

A More Sensible Reading of Plato on Knowledge in *Republic V*

Introduction

There is a long-standing characterization of Plato as an impossible rationalist so committed to the Forms that he forgoes all knowledge of the sensible world and thus any practical application of his ideas. The end of *Republic V*, where Socrates persuades the sight lover that he has opinion but not knowledge, is a *locus classicus* for this characterization. If, as the text suggests, knowledge is set over the Forms and opinion over the sensible world it looks as though Plato's two-worlds ontology leads inexorably to a two-worlds epistemology in which knowledge is confined to Forms and all one can hope for here in this life is true belief, or opinion.

Scholars have found ingenious ways to resist such a result, but they all seem to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.¹ I will argue here that one can stand by the traditional objects analysis, where knowledge and opinion are set over different objects, and still have knowledge of the sensible world. On the reading I propose, knowledge is indeed set over the Forms and opinion over sensible properties, but since the sensible world has both intelligible and sensible properties, the way is open for knowledge and opinion here and now. The mistake engrained in the tradition is the idea that the sensible particulars themselves (say, Helen and this vase) must be the objects of opinion, as opposed to their sensible properties (e.g., their shape and color).² Gail Fine's brief definition of Forms captures the intuition I am after nicely: Forms are "non-sensible properties, properties not definable in observational or perceptual terms—the property, for example, of beauty, as opposed both to particular beautiful objects (such as the Parthenon) and to observable properties of beauty (such as circular shape or bright color)."³

I will also argue against a related mistake, the assumption that an objects analysis is a barrier to a contents analysis, which finds the difference between knowledge and belief in the propositional content of their respective judgments. Is knowledge propositional, or is it a matter of acquaintance?⁴ Fine solves the problem by reducing one to the other—the objects of knowledge just are propositional contents.⁵ However, as I will argue, a complicated solution is not required if an objects analysis is compatible with a contents analysis. The upshot is an account of Platonic rationalism and epistemology strict enough for the divided line and sensible enough to do the philosophers some good in their descent back into the cave.

¹ Most notably, Gail Fine (1978, 1990), whose complicated veridical reading of *what is* swims upstream against the text. Francisco Gonzalez (1996: 272-5) has refuted Fine's interpretation but still suffers from the conviction that an objects analysis bars knowledge of the sensible world, which he addresses by making sensibles of the same kind as Forms (that is, he denies a two-worlds ontology). Nicholas Smith (2000) grants Plato a two-worlds ontology but denies it leads to a two-worlds epistemology, by denying that knowledge and opinion are different powers.

² Gonzalez (1996: 268); Kahn (1981: 113); Smith (2000: 150 (n. 15)); Stokes (1992: 283)

³ 1990: 215 (n. 1)

⁴ See Butler (2007: 31-2), who highlights Charles Kahn and Lloyd Gerson as poster-children of the propositional and acquaintance views, respectively.

⁵ *op. cit.*

Methodological remarks

I will proceed by reconstructing Socrates' argument at the end of *Republic V*, and argue for my interpretation along the way. I take the argument to begin at 467e7 when Socrates instructs Glaucon to answer on behalf of the lover of sights and sounds, and to end at 479e6 when the sight lover is persuaded that he "opines but does not know."⁶

Another important preliminary is that I take Glaucon to be answering for the sight lover in good faith, not just rolling over for Socrates. Glaucon's job is to admit no premise that would be anathema to the sight lover, i.e., no Forms, only "beautiful sounds and colors and shapes and all things crafted out of them" (476b4-9). This is the dialectical requirement central to Fine's interpretation.⁷ But the fact that every premise must be acceptable to the sight lover does not rule out every premise being acceptable to Socrates and the true philosopher as well. On the contrary, Socrates is clearly trying to argue for a thesis to which he is committed. Doing so by way of premises he rejects is not Socrates' *modus operandi*.⁸ The proposal at 476e is that they gently persuade the sight lover while hiding that he is not of sound mind. One might think that this hiding amounts to an explicit disavowal of the argument that follows, but it could just as well forecast Socrates proceeding from general terms to particular. The beauty of this argument, as I will argue, is that every premise (and the conclusion, of course) is acceptable to the sight lover and to the philosopher. There is no need to make Socrates disown the argument, or even to remain agnostic on the point, as many have.⁹

Finally, I prefer a reconstruction that stays true to the order and detail in which Plato proceeds, complete with reiterated premises. In translation I also err on the side of good Greek over lame English. The logical relations by which the conclusions follow are unaffected by this, and the clarity of exposition is no worse for it.¹⁰ Indeed, the argument is much clearer when not treated as a enthymeme. The only down side is a longer list of steps to reach the conclusion, for which I ask the reader's patience.

⁶ Throughout the argument I translate γνώσις and ἐπιστήμη as knowledge. They are used interchangeably and though there are no doubt reasoned differences to Plato's use of each term and its cognates, they are not relevant to the debate at hand and so I do not consistently flag the terms.

⁷ The dialectical requirement is also operative for Gosling (1968), and Stokes (1992), as Francisco Gonzalez points out (1996: n. 6).

⁸ The *Protagoras* is no exception. It is as clear there that Socrates is exploring Protagoras' views, as it is here that they will urge the sight lover to agree with Socrates' views.

⁹ See Gonzalez, loc. cit. for his own agnostic view and descriptions of Stokes, Fine and Ebert running the gamut from skepticism to certain rejection of Plato's commitment to the premises of the argument.

¹⁰ As opposed to Gerasimo Santas' reconstruction (1973: 47-8), for example, which reorders, supplies premises and generates conclusions beyond the boundaries of the argument. This is just a nit I pick in an otherwise highly illuminating proposal that for Plato the objects of knowledge are unchanging and of belief changing. I deny that the argument directed at the sight lover argues for such a conclusion, but I agree that it is Plato's view.

The difference between true philosophers and sight lovers

Little attention has been paid to the introductory argument directed to Glaucon,¹¹ which is certainly testament to Socrates' considered view and, as I will argue, of a piece with the argument that follows (dialectical requirement notwithstanding). I am giving the whole passage here (475d1-476e7) so I can make regular reference to it as I unfold from it the argument directed at the sight lover. I begin with Glaucon and Socrates on separate lines, then signal Glaucon's responses by an em dash (—) once they become simple affirmatives or merely conversational.

Glaucon: Then many strange people will be philosophers, for all the lovers of sights (φιλοθεάμονες) seem to me at least to be such since they take pleasure in learning well; and the lovers of sounds are the strangest to put in the class of philosophers, as they would not willingly attend arguments and serious discussions of that sort, but, as if their ears were under contract to listen to every chorus, they run around to Dionysiac festivals, missing none either in cities or villages. Do we say, then, that
475e these people and all others who learn such things and petty crafts, are philosophers?

Socrates: No, but they are like philosophers.

Glaucon: And who do you say are the true philosophers?

Socrates: Those who love the sight (φιλοθεάμονας) of truth.

Glaucon: That is correct at least. But what do you mean by it?

Socrates: It would in no way be easy to explain to someone else; but I think you will agree with me to such a thing. — To what?

476a Since beautiful is the opposite of ugly, they are two. — Of course.

Then since they are two, also each is one. — This too.

And indeed about the just and unjust, and good and bad, and about all the Forms (πάντων τῶν εἰδῶν), the account is the same, that each is on the one hand itself one, and on the other hand they all appear to be many (πολλὰ φαίνεσθαι) manifesting themselves everywhere in association (τῆ...κοινωνία πανταχοῦ φανταζόμενα) with actions, bodies and each other. — That is correct.

476b And so now I distinguish this way: on the one side are those you spoke of just now, the sight lovers (φιλοθεάμονας), craft lovers and practical people, and on the other side those about whom we are giving an account, which people alone someone would rightly call philosophers. — How do you mean?

The lovers of sights and sounds anywhere embrace (ἀσπάζονται) beautiful sounds and colors and shapes and all things crafted out of them, but their thought (διάνοια) is unable (ἀδύνατος) to see and embrace the nature of the beautiful itself. — It certainly is so.

¹¹ Gonzalez is an exception, but he uses it to argue that Plato is a bundle theorist (which Plato isn't) and that opinion is therefore always about Forms grasped deficiently, i.e., indirectly (which is too strong a result). Rather, the dreaming-waking description applies perfectly to Gonzalez's description of the difference between *dianoia* on the one hand as *doxa* and as *nous* on the other, as in the divided line (op. cit., n. 50, 272-3). Stokes is a less notable exception, making no substantive use of the distinction between dreaming and waking (op. cit., 270).

476c Indeed, those who are able to reach (ἰέναι) the beautiful itself and see it of itself won't then be many, right? — Certainly.

Then the one who believes in beautiful things (καλὰ πράγματα) but neither believes in the beautiful itself nor, if someone should lead him to awareness (γνώσιν) of it, is able to follow, does he seem to you to be living awake or asleep? But consider whether dreaming isn't this: whether asleep or awake, to take (ἡγήται) a likeness (τὸ ὁμοίον) to be what is not a likeness but that thing itself that it resembles. — I certainly think such a person appears to be dreaming.

476d But what about the one who, being the opposite of these, takes the beautiful itself to be something (ἡγούμενός τέ τι αὐτὸ καλόν) and can see clearly both it and those things participating in it (τὰ μετέχοντα), and neither believes the things that participate are it nor that it is the things that participate in it (τὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα)—now again, does this person seem to you to be living awake or dreaming? — He is very much awake.

So would it be right to say that his thought (διανοία) is knowledge (γνώμην), since he knows (ὡς γιγνώσκοντος), but the other one's thought opinion (δόξαν) because he opines (ὡς δοξάζοντος)? — By all means.

476e What if the one we say opines but does not know, should be angry with us, and disputes what we say as untrue? Will we somehow be able to console and gently persuade him while disguising the fact that he is not of sound mind? — We must at least be able to try.

Come then, consider what we will say to him. Or won't we inquire of him like this: by saying that no one wishes to begrudge him any knowledge he may have, but that we would be pleased to see that he knows something. But then we will say: does he who knows know something or nothing? Now you answer for him.

