case is not as clear as it may seem. Let us consider the case of cauterizing and diagnosing. Suppose there is a medic in the army who has learned how to cauterize wounds, but not how to
diagnose, or how to prescribe drugs, etc. (This is parallel to the cases in which Laches and Protagoras point out that there are men who are brave but not wise.) It seems that, in this case, although the medic may have mastered a technique or a routine, it is not at all clear that he has mastered an excellence in the practice of an art. The practicing of an art necessarily involves having knowledge, and although the medic may be able to perform certain tasks, he does not have knowledge of what he is doing. At Gorgias 465a, Socrates says that cookery is not an art because...

...it aims at what is pleasant, ignoring the good, and I insist that it is not an art but a routine, because it can produce no principle in virtue of which it offers what it does, nor explain the nature thereof, and consequently is unable to point to the cause of each thing it offers. And I refuse the name of art to anything irrational. (Emphasis mine.)

Again, at Gorgias 500e-501a, Socrates claims that medicine is an art and cookery is not because medicine...

...has investigated the nature of the subject it treats and the cause of its actions and can give a rational account of each of them... (Emphasis mine.)

The Gorgias doctrine is clear. A person is a practitioner of an art or craft only if that person has knowledge of his subject matter to the extent that he can point to the cause of the good he has produced. If he cannot, he is merely practicing a routine and not acting with excellence. This is obviously the proper description of the medic. If someone practices the art or excellence of
cauterizing, he cannot just be like the medic. Rather, he must know the science of health in order to be able to point to the cause of the good that he produces. The same is true of diagnosing. In order to practice it excellently (qua craftsman), one must know the science of health. If we think of arts as skills or abilities, one and the same rational ability (knowledge of health and disease) will eventuate in good cauterizing, good diagnosing, good prescribing, etc. Without that rational ability, at best one is practicing a technique, and not an art.

The previous analogy is quite close to what Plato has in mind. In the Gorgias, Socrates speaks of the science of health of the body and contrasts it with the science of health of the soul. One must have this latter science in order to be just, brave and good. (This science is clearly the same science as the science of human advantage or the science of good and evil.) Cauterizing and diagnosing turn out to be the same skill insofar as both are manifestations of one art or science (the art of medicine or the science of health and disease). Similarly, justice and bravery and the rest turn out to be the same skill insofar as both are manifestations of one art or science (the art of living or science of good and evil).

There is evidence in the Phaedo which supports the previous interpretation. In that dialogue, Socrates distinguishes between the "real" virtues which the
philosopher or man with knowledge has and the "popular" virtues. There is popular temperance and popular bravery which contrast with real temperance and real bravery. The latter two involve knowledge. This parallels my example of the medic who may have "popular" cauterizing. Although he doesn't have knowledge, at least he has the technique that many people would call "the art of cauterizing." Similarly, many people would call the rash man "brave." But, just as only a man with knowledge of health and disease can have the art or excellence of cauterizing, only a man with knowledge of good and evil can have the art or excellence of bravery. And just as a man with knowledge of health must have the excellence of diagnosing, and of prescribing, so too, the man with knowledge of good and evil also must have the excellence of justice, and of temperance. If we think of the art as the set of rational skills or abilities, there is only one set of skills of the doctor, and one set of skills in the art of living.

Thus, the key to the doctrine of the unity of virtue is the following: if we think of each virtue or excellence as a skill or ability, it is not implausible to suppose that, at bottom, there is really only one skill, the skill of living well. A person who has that skill will perform just, brave and pious actions.

This brings us to a point made by Vlastos. On his interpretation, each virtue word, for early Plato, names an
εὐδοκιμος or ἔδεξ (Form). I criticized him for that in Chapter IV. But now we can see that, even if Vlastos is correct, even if each virtue word does name a Form (as in the case for middle Plato), the relation between the Forms is not a genus-species relation. A just act is different from a brave act. But one ability in the soul produces those different kinds of behavior. And that ability in the soul is an instance of one Form, The Art of Living. Justice and Bravery are not species under a common genus, The Art of Living. Rather they are excellence Forms under a craft Form. A person can exemplify the Form, The Art of Living in different kinds of circumstances, viz., circumstances calling for brave behavior, circumstances calling for pious behavior, circumstances calling for just behavior, etc. If a person exemplifies the Form, The Art of Living, in circumstances calling for brave behavior, then that person is a practitioner of the art of living, and will, therefore, also practice his art in circumstances calling for just behavior. In a genus-species hierarchy, nothing can exemplify two different species under a common genus. In an art-excellence hierarchy, if something exemplifies one species under a genus, then it must exemplify every species under that genus.

I have tried to emphasize one concept throughout this dissertation, the concept of an ability or δυνάμις in Plato. In Chapter I, I argued that Plato has a doctrine of
concepts, i.e., a doctrine of linguistic abilities. In Chapters II and III, I enlarged on this suggestion and argued that knowledge for Plato is also a linguistic ability, i.e., the ability to define and defend. And in Chapters IV and V, I used this notion of an ability in order to shed light on the unity of virtue, and argued that each virtue for Socrates is one and the same ability.
FOOTNOTES

1. See Protagoras 352a ff., and Laches 199d.

2. See Chapter IV, pp. 112-117.


5. Cornford's translation.

6. Penner, op. cit., p. 44.

7. Shorey's translation.


9. All Laches translations are Jowett's.


11. All Charmides translations are Jowett's.


14. Penner, op. cit., pp. 44-49 argues that virtues are not dispositions or abilities.

15. Shorey's translations.

16. All Gorgias translations are Woodhead's.


21. Laches 195a, 196d-197d. Protagoras 349d.

22. Gorgias 504b-d.

23. Gorgias 507b-c.

24. Protagoras 357. Charmides 174b-d.

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