This portion of the text is important for several reasons. First and foremost, for the introduction of the one over many apparatus: at 476a Socrates and Glaucon agree that each Form is itself one yet appears to be many because of its various manifestations in the sensible world. The sight lover is then defined as embracing “beautiful sounds and colors and shapes and all things crafted out of them” and “unable to see and embrace the nature of the beautiful itself” (476b). So a certain diagnosis of the sight lovers is already available, namely that they embrace the many manifestations but not the one itself; and that these many are the beautiful sounds, colors and shapes, i.e., sensible properties. To say they embrace only sensible properties is to forecast that their thought is *set over* (ἐπί) *what is* and *is not*, indeed dooming them to δόξα (opinion). But the many beautiful particulars also have intelligible properties, namely their participation in Forms. The philosopher grasps both the sensible and intelligible properties, sees the connection between them and keeps them distinct in answering the question “What is beautiful?”¹²

Thus the analogy to dreaming and waking can be read as follows: the one who believes in the many beautiful things but not beauty itself takes a likeness—a manifestation of beauty—to

¹² I do not mean to suggest that sensible particulars like Helen are bundles of properties or that having intelligible properties is not a function of the sensible properties—Helen instantiates beauty because of her sensible shape, sound, color, etc., or because of the arrangement of her sensible properties, one could say. My talk of having sensible as well as intelligible properties should not be taken too literally.

be the thing of which it is a likeness—the one, beauty itself. But surely the sight lover has no such explicit thoughts! How can this description of confusing the one with the many be accurate if they don't even countenance the one? The answer is that when the question “What is beautiful?” is put, the sight lover answers: Helen's shape, the color of the vase, the sound of the lyre. This is to answer the question, “What is F?” in terms of the many sensible properties that are “never any more what one says they are than the opposite” (479b). A proper answer to “What is F?” will be given in terms of the one set over the many, recognizing precisely that the one *appears* to be many without being fooled by that appearance. So, in answering “What is F?” the sight lover *confuses* the sensible manifestation with a proper answer to the question, which should make reference to the intelligible one set over the sensible many. This sort of mix-up need not be conscious to be described as a case of confusion. When someone gives a wrong answer it is natural to say he has confused the answer he gives for the correct one. So the analogy with dreaming and waking is more than just pretty prose; it gives us a preliminary diagnosis of the sight lover and a prescription for the philosopher's knowledge.

I have argued that *embracing* in this argument to Glaucon anticipates the *set over* (ἐπί) relation in what follows, and this supports an objects analysis of knowledge and opinion. The objects of opinion will be the many sensible properties the sight lover embraces; the objects of knowledge will be the Forms, i.e., the one(s) set over the many. Now, though, it looks as if knowledge of the sensible world is impossible since it has to be of Forms. This is the traditional conundrum: how to countenance an objects analysis while making room for knowledge of the sensible world, knowledge that this or that is a case of justice, beauty or health. The answer to this puzzle lies in the dreaming–waking analogy as well. The philosopher who is awake does not just believe in Forms in simple opposition to the sight lover who refuses them. Rather, he “takes the beautiful itself to be something and can see clearly both it and those things participating in it” (476d1-2). He sees the world through the lens of the Forms, so to speak, keeping track of the one, the many and their relation to one another. The philosopher therefore sees each case of beauty as just that: a case or instance of beauty, a manifestation of the one. Being set over the Forms does not mean thinking only about Forms. After all, why would Socrates specify that being awake is keeping Forms and their sensible instances distinct if he did not think knowledge the sensible world is the kind of thing that involves both? So, embracing or being set over the Forms is to bring the one over many apparatus to bear as described in analogy with waking.

So, the argument to Glaucon is not just a diagnosis of the sight lover's shortcomings but also a positive prescription for the philosopher's knowledge of the sensible world. The one over many apparatus introduced at 476a unfolds at 476b-c into a definition of the sight lover as one whose thought (διάνοια) is set over the many colors, shapes and sounds without benefit of the one, which in turn (at 476d) yields an important description of what the philosopher does when he knows. And what he does involves much more than just thinking about Forms, it means thinking about the one *and* the many—something not possible unless knowledge is of the sensible world. Thus an objects analysis is already present, as the tradition holds, but it does not *eo ipso* deny knowledge of the sensible world; a two-worlds ontology that posits intelligible as well as sensible properties does not lead inexorably to a two-worlds epistemology.

Furthermore, an objects analysis is not incompatible with a contents analysis. The philosopher does not just engage in non-representational Form-gazing, but sees the world through the lens of the one over many apparatus. So when Socrates says, “Helen is beautiful” he means that she instantiates beauty; acquaintance with the Forms thus bears propositional fruit, as

I will argue further below. Finally, the argument directed at Glaucon is important because it lays down the very conclusion to which Socrates will gently urge the sight lover: that he opines but does not know. Socrates might use a certain subterfuge in the argument that follows, knowing that the sight lover cannot discern his condition from what he has already agreed; but Socrates is not going to argue with premises he disavows toward a conclusion he himself endorses.

Argument reconstructed

I: The Crucial Conditional

1. One who knows knows (ὁ γινώσκων γινώσκει) *something that is* (τὸ ὄν), not nothing (οὐδέν) or *something that is not* (οὐκ ὄν), because *what is not* (μὴ ὄν) cannot be known. **476e7-477a1**

To the philosophically untrained ear, say to the sight lover, this first premise should be and indeed is innocuous—what could be objectionable about agreeing that the object of knowledge is something that *is* rather than nothing at all? But a lot has been thought to turn on our reading of the verb to be (ὄν): as a veridical, existential or predicative (copula) use, and thus over whether Socrates has already violated the dialectical requirement. For example, Gail Fine hangs her interpretation on a veridical reading, which renders the premise: one who knows, knows something that is true. There is, of course, no reason for the sight lover to object to such a proposition.¹³ A veridical reading also makes good sense of the initial description of the philosopher as one who loves the sight of truth (475e4).

On the other hand, as many have argued,¹⁴ the context strongly implies an existential reading. The initial admission that the object of knowledge is something (τί) is standard Greek for saying that something exists, and standard Plato for acceptance of the Forms' existence. Further, the contrast with nothing at all (οὐδέν) underscores the existential sense of saying that knowledge is of *what is*, as does the sight lover's denial that Forms exist.¹⁵ On an existential reading, too, the sight lover has no reason to object since he certainly holds that the sounds, colors and shapes he embraces exist.

Others¹⁶ have preferred a predicative reading of *what is* (τὸ ὄν) as an incomplete use of the verb calling for a complement. *What is* is short for *what is F*. Here again there is no reason for the sight lover to object, since he is happy to say he knows what is beautiful: Helen's shape, the color of the vase and the sound of the lyre. Still others have argued for a reading that is both predicative and existential, some taking the existential reading to presuppose the predicative

¹³ As Gosling also points out: "In fact, the admission...has to be interpreted in a sense which makes it hardly open to dispute even by someone who does not admit the theory of Forms, and the obvious candidate here is 'the truth'." (1968: 121)

¹⁴ Stokes (1992), Hintikka (1973), F.C. White (1981), Cross & Woosley (1964). Many more have recognized the existential sense in addition to predicative. I cite here only those who argue for a pure existential reading.

¹⁵ As Stokes points out (1992: 272-3)

¹⁶ Smith (2000), Vlastos (1965), Allen (1971), Annas (1981), Gerson (2003), Sedley (2007)

reading,¹⁷ others as two distinct but equally valid readings,¹⁸ and yet more as blended readings of the two.¹⁹ For the reasons given above, the sight lover still has no reason to object to this first premise that knowledge is of *what is*.

I will not debate the relative merits of these various interpretations. Instead I will bypass them and proceed directly to Charles Kahn's overdetermination reading according to which the convergence of grammatical values does important philosophical work: "several grammatical readings of a single occurrence are not only possible but sometimes required for the full understanding of the text."²⁰ Kahn takes the veridical notion to be dominant in the argument directed at the sight lover, indeed giving the least controversial opening premise.²¹ But the point of Kahn's reading for my purposes is that the three uses come together as a package.

I suggest that, for both Parmenides and Plato, the veridical ἐστὶ and τὸ ὄν ("what is the case") be understood as a conjunction of "X exists" and "X is F", for unspecified values of X and F, so that the veridical unfolds naturally and non-fallaciously into the existential plus the incomplete copula.²²

So, when Socrates says that knowledge is of *what is*, he means three things: that it is of what is the case, that X exists and that X is F. Knowledge that Helen is beautiful is thus knowledge that she really is beautiful (veridical), that she exists (existential) and that she participates in the Form of beauty (predicative).²³ The sight lover, as competent a Greek speaker as Socrates, also hears the three senses of *what is*, but plugs in different values. Socrates hears each sense of *to be* through the one over many filter, while the sight lover operates only in terms of the particular and its sensible properties. Both, however, are live to the three senses of *to be*.

Now, the overdetermination thesis does more than just make the veridical, predicative and existential readings compatible with each other. It also makes an objects analysis compatible with a contents analysis. While I deny that propositions are the objects of knowledge, since knowledge is set over (ἐπί) the Forms, I do maintain that whatever acquaintance the philosopher has with the Forms bears propositional fruit. Kahn's observations that truth implies both the reality that is described and the content of the description are to the point:

My claim, then, is that the concept of Being in Parmenides and Plato — and to some extent in the later tradition as well — is understood primarily by reference to the notion of truth and the corresponding notion of reality. The question of Being is first of all the question of the nature of reality or the structure of the world, in the very general sense of "the world" which includes whatever we can know or investigate and whatever we can describe in true or false statements.²⁴

[T]he prephilosophic conception of truth in Greek (and in Indo-European generally, if not in all languages) involves some kind of correlation or "fit" between what is said or

¹⁷ Ferber (1989)

¹⁸ Santas (1990)

¹⁹ Cooper (1986), Gonzalez (1996), Brown (1986)

²⁰ Kahn (1981: 105)

²¹ op. cit.: 112-114

²² op. cit., n. 18: 130

²³ Note that the same account holds when a Form is the subject term.

²⁴ Kahn (1976: 328)

thought, on the one side, and *what is* or *what is the case* or *the way things are* on the other side.²⁵

For every premise of the argument where the verb *to be* (εἶναι, τὸ ὄν, οὐσία) figures, I will make explicit the overdetermined sense that Socrates hears as well as the sense that makes the premise acceptable to the sight lover so that Socrates never violates the dialectical requirement or argues fallaciously.²⁶ At the same time I will show how the argument can be read as advancing both an objects analysis and a contents analysis without conflict.

The opening premise, then, holds for Socrates and the philosopher because one who knows knows:

- i. *What is true.* With Kahn, I take the notion of truth to imply both the way things are in the world and the propositional element that is said or thought. So knowing what is true is shorthand for knowing what is the case, or describing the world as it truly is. This yields both an objects analysis, since what is known is the world as it truly is, and a contents analysis since what is said or thought is true as well. Most importantly, note that these two analyses are not in tension with one another and thus need not be exclusive alternatives as has traditionally been supposed.
- ii. *What is F.* The predicative (or incomplete copula) reading is the sense in which *what is* (τὸ ὄν) answers “What is F?” Stokes denies that knowing the nature of the beautiful itself (476b) is a matter of knowing the essential nature of beauty, hence he denies that Forms hold informative answers to “What is F?” He also advocates a purely existential reading so he needs to close the predicative avenue.²⁷ Many others, however, recognize the predicative sense of *what is* and that *being truly F* equates to *what F is*. For example, Gosling, who says most directly: “the true answer to any question τί ἐστὶ X; is that which gives τὸ ὄν X.”²⁸ Kahn calls this sense the definitional copula, or “the ‘is’ of whatness” “corresponding to the “what-is-it?” question.”²⁹ I take it as established that *what is*, the undisputed object of knowledge, answers the “What is F?” question. So when the sight lover says that colors, shapes and sounds are what is beautiful, he takes them for what really is beautiful, the Form of beauty itself. As in the dreaming analogy, he *confuses* the many manifestations of beauty with a genuine account of what beauty is.

On the other hand, I agree with Smith³⁰ that we should not take our passage to limit knowledge to definitions or answers to “What is F?” questions, thereby excluding knowledge of the road to Larissa, particular

²⁵ op. cit., original italics: 329

²⁶ As Crombie and Hintikka think he does on an objects analysis. Specifically, they take Socrates to argue with the result that if I can taste a pear I can’t see it.

²⁷ 1992: 272-3

²⁸ 1968: 122

²⁹ 1981: 111, 115

³⁰ 2000: n. 36: 265; contra Penner (1987) and Gonzalez (1991)

squares and Socrates' guilt. Rather, we should say that the predicative reading of *what is* itself carries two related but distinct senses: (a) *what F is* and (b) *what is F*. Indeed the *Hippias Major* shows that Plato was very much aware of such a distinction, when Hippias is deaf to the difference between a request for (a) *the beautiful* and (b) *a beautiful thing*.³¹ He is like the sight lover, even explicitly so when Hippias endorses yet another definition of the beautiful (τὸ καλόν)—this time as what makes us glad and delights us through hearing and sight, i.e., beautiful men and everything decorative, pictures and sculptures, beautiful sounds and music altogether, as well as speeches and storytelling.³²

So, one could answer the question “What is beautiful?” by (a) giving an account of beauty itself or (b) giving an instance of beauty; Socrates is live to both—he need not deny that one can know that Helen is beautiful. One cannot, however, know (b) that Helen is beautiful without knowing (a) what beauty is. This is the crux of the dialectic between Socrates and the sight lover. Each hears the question “What is beautiful?” in his own way, but with enough overlap for the argument to proceed.³³ The sight lover is of course deaf to (a) and thus to the role of Forms in knowing (b) that Helen is beautiful, hence he is doomed to opinion. But he need not recognize the Forms or his impending doom in order to agree that Helen's being beautiful can be an object of knowledge. For the sight lover, *What F is* just is *what is F*, and therein lies the problem—there is no *one* set over their *many*, the sight lovers are adrift with no criterion. Hence, Glaucon's initial description of the lover of sounds running around as if his ears were under contract to listen to every chorus.

- iii. *What exists*. There can be no doubt that Socrates takes the Forms to exist and I see no reason to make him skeptical as to the existence of the material world and its sensible properties either. Vlastos is surely right that Plato cannot have been in doubt about the existence of the material bed even while committed to the higher reality of *what a bed is*; but this is no reason to reject the existential reading as Vlastos does.³⁴ Rather, I agree with Kahn, again, that while “existence does not emerge as a distinct concept in Greek philosophy,” there are plenty of existential *uses* of εἶναι to justify this third sense as yoked with the other two.³⁵

The opening premise holds for the sight lover in all three senses as well, as follows. One who knows knows:

³¹ 287d

³² 297e8-298a10, Grube trns.

³³ The same is true in *Hippias Major*. Socrates phrases the definitions very carefully so that they are technically correct but with enough latitude (rope) for Hippias to hang himself.

³⁴ 1966

³⁵ 1976: 325-6

- i. *What is true.* The premise is uncontroversial on both aspects of the veridical reading: as how the world really is and the description we give of it. Why would the sight lover disagree that knowledge should get it right?
- ii. *What is F.* On the predicative “What is F?” reading, too, the sight lover has no issue with the premise, since he will certainly say he knows (b) that Helen is beautiful; for the sight lover there is nothing more to answering “What is F?” than giving examples. He is deaf to hearing “What is beautiful?” as (a) a request for an account of the intelligible Form of beauty itself, but as long as the premise does not *require* such a reading the dialectical requirement is not violated. Socrates agrees to this premise for his reasons; the sight lover for others.

Another way to hear the question “What is beautiful?” is as a request for what *makes* something beautiful, say, a vase. This sense is quite alive in *Hippias* as well, where Socrates consistently asks for that *by which* something is fine.³⁶ Socrates will answer the question by saying (a) that the vase participates in the Form of beauty, or shares in, or whatever; the Form is the ultimate beauty-maker. Now, both will agree that (b) the vase’s color makes it beautiful, but for different reasons. Socrates recognizes the gold color of the vase as an instance of beauty, and understands (b) through the lens of (a). The sight lover, on the other hand, takes the color by itself to be the beauty-maker (which, of course, it can’t be if gold is sometimes an ugly-maker, as it would be on a statue’s face). Here again the sight lover has no criterion by which to unify the many manifestations.

- iii. *What exists.* Finally, we can see that there is also no reason for the sight lover to worry about saying knowledge is of what exists, since he takes the existence of his many colors, shapes and sounds to be unproblematic.
2. Then we grasp most³⁷ sufficiently, no matter how we consider the matter, that *what is completely* (τὸ παντελῶς ὄν) is completely knowable (παντελῶς γνωστόν); and *what is in no way* (μὴ ὄν μηδαμῆ) is in every way unknowable (πάντη ἄγνωστον). **477a2-5**
 - i. *What is completely true* is completely knowable. The sight lover and philosopher can both agree to this sense of the premise unproblematically, including the correspondence between what is said or thought on the one hand (the contents aspect) and reality on the other (the objects aspect). For Socrates *telling it like it is*, as Kahn says, involves the Forms; for the

³⁶ e.g., 287c, 288a, 289d, 294b, 296e

³⁷ Reading in Ἰκανώτατα from Glaucon’s response on behalf of the lover of sights and sounds. Throughout I will include the sight lover’s response in the line numbers to indicate this sort of license in rephrasing the questions and answers into statements.

sight lover it does not. But for both, as Gosling puts it, “only the absolutely right answer can be claimed as absolutely knowable.”³⁸

- ii. *What is completely F* is completely knowable. For Socrates this means that only the Forms are completely knowable, since only they are completely F. Only *what F is*, the Form of beauty, is completely beautiful, i.e., always beautiful and never not.³⁹ Thus Socrates hears only the (a) reading (*what F is*) of this premise because the subject of the (b) reading (*what is F*), Helen, is not completely beautiful. For the sight lover there is no problem with the premise since he certainly takes Helen, the gold vase and the all the many cases of beauty to answer the question completely—he hears only the (b) reading.

I will pause now to introduce another way to see an objects and a contents analysis emerging together. Take Kahn’s description of this premise: “The pure being-so...of the Form F lies in its being just ‘what F is’ ...and nothing else.”⁴⁰ What it says is that to be *completely F* is to be *what F is*, i.e., an answer to *ti esti*. We saw already that the veridical reading yields both an objects and a contents analysis: the reality described and the content of the description. Now, as the veridical reading unfolds into predicative, parallel objects and contents analyses emerge as well: the Form F corresponds to the objects analysis and *what F is* to the contents analysis. But these are just two ways of picking out the same thing: the Form of beauty and *what beauty is* are not two things but one. Scholars have typically thought that either Plato has an acquaintance model of knowledge or a description model, but no one seems to think there can be both.

Travis Butler has argued nicely for what he calls an informational view, according to which knowledge of the Forms is “a matter of consciously possessing information about their natures.”⁴¹ But he too makes a point of remaining agnostic as to whether knowledge is by acquaintance or description for Plato.⁴² Why not both, I ask, since the account is already compatible with both? Butler motivates the possibility of an informational acquaintance relation to the Forms by comparison with theories of direct perception.

We think propositionally about Forms, but we also “see” them, and our knowledge of them cannot be characterized fully without both kinds of cognition, in something like the way that really seeing Mt. Rainier would (according to the direct realist) involve propositional content but would also be a direct experience of it.⁴³

Butler does not pursue the direct realist account in the detail it would take to establish, and I won’t be able to now either. But I am going to assume such a view is correct, eventually defensible and called for by the veridical reading that links how the world is (objects analysis) with what is said (contents analysis). The predicative reading of premise 2, then—*what is completely F* is completely knowable—also yokes together objects (the Form F) and contents

³⁸ 1968: 122

³⁹ In *Sophist* terms: only the Form of beauty is purely, i.e., never not, beautiful because it’s the only one that shares only in sameness and not difference relative to itself.

⁴⁰ 1981: 113; the pure being-so translates the Greek from the next premise, but there is no doubt that Socrates takes being completely ($\pi\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma$) F in premise 2 and being purely ($\epsilon\iota\lambda\iota\kappa\theta\iota\nu\omega\varsigma$) F in premise 3 as interchangeable.

⁴¹ 2007: 33

⁴² op. cit.: 53

⁴³ op. cit.: 46; see also 41 and n. 14: 55

(*what F is*) in what I will call Socrates' propositional acquaintance view.⁴⁴ I turn now to the third sense of *what is completely*.

- iii. *What exists completely* is completely knowable. Again, this reading is no problem for Socrates, who takes the Forms to have the highest kind of existence without denying the sensible reality of concrete beds. The sight lover is also at ease, given the uncontroversial existence of colors, shapes and sounds. We can also say that the propositional acquaintance reading appears with the existential sense of *what is*: what exists (objects analysis) gives information (contents analysis)—for both the philosopher and sight lover.

Henceforth it should be understood that for Socrates what exists includes intelligible and sensible reality, while for the sight lover there is only sensible reality; that for both the veridical unfolds naturally and non-fallaciously into the predicative and the existential senses, as Kahn puts it; and that objects of knowledge that exist (whatever they turn out to be) are known by propositional acquaintance.

3. If something were such as *to be* (εἶναι) and *to not be* (μὴ εἶναι), it would lie between *what purely is* (τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς ὄντος) and *what, again, in no way is* (τοῦ αὐ μὴδαμῆ ὄντος). **477a6-8**
4. Therefore (Οὐκοῦν), knowledge being set over (ἐπί) *what is* and ignorance of necessity over *what is not* (μὴ ὄντι), we must also seek something intermediate between ignorance and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) set over this intermediate (ἐπί δὲ τῷ μεταξὺ τούτῳ), if there is such a thing (εἴ τι τυγχάνει ὄν τοιοῦτον). **477a9-b2**

The crucial point here concerns the conditional form of premises 3 and 4. Many scholars have taken the final clause of premise 4, “if there is [or *should be*] such a thing,” to refer to the possibility of an intermediate power between knowledge and ignorance.⁴⁵ But the grammatical referent of “such a thing” (τοιοῦτον) is the intermediate described in premise 3. Otherwise, the conclusion signaled by “therefore” in 4 would not be licensed. The logical order is that premise 4 follows from 2 and 3: because knowledge is set over *what is* and ignorance over *what is not*, if something were *to be* and *to not be*, then we would have to search for some power intermediate to knowledge and ignorance. I don't deny that the status of an intermediate power is tentative at this point, since it would remain to seek for it if an intermediate object were to appear; but it is essential to see that the antecedent concerns the intermediate *object* and not the power.

My reading is confirmed by looking forward to the reiteration of this premise at 479d5-10 (between premises 21 and 22) and by premise 18 (478e1-6), which make it clear that what

⁴⁴ I prefer this to Butler's *nonrepresentational* label because I am not sure why acquaintance with Forms shouldn't be representational if it's going to be propositional; I also prefer it to *informational*, which doesn't convey the two-headed nature of the beast that I am emphasizing.

⁴⁵ Stokes (1992: 274, 283); Gonzalez (1996: 247, 251-3)

remains to be found is the intermediate object of opinion, not the intermediate power. Furthermore, the elegance of the argument lies precisely in the sight lover's early acceptance of a conditional whose antecedent will be the last premise secured before QED. Now why should Socrates leave the antecedent of the conditional, that there is such a thing as *to be* and *to not be*, for last?

It's because Socrates knows the sight lover will object least of all to the idea that the many beautifuls are also all ugly. Why should they object least of all to saying their many beautifuls are also ugly? Because, I suggest, with no criterion the sight lovers are no more than closet relativists. Indeed, only a relativist would agree so easily that their answer to "What is F?" is also ugly. Here again the *Hippias Major* lends helpful support. Just as the lover of sounds has put his ears under contract to hear every chorus, so the sophists and their clients put their minds under contract to hear every lecture and demonstration. The sight lover *cum* sophist lover of the *Hippias* would be fond of Protagoras, relativism and the eristic tricks of the sophists that make contradictory results commonplace. So establishing the conditional early on and leaving the antecedent for the last premise, is a calculated dialectical move. Socrates sets up what he knows will be the least objectionable premise as the lynch pin of the whole argument.

I am already using the language of objects and powers that will emerge in full force in the next section, so I will make some preliminary observations about the terminology. First, the preposition ἐπί (plus the dative) is conventionally rendered *set over*, which is a perfectly good translation. This *set over* relation has also been what signals an objects analysis to the tradition: knowledge, opinion and ignorance are *set over* their proper *objects*. Here too I take no issue and will embrace the objects locution to emphasize my point that an objects analysis does not commit Socrates to denying the possibility of knowledge of the sensible world.

Second, as Smith has commented, the ἐπί relation between power and object is not equivalent to the resulting state (say, knowledge) and its intentional content. Powers and their products (*states* like knowledge, opinion and ignorance) are distinct from the objects they are set over: "our perceptual powers are not *of* or *about* their natural objects of contact—they simply make contact with their objects; it is, instead, what is produced in us by the perceptual power—cognitive or perceptual states—that are *of* or *about* their objects."⁴⁶ I embrace this view as another version of propositional acquaintance, and appreciate the distinction between a power itself, its objects and its product. I will be mindful of the distinction in what follows.

Finally, I have helped myself to the term *power*, which is not formally introduced until the next premise. I use it now because it's clear that the upcoming account of powers (δυνάμεις) is already in play. The conclusion that is premise 4 (if there's an intermediate object, then it will have an intermediate power set over it) is licensed by the suppressed premise that different objects have different powers set over them. The structure of Socrates' argument is already in place with the crucial conditional, but the suppressed premise needs to be filled in before the antecedent can be established and the admission that the sight lover opines but does not know secured.

⁴⁶ 2000: 148

Thus the crucial conditional of section I can be captured as follows: If something is such as *to be* and *to not be*, it will be the object not of knowledge (set over *what is*) or ignorance (set over *what is not*), but of some intermediate (power) between them.

II: Knowledge and Opinion—Set Over Different Objects

5. Opinion is something, namely a power (δύναμις) distinct from knowledge.
477b3-6
6. Then (ἄρα) (a) opinion is set over (ἐπὶ) one thing and knowledge over another, (b) according to the power (κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν) of each of these.
477b7-9
7. Therefore (Οὐκοῦν) knowledge is by nature set over *what is*, to know it as it is; on the other hand, it is necessary to be more explicit. **477b10-12**

I will take these premises together. First, note the formal introduction of opinion and knowledge as δυνάμεις. I will translate δύναμις as *power* rather than *faculty* so as not to prejudge the case against Gosling, who objects to a *faculty* reading of δύναμις.⁴⁷ Second, I want to emphasize just how much information is implicit in these premises already. In particular, premise 6 is forecasting the power principle that Socrates will elucidate in the next two sections: that a change in power entails a change in object and activity. Now, all Socrates says in premise 6 is that because opinion and knowledge are different powers (5, 6b), opinion and knowledge have different objects (6a). If nothing else, it is clear that “according to the power of each” (6b) governs the conclusion (6a) that opinion and knowledge have different objects, since it is offered as an explicit explanation of the inference. What remains to be seen is why that inference is licensed, which Socrates will explain in sections III and IV.

What also remains to be seen is how “according to the power of each” (6b) governs premise 7 too, which introduces the working definition of knowledge in terms of object *and* activity: to know *what is*, as it is. That premise 6b governs premise 7 can be seen in the text in the strong inference term therefore (οὐκοῦν); and in the force of saying that knowledge is *by nature* set over *what is*, to know it as it is, which reaches back to 6b and hearkens to the upcoming power principle that defines δυνάμεις in terms of object and activity. *By nature* and *according to its power* are just two ways of picking out the power principle. So, premise 7 is the application of the general power principle (6b) to the particular case of knowledge, which is defined in terms of its object (*what is*) and its activity (to know *what is* as it is).

Certainly Socrates is not yet entitled to assume all of this, which is precisely why he says it’s necessary to be more explicit. But the logical structure of these premises is sound, revealing Socrates’ elegant approach to the sight lover. The way Socrates is hiding from the sight lover

⁴⁷ In a valiant effort to salvage knowledge of the sensible world, Gosling argues that opinion and knowledge are not distinct faculties but rather different applications of the same faculty of judgment. I agree that opinion and knowledge are both cases of thought (*dianoia*) or judgment (see 476b-d); but I hold that opinion and knowledge are indeed distinct faculties with distinct objects, as the analogy with sight and hearing implies.

that he is not of sound mind is by proceeding from general to specific, unfolding his points into detail in an order that will back the sight lover, unawares, into a corner. How could the sight lover possibly see from here, from these intuitive responses, that his fate is already sealed? It might be a little unfair, this game of cat and mouse, but there is no fallacy involved. As I have said, Socrates and the philosopher can agree to each and every premise of the argument just as well as the sight lover does.

Section II can now be recast as follows.

- 5. Opinion and knowledge are different powers (Δ power)
- 6b. Different powers have different objects and activities
(Δ power \leftrightarrow Δ object & Δ activity)
- 6a. Then knowledge and opinion are set over different things (Δ object) (5, 6b)
- 7. Therefore, knowledge is of *what is*, to know it as it is (1, 6b)

Premise 6b is applied twice: once to secure agreement that knowledge and opinion have different objects (6a), then again to establish a working definition of knowledge in terms of object and activity (7). Regardless of all this forecasting about 6b, section II stands on its own: knowledge and opinion are different powers with different objects; knowledge knows *what is*, as it is. What follows will explain just why 6b holds and licenses these inferences.

III: The Power Principle, Part I

- 8. We will⁴⁸ say that powers are a certain class of things that are ($\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ $\tau\iota$ $\tau\acute{\omega}\nu$ $\acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\omega\nu$), in fact both that by which ($\acute{\alpha}\iota\varsigma$) we are able to do ($\delta\upsilon\nu\acute{\alpha}\mu\epsilon\theta\alpha$) what we are able to do and, for that matter, that by which all other things are able to do what they can; I mean for example that sight and hearing are powers, if then you understand the kind of thing I wish to say. **477c1-5**

First, what will it mean for the philosopher and sight lover to agree that powers are among the things that are? According to the overdetermined reading of *what is* it will mean that each agrees that there really are powers; agreeing *it's true* there are powers then unfolds into the agreement that *they exist* (which is most explicit in the Greek: they are among the things that are) and that *they are F*, that by which we have the powers we do. There is nothing to violate the dialectical requirement on either side.

Second, the analogy to sight and hearing is crucial. Many have taken the analogy to indicate that for Plato knowledge is by acquaintance. While Plato may well take knowledge to be by acquaintance in a certain respect, as in the propositional acquaintance view I have postulated, the use to which Socrates puts the analogy with sight and hearing here is no evidence for it. Rather, the role of the analogy in this argument is to define powers generally. Sight and hearing are natural examples because Socrates is talking to the lover of sights and sounds—these are his paradigm powers; so the sight lover goes in to this portion of the argument with eyes wide open, so to speak. The force of the analogy is the completely general point that powers are

⁴⁸ The future tense answers to the sight lover's query as to how Socrates will be more specific.

defined by the work they do (which is confirmed by premise 10a below). Socrates is aligning the power of knowledge with the power of sight only in their being species of the same genus: what is defined by what it does. The choice of sight and hearing as paradigm powers is best explained as a wise dialectical move relative to the interlocutor, not a direct comparison of knowledge to vision.

9. One sees in a power neither any color nor shape nor anything of the sort (τῶν τοιούτων), like one does in many other things (ἄλλων πολλῶν), by which one sometimes distinguishes for oneself some things from others; but in the case of a power one sees (βλέπω) only that over which it is set and the work it does (ἀπεργάζεται) and in virtue of this each of these is called a power, and being set over the same thing and doing the same work I call it the same, but being set over a different thing and doing different work I call it another. **477c6-d6**

I read this premise as follows: powers do not have sensible properties by which to distinguish them, i.e., neither color, nor shape, or anything of the sort. Rather, each power is individuated by its object (that over which it is set) and the work it does (its activity).⁴⁹ What has the same object and does the same work is the same power; what has a different object and does different work is a different power. The first question that arises is whether a change in either the object or the work but not both, changes the power, or whether it's even possible for the object and activity to come apart. Is it possible for the visible to be heard? Is it possible for the opinable to be known, and *vice versa*? The possibility of knowing the sensible world looks to be in jeopardy if not; a two-worlds epistemology threatens, or so the tradition has seen it.

There have been two kinds of approach to this problem: to pry the object and activity apart so one can know the objects of opinion, and to reduce the object and activity to one thing. For example, Gosling reduces the work to the object: the power to melt is set over melting.⁵⁰ Hintikka does the same by aligning the work a power does with the product or output, which he takes to be the *object* of the *dunamis*:⁵¹ the power to think is the power of producing thoughts. All this to save Socrates from the fallacious result that if you can see a pear then you can't smell it.⁵² Likewise Julia Annas: "Plato carefully distinguishes two criteria for something's being a capacity, only to run them together."⁵³ But the result only follows if you assume that the work and object swing independently. Fine makes a similar mistake in making propositions the objects of opinion and knowledge, locating their difference exclusively in the work they do (pull apart work and object, then reduce the power to its work).⁵⁴

My diagnosis is that such separation and reduction are just two sides of the same bad coin: the strain of pulling apart the object and work of a power in order to countenance knowledge of the sensible world has led to untenable reductive accounts. But if we never pull

⁴⁹ I translate ὁ ἀπεργάζεται interchangeably as *activity* or as *work*, a nod to the *ergon* root of the word.

⁵⁰ 1968: 124

⁵¹ 1973: 7-15

⁵² Hintikka adopts the stance from Crombie without ado.

⁵³ 1981: 202

⁵⁴ 1990

them apart to begin with, the reduction won't be necessary. That still leaves us with the traditional puzzle as to how Socrates can possibly countenance knowledge of the sensible world if it's just one big object of opinion, which I will address shortly. The point here is that object and work do not come apart in their individuation of a power; accordingly, a change in one of the three (object, work, power) brings a change in the other two. No pulling apart, no *ad hoc* reduction required either.⁵⁵

Thus I am with Smith in maintaining that there are two criteria for a power: the object and the work. Smith is also right that we must recognize the difference between a power and its product or output, and that we must not conflate the object of each power with the product. The objects of the power of knowledge are the Forms, or *what is* (in its fully overdetermined sense); the characteristic activity is to know *what is*, as it is; and the product is a cognitive state that X is F. But Smith still sees a barrier to knowledge of the sensible world under this schema, which he solves by emphasizing the difference between the product or output and the object: "unless we can find some reason *not* to identify the distinguishing objects of the powers with the objects of the cognitive states they produce, we will be committed to a 'two-worlds theory' of Plato's epistemology."⁵⁶

I agree that the distinction Smith illustrates between object and content is operative but I don't see any reason to say that being set over the Forms means your thought is only about Forms. According to the propositional acquaintance reading, being *set over* the Forms is parsed according to the analogy with waking, where *embracing* the Forms means recognizing both the Forms and their sensible instances, and then keeping them straight when we bring the one over many apparatus to bear on the sensible world. There is plenty of room here for Smith's distinction between powers and their products without separating the content and object as dramatically as he does. There is no need to deny that the "judgments involved in ruling are judgments *about* Forms,"⁵⁷ even when our judgments are not explicitly about their nature. Socrates' knowledge that Helen is beautiful is *about* Helen's instantiation of beauty, therefore indirectly about the Form of beauty.

The solution to the traditional puzzle, how there can be knowledge of the sensible world when knowledge is explicitly set over the Forms, is that the proper objects of opinion are not sensible particulars but their sensible *properties* that we apprehend by sight, hearing, smell *et al.* A pear can be seen, tasted and smelled by its sensible properties but it can also be recognized as a pear or as a beautiful subject for a still life by its intelligible properties. Thus one could say it's the aspect under which we think of a particular—sensible vs. intelligible—that determines whether we are on a path to opinion or to knowledge. The sight lover embraces only Helen's colors, shapes and sounds—merely her sensible properties. The philosopher, however, embraces

⁵⁵ If there were to be some reduction it would be of the power to the activity, as the wording of premise 8 signals. But because the three entities are yoked together as they are, one would expect the elements to collapse this way. Work and object are defined in terms of each other: vision works on the visible, to be visible is to be a possible object of vision. But this does not really speak against the distinction between vision as the power of sight on the one hand, and vision as the act of seeing on the other. All three come together without needing to be reduced to one another—as will be the case for opinion and the opinable, and knowledge and the knowable. How to apply this schema to the third power, ignorance, is an interesting further problem that I cannot go into here; but an adequate account of *powers* should apply to ignorance as well.

⁵⁶ 2000: 153

⁵⁷ *op. cit.*: 154

the intelligible one, the Form of beauty, as well as the sensible many—he thinks about Helen and her sensible properties through the lens of the one over many apparatus, and therefore about her intelligible properties.

What exactly does it mean to say Helen has intelligible as well as sensible properties? This sounds like more two-worlds trouble. But it need not. Dorothea Frede has argued for a decidedly this-worldly interpretation of Plato's Forms that makes it "reasonable to assume that Plato does not have pure concepts in Kant's sense in mind. For in spite of all his other-worldly fanfare, there can be little doubt that his concern with the Forms centres on their applicability to the kinds of problems humans encounter here and now."⁵⁸ Frede finds the solution in Book X, which renders the Form of a bed in terms of its ideal use or function. Thus Forms can be cast as separately existing insofar as these ideal uses are *a priori*, but the Forms remain this-worldly insofar as they are *a priori* functions or uses of items in *this, sensible* world. Again, the *a priori* nature of the objects of knowledge does not divorce them from the sensible world; on the contrary, it is only through the sensible instances that the thought can be trained to "transcend the senses and attain the intelligible. This 'transcendence' is not a simple process but involves at the same time extensive field-work on the Good because Socrates seems to presuppose that the dialectician must systematically review all things that are good in the world and find out what it is that makes them good."⁵⁹

So, what it means to say that Helen has sensible as well as intelligible properties is just the truism that, as Frede puts it, no amount of looking will get you to a theory. "The seeming denigration of the senses is due, then, to the simple reason that even ordinary experience needs to go beyond sensory evidence. The problems that Socrates lays out *disserendo* in the *Republic* are not the domain of the senses, for the senses are unable to determine the nature of justice and injustice."⁶⁰ When I say that opinion is set over sensible *properties* I have in mind this simple distinction between sensory evidence and the thoughts that go beyond it to the one set over the many. Thus talk of sensible and intelligible properties need not suggest any sort of bundle theory or other metaphysical baggage; on the contrary, my aim is to simplify Plato's metaphysics.

Now, premise 9 supports my interpretation of the objects of opinion as an individual's sensible properties because it clearly identifies colors and shapes as such. To paraphrase for Socrates: since I can't identify powers by color or shape or any other such (sensible property) as I do with many other things,⁶¹ I proceed in terms of object and activity instead. *Any other such* (τι τῶν τοιοῦτων) clearly refers to sensible properties because if powers had sensible properties Socrates wouldn't have to define them in terms of object and activity. And since the dialectical requirement is in force, Socrates can't mean for the sight lover to understand *intelligible* properties by τοιοῦτων. Thus we are in a good position to take the objects of opinion as sensible properties, i.e., Helen's colors, shapes and sounds as opposed to Helen herself. If so, the way is clear for there to be knowledge and opinion of the sensible world while maintaining the traditional objects analysis warranted by the text.

⁵⁸ 1999: 198

⁵⁹ op. cit.: 204

⁶⁰ op. cit.: 208

⁶¹ Alternatively for ἄλλων πολλῶν: the other manies

On this account, Helen herself can be an object of knowledge as much as of opinion because she has intelligible as well as sensible properties. When the sight lover embraces only Helen's sensible properties, he is adrift without a criterion and thus doomed to the ebb and flow of opinion. Again, the image of the lover of sounds' ears being under contract to listen to every concert he can find is apt. When asked what makes Helen beautiful, he can say only that it is her shape, color and sound; but these colors, shapes and sounds can also be ugly-makers, and thus fail as answers to "What is F?" The sight lover has no answer as to *why* Helen's shape is beautiful; he hasn't got hold of a real beauty-maker. The philosopher, however, can know that Helen is beautiful and even that her colors, shapes and sounds make her beautiful insofar as their combination is a manifestation or instance of the one, the Form of beauty itself.

Here again the *Hippias Major* is a useful echo: Hippias finds no real beauty maker since Socrates can always identify a case where the sensible property is an ugly maker; second, he fails to pursue the one promising suggestion Socrates makes, that the beauty maker is the appropriate (τὸ πρόεπον) arrangement of sensible properties. This ratio or harmony of properties grounds the sense in which Socrates can recognize colors, shapes and sounds as real beauty makers. Gold is not a *per se* beauty-maker and does not capture what beauty is, but it can certainly be part of a complete answer as to what makes a certain vase beautiful—the appropriate use of curves and gold.

Again, when someone only thinks about (applies *dianoia* only to) Helen's sensible properties, all that will result is opinion. But Helen also has intelligible properties, like manifesting beauty. Socrates' snub nose, too, has sensible properties (I can see it, touch it, etc.) as well as intelligible properties—I can think about it as a case of the convex, as failing to instantiate beauty, or as a defining characteristic of Socrates. It makes all the difference whether one's thought is *set over* the sensible properties alone, in which case the best scenario is opinion; or whether it is *set over* the Forms, recognizing the one in its many manifestations. That's why Socrates later tells Glaucon that there's no knowledge by looking up or squinting down, but only when studying the world with the understanding⁶²—that part of the soul that is fitted to grasp the sensible world through the one over many lens.⁶³

And isn't this exactly what the philosopher does when he descends to the cave? "Because you've seen the truth about fine, just and good things, you'll know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image. Thus, for you and for us, the city will be governed, not like the majority of cities nowadays, by people who fight over shadows, and struggle against one another in order to rule—as if that were a great good—but by people who are awake rather than dreaming."⁶⁴ The analogy with waking and dreaming remains in play, and talk of images throughout Book VII corresponds to the many manifestations of the one, so that knowing each image for what it is and that of which it is the image means recognizing each manifestation as an instance of the one, just as Socrates first described to Glaucon in Book V. The diagnosis of the prisoners is also in waking/dreaming terms: they mistake likenesses for the real thing, instances for causes; and the upward journey of the philosophers is not to another world but to a change of perspective, which sees the world through the lens of the intelligible.⁶⁵

⁶² 529ab

⁶³ 490b

⁶⁴ 520c, Grube trns.

⁶⁵ 517bc, 519b, 527e, 529cd, 531b, 532a-c, 533d

But what about the divided line of Book VI? The visible realm clearly consists of sensible particulars, which are the objects of belief (*pistis*), and their reflections and shadows are objects of mere imagination (*eikasia*). Doesn't the intelligible realm leave sensible particulars behind, undoing all my hard work in Book V? The answer is that the intelligible realm does not leave sensible particulars behind but considers them under a different aspect, namely through the one over many lens. The dreaming sight lover confuses a likeness (Helen, for example) for that of which it is a likeness (beauty itself)—he remains in the second section of the line because he takes sensible particulars as originals rather than images; therefore has mere belief or opinion. Someone in the third section of the line, on the other hand, takes the very same sensible particulars as images, i.e., as manifestations of the one.⁶⁶ He is therefore awake, seeing the same world through a different lens. Note that the geometer is only introduced to illustrate how a sensible particular could be treated as an image; the third portion of line is not the exclusive domain of the geometer.

Finally, even the dialectical trip back down from an unhypothetical first principle “without making use of anything visible at all, but only of forms themselves, moving on from forms to forms and ending in forms”⁶⁷ is compatible with the view I advance. To say that a dialectical account of the world operates only in Forms is to say that a theory of everything, if you will, makes reference to no particular sensible particular—but this is no more a change of worlds than a deductive nomological explanation of the sensible world.

Republic Book III supports the sentiment as well:

And isn't it also true that if there are images of letters reflected in mirrors or water, we won't know them until we know the letters themselves, for both abilities are parts of the same craft and discipline? — Absolutely.

Then, by the gods, am I not right in saying that neither we, nor the guardians we are raising, will be educated in music and poetry until we know the different Forms (εἶδη) of moderation, courage, frankness, high-mindedness, and all their kindred, and their opposites too, which are moving around everywhere (πανταχοῦ περιφερόμενα), and see them in the things in which they are (ένόντα έν οἷς ένεστιν αισθανώμεθα), both themselves and their images (εἰκόνας), and do not disregard them. Whether they are written on small things or large, but accept that the knowledge of both large and small letters is part of the same craft and discipline (μελέτης)? — That's absolutely essential.⁶⁸

Socrates' description of the guardians' knowledge here accords perfectly with the earlier analogy to the waking philosopher; he knows the Forms, sees them in their many manifestations, and keeps both themselves (the one) and their images (their many manifestations) straight. Thus, again, being set over the Forms does not take us away from this world to another, does not imply mere Form-gazing, and is not restricted to explicit contemplation of their essential nature. On the contrary, knowledge of the original and its images is explicitly part of the same craft and discipline.

⁶⁶ 510b4-6

⁶⁷ 511b, Grube

⁶⁸ 402b5-c8

All this has been in the service of a traditional objects interpretation that takes Socrates at face value when he says that a power is individuated by two criteria (a) its object and (b) its activity. I have argued that the proper objects of opinion are sensible properties, and not sensible particulars. If so, we can have opinion as much as knowledge about the sensible world, even while maintaining a strict objects analysis that binds knowledge to Forms and opinion to sensible properties. Nonetheless, it does remain technically open at this juncture that the object or the activity could remain the same while the other changes, i.e., that one could have knowledge about the objects of opinion (or *vice versa*). It is still open whether it's even possible to pull apart object and activity as the tradition has done. I have argued that there is no reason to want to, even if it is an option; the next section will close that avenue.

For now, then, the premise of section III can be put as follows: Powers are defined in terms of their object and activity; same object and same activity entails the same power; different object and activity, entails a different power.

- (= object & = activity) → = power
- (Δ object & Δ activity) → Δ power

IV: The Power Principle, Part II

10. Knowledge and opinion are (a) distinct powers—(b) knowledge being the strongest of all powers and (c) opinion the ability to opine—because (d) the one is infallible (τό γε ἀναμάσθητον), the other fallible (τῷ μὴ ἀναμαρτήτῳ). **477d7-478a2**

There are textual cues that show Socrates is going over the same ground, the power principle just set out, in further detail. For example, Socrates introduces this premise by saying “Then let’s back up.”⁶⁹ We also see him making the sight lover’s commitments increasingly explicit, and renewing his past commitments regularly in this section and through the conclusion.

Premise 10 renews the sight lover’s commitment to knowledge and opinion as different powers, and now locates their difference in the work that they do. Thus I read the infallibility of knowledge as a difference in its activity; this gives us Δ activity → Δ power. I cannot possibly offer an adequate treatment of infallibility now, so I will just register my support for something like Travis Butler’s reading of infallibility as dialectical dependability;⁷⁰ and Dorothea Frede’s analysis of dialectic in Book VII (532-534) as sophisticated, high-level elenchus.⁷¹ The dialectician’s knowledge of the Good must survive all manner of refutation, which again aligns explicitly with the analogy to waking and dreaming.

Unless someone can distinguish in an account (ἔχῃ διορίσασθαι τῷ λόγῳ) the Form of the good from everything else, can survive all refutation, as if in a battle, striving to judge

⁶⁹ Grube trns.

⁷⁰ 2007

⁷¹ 1999: 202-4. See also Kahn (1981: 115) regarding the “whatness-questions of dialectic;” and Smith (2000: 158) regarding the habituation of *episteme* to the sensible world.

things not in accordance with opinion but with being, and can come through all this with his account still intact, you'll say he doesn't know (εἰδέναι) the good itself or any other good. But if he somehow gets hold of some image of it, you'll say that it's through opinion, not knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), for he is dreaming and asleep throughout his present life, and, before he wakes up here, he will arrive in Hades and go to sleep forever.⁷²

The one who gets hold of an image of the Good is dreaming: he confuses the image with its model and is thus doomed to opinion. Notice, too, that infallibility is not (just) a matter of acquaintance (nor just a matter of getting hold of a true statement). Rather, it's the account that comes through battle intact that is the true mark of knowledge. Even internally to the argument against the sight lover, we can see that infallibility is elenctic already in premise 2 when Socrates says "we grasp most sufficiently, *no matter how we consider the matter*, that what is completely is completely."⁷³ Such a reading accords nicely with the *Meno*'s account of knowledge as tying down judgment with an account of being. It also leaves room for someone to have opinion about the Forms, as Socrates avows relative to the Form of the good.

Premise 10 can be summarized as follows: different work entails a different power; knowledge and opinion do different work (the one being infallible, the other fallible); therefore, knowledge and opinion are different powers.

- Δ activity \rightarrow Δ power
- Δ activity
- Δ power

11. Then (ἄρα) (a) necessarily⁷⁴ each of them by nature is set over different things, (b) having the capacity to do something different. **478a3-5**

I said premise 10 told us a change in activity entails a change in power, but that it was still open whether objects might remain the same while activity and power change. Now there is no doubt that a change in activity also entails a change in object.⁷⁵ Premise 11b, that one does fallible work and the other infallible as just agreed, is intended to justify 11a, that each has different objects. Because each has a different capacity (11b), each is set over different objects (11a). So premise 11 can be summarized as follows.

- Δ activity \rightarrow Δ object
- Δ activity
- Δ object

7. Knowledge is set over *what is*, to know it as it is. **478a6-7**

10c. Opinion is the ability to opine. **478a8-9**

⁷² 534b

⁷³ 477a2

⁷⁴ From the sightlover's response

⁷⁵ So Annas is not correct in saying that Plato leaves this gap open (1981: 202).

I include reiterated premises⁷⁶ in support of my methodological suggestion that the argument against the lover of sights and sounds proceeds by unfolding and exposing what is implicit from the outset, indeed already in the argument directed to Glaucon. Premise 7 was introduced as a forecast of the relation between power, object and activity, which has now been provided. Socrates said it was necessary to be more explicit, and this reiteration signals that he has been. Further, the sight lover can now see more in this premise than when it was first given, so it's only sporting of Socrates to make sure the sight lover is still in agreement with their working definition of knowledge in terms, now, of the elucidated power principle.

Premise 10c gives a parallel working definition of opinion, albeit with a placeholder for the object. Opinion is characterized only by its work or activity at this point, not yet by its object. The crucial conditional of section I was that if something were *to be* and *to not be*, then they would have to find an intermediate power to set over that intermediate object. The conditional has not come up since then, and nothing has been said to indicate that there are such intermediates, so we would expect the definition of opinion to be incomplete. The point of reiterating this premise is to underline that knowledge and opinion are different powers. No more is licensed or required at this point.

12. Therefore⁷⁷ (a) it is impossible that knowledge know the very same thing as what opinion opines, because (b) different powers by nature are *set over* different things and (c) knowledge and opinion are different powers. **478a10-b2**

Is Socrates entitled to premises 12b and 12c, which entail 12a? Indeed he is. Premise 12c is the reiteration of 10a and the very point of having just restated premises 7 and 10c; that knowledge and opinion are different powers is by now a commonplace in the argument. What about 12b, though? Has it been established somewhere that a change in power entails a change in object? Premise 10 made explicit that a change in activity entails a change in power; premise 11, that a change in activity entails a change in object; but these together don't give us 12b, that a change in power entails a change in object.

Premise 9 established that when the object and work are the same, the power is the same; and that when they are different, the power is different too. But this left open the possibility that either the object or activity could remain the same while the other changes. When we put these premises together, however, we get 12b (Δ power \rightarrow Δ object). Here's how. The contrapositive of 9a is: Δ power \rightarrow \neg (= object & = activity), yielding three possibilities for the consequent:

- One.** = object & Δ activity;
- Two.** Δ object & = activity; or
- Three.** Δ object & Δ activity.

The recent tradition has been angling for One, so that the sensible world could be the common object of knowledge and opinion, with their difference located just in the activity. But this avenue is closed by premise 11 (Δ activity \rightarrow Δ object), and its contrapositive (= object \rightarrow =

⁷⁶ Again, when I reiterate premises I use the original premise number with the text from the current lines.

⁷⁷ Corresponding to the sight lover's explanation of impossibility, which makes it clear that this is a conclusion being drawn from the recently reiterated premises.

activity), which make One false. The two remaining possibilities both include a change in object, so Socrates is indeed entitled to premise 12b, that a change in power entails and change in object. Consequently, avenue Two is also closed, because the contrapositive of 12b (= object \rightarrow = power) falsifies the antecedent (Δ power). Therefore Three is the only proper reading: Δ power \rightarrow Δ object & Δ activity, establishing the power principle as a biconditional.

Now it is clear what licensed the inferences of section II, and that premise 6b “according to the powers of each” does indeed forecast the power principle. The first inference was from premise 6b (with 5), that knowledge and opinion are different powers, to premise 6a, that they have different objects; the second was from 6b (with 1), that knowledge is of *what is*, to the working definition of knowledge in terms of object and activity. This result supports my methodological suggestion that Socrates disguises from the sight lover that he is not of sound mind by proceeding from general and intuitive premises they both endorse, to detailed and unavoidable conclusions.

Sections II-IV can now be summarized as the final power principle and its application as far as licensed by the preceding premises.

- Δ power \leftrightarrow Δ object & Δ activity
- $\text{power}_{\text{knowledge}} = \text{object}_{\text{what is}} \& \text{activity}_{\text{to know what is as it is}}$
- $\text{power}_{\text{opinion}} = \text{object}_x \& \text{activity}_{\text{to opine}}$

V: Opinion is the Intermediate Power

Things now begin to unravel for the sight lover, as Socrates puts all the pieces together to gently persuade him that he opines but does not know. Socrates has pushed the sight lover unawares into a corner from which there is no escape without renegeing either on the crucial conditional or on the power principle.

13. Therefore (οὐχοῦν) if what is knowable (the object of knowledge) is *what is*, what is opinable (the object of opinion) is something other than *what is*. **478b3-5**
14. Then it is impossible to opine *what is not* (**478b6**) because:
- (a) It is impossible that one who opines brings opinion to bear over nothing; **478b7-9**
 - (b) So one must opine some one thing; **478b10-11**
 - (c) But surely (Ἀλλὰ μὴν) *what is not* is most properly called not some one thing but nothing. **478b12-c2**
- 1/2. Indeed (μήν) we put ignorance of necessity over *what is not*, and knowledge over *what is*. **478c3-5**
15. Then (ἄρα) one opines neither *what is* nor *what is not*. **478c6-7**
16. Then (ἄρα) it seems opinion is neither ignorance nor knowledge. **478c8-9**

17. Opinion is intermediate (μεταξύ) between knowledge and ignorance (478d3-4) because:
- (a) It does not lie outside them, surpassing neither knowledge in clarity (σαφηνεία) nor ignorance in unclarity (άσαφεία). 478c8-9
 - (b) It is not darker (σκοτωδέστερον) than knowledge but lighter (φανότερον) than ignorance. 478c10-12
 - (c) Opinion lies between (έντὸς κείται) these two. 478d1-2

By application of the power principle to premise 1, the object of opinion can't be *what is* (13). Neither, however, can the object of opinion be *what is not* (14), since opinion must have some object (14ab) and *what is not* is ultimately nothing at all (14c). So it is confirmed that knowledge and ignorance are set over different objects (1/2), and that opinion is set over neither *what is* nor *what is not* (15); therefore opinion, knowledge and ignorance are distinct powers (16). The next premise (17) establishes that opinion and its objects are not just other than *what is* and *what is not*, but intermediate between them as endpoints.

There has been some debate as to what to make of the language of dark and light, clarity and obscurity in line with the debate over what reading to take of *what is*. Gosling, for example, emphasizes that the clarity of opinion lies in the clarity of the answers, not the objects themselves; but, then again, Gosling is defending a purely veridical reading of the objects of knowledge, *what is*.⁷⁸ Here, too, though an overdetermination reading is best: for *what is* as well as for *what is not*, and for its natural extension to the divided line in Book VI. So, the clarity of *what is* and darkness of *what is not* can be understood as follows.

- i. *What is clearly true (false)*. As before, two senses of the veridical reading are operative: the way things are in the world (objects analysis) and what is said or thought about the world (contents analysis). In other words, opinion does not “tell it like it is” the way knowledge does, since the Forms are part of what there is and thus necessary for telling it like it is. Ignorance, on the other hand says what is clearly not the case in the world, and does not tell it like it is at all. The sight lover says something true, but for the wrong reasons; the ignorant person does not even say something true.
- ii. *What is clearly F (not-F)*. The predicative reading aligns *what is* with answers to “What is F?” and what makes something F. To the question “What is beautiful?” Socrates answers only (a) what beauty is, since only the Forms are clearly F and proper beauty-makers. And again, the predicative reading brings along an objects and contents analysis: the Form of beauty is what beauty clearly is (hence the increasing clarity as one travels up the divided line). The sight lover, however, is still free to endorse the (b) reading since he takes it that Helen is clearly beautiful, that she answers the “What is F?” question, and that her sensible properties are the beauty-makers. Ignorance, being even darker than opinion does not

⁷⁸ 1968: 122

even cite a proper instance of F in answering the question. The sight lover is at least right that Helen is beautiful, even if he doesn't know why.

- iii. *What clearly exists (does not exist)*. In brief: what clearly exists for Socrates are the one and the many; for the sight lover, only the many.⁷⁹ The ignorant person gets it wrong by talking about what doesn't even exist, which is indeed a darker state than the sight lover who at least gets it half right. It's not that the ignorant person has no thoughts at all, but that he chases phantasms.

Socrates then reiterates the crucial conditional and establishes that the consequent has been found.

3/4. If something should appear as at once *being* and *not being*, such a thing would lie between *what purely is* and *what in no way is*, and neither knowledge nor ignorance would be set over it but, again, what appears as intermediate between ignorance and knowledge. **479d5-10**

17c. Opinion has appeared intermediate to these. **478d11-12**

VI: The Missing Link

Socrates now restates the crucial conditional yet again, underscoring the sight lover's acceptance that indeed the only thing missing is the antecedent.

3/4. So it would remain for us to find (εὐρεῖν) that thing participating in both *being* and *non-being* (τὸ ἀμφοτέρων μετέχον), and not correctly called purely either one, so that if it should (ever) appear (ἐὰν φανῆ), we would justly call it the opinable, setting the extremes over the extremes (ἀκρόα), and the intermediates (μεταξύ) over the intermediates. **478e1-6**

The order of exposition is a little unorthodox, since the antecedent is the *sine qua non*. But, the fact that the consequent has emerged as true gives good reason to expect the antecedent will as well. Indeed it would be quite embarrassing for the sight lover to have come this far in applying the power principle to knowledge and opinion to back out now and deny that opinion has proper objects distinct from *what is*. Once the antecedent has been found, the task of looking for the intermediate power will have been handled already and the argument will be complete. So, there is nothing logically amiss with Socrates' process; finding the consequent first is just part of Socrates' gentle persuasion of the sight lover while hiding that he is not of sound mind.

That Socrates proceeds this way (from firm premises to the one missing link) is clear from the careful way he introduces the final premises. Socrates reiterates that the sight lover denies the existence of Forms, and that everything that has come before is accepted. These

⁷⁹ See premise 2, iii for further detail.

things having been established (τούτων δὴ ὑποκειμένον), he says, let the good man who denies the existence of Forms answer whether any of the many beautiful things does not also appear ugly (478e7-479a8). The sight lover agrees readily, and is happy to generalize the case to yield premises 18 and 19.

- 18.** All the many beautiful things (πολλὰ τὰ καλά, τῶν πολλῶν καλῶν) also turn out (φάησεται) ugly; all the many just things turn out unjust; all the many pious things impious; doubles turn out halves, great things small, light things heavy. In short, each of the many things (ἕκαστον τῶν πολλῶν) is no more that which we call it than its opposite, no more what someone says it is than its opposite. **478e7-479b10** (eunuch to 479c5)
- 19.** Each of the many things is intermediate between being (οὐσίας) and non-being (τὸ μὴ εἶναι) because they cannot be darker (σκοτωδέστερα) than *what is not* by having any greater non-being, nor clearer (φανότερα) than *what is* by having more being (πρὸς τὸ μᾶλλον εἶναι) (premise 17b). **479c6-d2**

In the interest of brevity I have condensed this portion of the text at the expense of Plato's beautiful prose, including the riddle of the eunuch. While I cannot give the riddle the full attention it deserves I can at least say that it serves as a further diagnosis of the sight-lover's shortcomings, one that even the sight lover can recognize. I argued in section I that in answer to "What is F?" the sight lover is deaf to the (a) reading, *what F is*, and answers only (b), *what is F*. He answers the "What is F?" question by reference to sensible properties. Now it is clear why sensible properties won't do as an account of beauty: while it may be true that this gold color makes this particular vase beautiful, gold is not always a beauty-maker (again, as in the *Hippias*). Thus sensible properties play both sides, like the riddle of the eunuch. The sight lover who denies the one set over the many is adrift without a criterion, which has now been made explicit.

One important question remains, though: why exactly does the sight lover agree so enthusiastically that the many beautifuls also appear ugly? Stokes has argued that the sight lover by now is so desperate to find an object to fit the intermediate power that he willingly takes this option even at the expense of his claim to knowledge.⁸⁰ This is surely correct, but how did Socrates know this last premise would be the easiest for the sight lover to endorse? My hunch is that the sight lover, in lacking a criterion, is no more than a relativist. If so, he would gladly agree that what I find beautiful you may find ugly, thus that the many beautifuls are also ugly. Someone whose mind is under contract to attend all manner of sophistic demonstrations would be a fan of Protagoras and his ilk and may even be able to articulate why all the beautifuls are also ugly. I cannot here offer more than a suggestion that Plato casts the sight lover as a relativist,⁸¹ so I will be content if I have shown that Socrates argues from the crucial conditional

⁸⁰ 1992: 285

⁸¹ An argument would involve positing a third reading of "What is F?" that only the sight lover hears, in parallel to the sight lover's denial of the Forms. On the (c) reading the *experience* of the sensible properties are the proper beauty-makers, in line with the twin births of *Theaetetus*. Of course, the unreflective sight lover will not actively have such thoughts but a certain reconstruction could yet be licensed; and the ones who chase sophists would arguably delight in such a view. Just as the sight lover does not actively conflate Forms and sensible properties when he is described properly as *confusing* them for an answer to "What is F?" so we might be able to project a (c) reading to which the sight lover would agree given the opportunity (and to which Socrates would be deaf, in parallel

of section I, via the power principle (sections II-IV), to the one missing link in the argument. Any more would be conjecture beyond the current scope—but why else would Socrates so confidently leave the lynchpin premise for last?

Thus section VI can be summarized as follows: the many *are* and *are not*; therefore they are the proper objects of opinion.

VII: *quod erat demonstratum*

The rest of the argument draws the inevitable conclusions from what has been established, as the sight lover by now can see but not resist—he does indeed seem to have been gently persuaded that he opines but does not know.

20. Then (ἄρα) the conventions (νόμιμα) of the many about beauty and the others are rolling around somewhere between *what is not* and *what purely is*.
479d3-6

Immediately a new puzzle arises. What is the point of saying the *conventions* of the many are rolling around between being and non-being? One would expect for the object or the power to be intermediate, in line with power principle so carefully unfolded; so why now speak in terms of νόμιμα? Gail Fine has made much of this line, arguing that it supports a veridical reading since it's the sight lover's propositions that are rolling around between being and non-being. But, as Smith has cautioned, we must keep straight the difference between a power, its object and its product. On Smith's line, the conventions considered as propositions would correspond to the products of the power, not the objects, so already Fine's propositions-as-objects interpretation is swimming upstream.

I don't think it's necessary to pigeon-hole νόμιμα into the role of object, power or product, though. Rather, the conventions of the many include denying the existence of Forms, neglecting the one over many apparatus, and as a result consorting with intermediate objects and using the intermediate power to produce intermediate states. The evocative image of rolling around or knocking about somewhere between being and non-being is a natural description of the conventions of the majority on the reading I have advanced, which does not pull apart object, activity, power and product. Rather, they all knock about together between being and non-being, as do the sight lovers themselves flitting from performance to performance. The move to conventions is just a generalization covering all aspects of the sight lover's plight at once. Plato confirms this when he uses νόμιμα again shortly after. At the beginning of Book VI Socrates says that those who deny the one over many are blind in their lack of knowledge and therefore unable to establish proper *conventions* here on earth.⁸² Without reference to what is most true, everything the non-philosophers do and say will be rolling around between being and non-being.

to the sight lover's refusal of the Forms). Might the full relativist, as opposed to the unreflective sight lover, turn out to be the one with ignorance?

⁸² 484d2

Indeed, how better to describe the sight lover adrift without a criterion than as knocking about between *what is* and *what is not*? He's not totally wrong (Helen really is beautiful), but not really right either (her shape is not a *per se* beauty-maker). Furthermore, an overdetermination reading is most appropriate here too. The conventions of the many are rolling around between the following inclusive alternatives. Note that it's no longer necessary to address what Socrates hears as opposed to what the sight lover hears, since it's all out in the open now. With the admission that the many the sight lover embraces *are* and *are not*, Socrates is no longer constrained by the same dialectical requirement; and as we saw before, even *what is not* can be read in the fully overdetermined sense.

- i. *What is not true* and *what is purely true*. As before, the veridical reading brings the distinction between the ways things are and what is said or thought about the world, i.e., an objects and a contents analysis, together. So the conventions of the many are rolling around between the ways things are not and the way things truly are, and between saying what is not the case and saying what is purely true.
- ii. *What is not F* and *what is purely F*. The conventions of the sight lover are between what is not at all F (something not beautiful in any way) and what is purely F (what is beautiful in every way). The sight lover may not yet admit the existence of Forms as what is always F and never not, but insofar as the many are both F and not F, this premise is acceptable to the sight lover, and there is no reason for Socrates to hide that he takes the Forms to be what is purely F. That said, it does look as though the sight lover accepts even this stronger way of putting the point now that he has been gently persuaded.
- iii. *What does not exist* and *what exists purely*. One might think things get tricky here since it looks like the sight lover is now agreeing that the many are half-existents, but this need not be the case. Rather, one can say that the conventions of the many are rolling around between what in no way exists and what has a pure mode of existence. I have in mind something like Vlastos' distinction in "Degrees of Reality" between pure unalloyed gold, gold that is impure, and some other metal that has no gold whatsoever. So the many sights and sounds are plausibly like an alloyed substance in being both beautiful and not beautiful, just and unjust, double and half, and so on. It's not false that they're F but not fully true either.

Overdetermination and my resistance to pigeon-holing the conventions into a single role notwithstanding, there is no doubt that what lies between *what is not* and *what purely is* are the objects of opinion (and, as I have argued, that these are sensible properties).⁸³ In case the generalizing move in premise 20 muddied the waters, Socrates reiterates the crucial conditional

⁸³ Though *many beautiful things* is a perfectly good translation of *πολλὰ καλλὰ* below, it is misleading insofar as *things* suggests that the objects of opinion are sensible particulars rather than their sensible properties. The good Greek but lame English translation would say *the many beautifuls* instead, which is more naturally aligned with the many manifestations of beauty as introduced in the argument to Glaucon.

yet a third time to emphasize that the proper antecedent has been established before proceeding to the target conclusion laid out in the argument directed to Glaucon: that the sight lover opines but does not know.

3. If something of the sort should turn out (πανείη), it must be called what is opined but not known, the wandering intermediate grasped by the intermediate power. **479d7-10**

21. Then (ἄρα) necessarily those who believe in many beautiful things (πολλὰ καλλὰ) but not the beautiful itself, many just things (πολλὰ δίκαια) but not the just itself, opine all things but know nothing of those things they opine. **479e1-6**

22. Necessarily those beholding (θεωμένους) each of the things themselves being always such as they are in the same respects (ἀεί κατὰ ταῦτὰ ὡσαύτως ὄντα) know, but do not opine. **479e7-9**

Conclusion

The structure of the argument directed at the sight lover is, after all, quite simple.⁸⁴

- First.** If something is such as *to be* and *to not be*, it will be the object not of knowledge (set over *what is*) or ignorance (set over *what is not*), but of some intermediate (power) between them.
- Second.** There is an intermediate power, opinion.
- Third.** There are intermediate objects such as *to be* and *to not be*.
- Fourth.** The sight lover embraces these intermediate objects.
- Fifth.** Therefore the sight lover opines but does not know.

The most complicated part of the argument is establishing the power principle, which links objects, activities and powers inextricably so that a change in any one implies a change in the other two (and, implicitly, for the products of such powers as well, bringing along the contents analysis). Indeed, I have argued that the recent tradition has worked in vain against a strong objects analysis.

Knowledge of the sensible world is nonetheless possible once we recognize that the proper objects of opinion are not sensible particulars, like Helen or a vase, but their sensible properties, i.e., the shapes, colors and sounds that the sight lovers so readily embrace. This essential detail has been overlooked, despite being grounded in the text of the initial argument directed to Glaucon and in the introduction of the power principle. Once we see that sensible particulars can be considered under sensible as well as intelligible aspects (Helen has sensible shapes and colors as well as the intelligible property of beauty), a strong objects analysis no longer poses a threat to knowledge of the sensible world. If all one recognizes are the sensible

⁸⁴ See the Appendix for a complete reconstruction of the premises I have presented.

aspects of the world, then indeed all that will result is opinion. But if one can also embrace the one set over those many, the prospect of knowledge is open.

Another traditional problem dissolves on my reading too: the idea that an objects analysis is in conflict with a contents analysis, that knowledge is either by acquaintance or by description but not both. Judgment set over the Forms does not change the subject to another world and does not consist in contentless Form-gazing. Rather, being set over the Forms is to grasp and bring the one over many apparatus to bear on the sensible world here and now, to see the many shapes, colors and sounds as manifestations or instances of the Forms.

Finally, I have illustrated that Socrates' argument to gently persuade the sight lover he opines but does not know proceeds by premises acceptable to both parties, hiding from the sight lover that he is not of sound mind by moving from general to particular. Indeed, I contend that the whole argument is forecast in the analogy with dreaming and waking, then unfolded in "direct" dialogue with the sight lover, where Socrates offers an explicit diagnosis of the sight lover's shortcomings and a positive prescription for the philosopher's knowledge of the sensible world.

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I: The Crucial Conditional

1. One who knows knows (ὁ γινώσκων γινώσκει) *something that is* (τὶ ὄν), not nothing (οὐδέν) or *something that is not* (οὐκ ὄν), because *what is not* (μὴ ὄν) cannot be known. **476e7-477a1**
2. Then we grasp most⁸⁵ sufficiently, no matter how we consider the matter, that *what is completely* (τὸ παντελῶς ὄν) is completely knowable (παντελῶς γνωστόν); and *what is in no way* (μὴ ὄν μηδαμῆ) is in every way unknowable (πάντη ἄγνωστον). **477a2-5**
3. If something were such as *to be* (εἶναι) and *to not be* (μὴ εἶναι), it would lie between *what purely is* (τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς ὄντος) and *what, again, in no way is* (τοῦ αὐῶ μηδαμῆ ὄντος). **477a6-8**
4. Therefore (Οὐκοῦν), knowledge being set over (ἐπί) *what is* and ignorance of necessity over *what is not* (μὴ ὄντι), we must also seek something intermediate between ignorance and knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) set over this intermediate (ἐπί δὲ τῷ μεταξὺ τούτῳ), if there is such a thing (εἴ τι τυγχάνει ὄν τοιοῦτον). **477a9-b2**

II: Knowledge and Opinion—Set Over Different Objects

5. Opinion and knowledge are different powers (Δ power). **477b3-6**
6. (a) Knowledge and opinion are set over different things (Δ object) because (b) different powers have different objects and activities (Δ power ↔ Δ object & Δ activity). **477b7-9**
7. Therefore (Οὐκοῦν) knowledge is by nature set over *what is*, to know it as it is; on the other hand, it is necessary to be more explicit. **477b10-12**

III: The Power Principle—Part I

8. We will⁸⁶ say that powers are a certain class of things that are (γένος τι τῶν ὄντων), in fact both that by which (ἅτις) we are able to do (δυνάμεθα) what we are able to do and, for that matter, that by which all other things are able to do what they can; I mean for example that sight and hearing are powers, if then you understand the kind of thing I wish to say. **477c1-5**
9. One sees in a power neither any color nor shape nor anything of the sort (τι τῶν τοιούτων), like one does in many other things (ἄλλων πολλῶν), by which one sometimes distinguishes for oneself some things from others; but in the case of a power one sees (βλέπω) only that

⁸⁵ Reading in Ἰκανώτατα from Glaucon's response on behalf of the lover of sights and sounds. Throughout I will include the sight lover's response in the line numbers to indicate this sort of license in rephrasing the questions and answers into statements.

⁸⁶ The future tense answers to the sight lover's query as to how Socrates will be more specific.

over which it is set and the work it does (ἀπεργάζεται) and in virtue of this each of these is called a power, and being set over the same thing and doing the same work I call it the same, but being set over a different thing and doing different work I call it another ([(= object & = activity) → = power] & [(Δ object & Δ activity) → Δ power]). **477c6-d6**

IV: The Power Principle—Part II

- 10.** Knowledge and opinion are (a) distinct powers—(b) knowledge being the strongest of all powers and (c) opinion the ability to opine—because (d) the one is infallible (τό γε ἀναμάρτητον), the other fallible (τῷ μὴ ἀναμαρτήτῳ) (Δ activity→ Δ power; Δ activity; Δ power). **477d7-478a2**
- 11.** Then (ἄρα) (a) necessarily⁸⁷ each of them by nature is set over different things, (b) having the capacity to do something different (Δ activity→ Δ object; Δ activity; Δ object). **478a3-5**
- 7.** Knowledge is set over *what is*, to know it as it is. **478a6-7**
- 10c.** Opinion is the ability to opine. **478a8-9**
- 12.** Therefore⁸⁸ (a) it is impossible that knowledge know the very same thing as what opinion opines, because (b) different powers by nature are *set over* different things and (c) knowledge and opinion are different powers (Δ power→ Δ object & Δ activity). **478a10-b2**

V: Opinion is the Intermediate Power

- 13.** Therefore (οὐκοῦν) if what is knowable (the object of knowledge) is *what is*, what is opinable (the object of opinion) is something other than *what is*. **478b3-5**
- 14.** Then it is impossible to opine *what is not* (**478b6**) because:
 (d) It is impossible that one who opines brings opinion to bear over nothing; **478b7-9**
 (e) So one must opine some one thing; **478b10-11**
 (f) But surely (Ἀλλὰ μὴν) *what is not* is most properly called not some one thing but nothing. **478b12-c2**
- 1/2.** Indeed (μήν) we put ignorance of necessity over *what is not*, and knowledge over *what is*. **478c3-5**
- 15.** Then (ἄρα) one opines neither *what is* nor *what is not*. **478c6-7**
- 16.** Then (ἄρα) it seems opinion is neither ignorance nor knowledge. **478c8-9**
- 17.** Opinion is intermediate (μεταξύ) between knowledge and ignorance (**478d3-4**) because:

⁸⁷ From the sightlover's response

⁸⁸ Corresponding to the sight lover's explanation of impossibility, which makes it clear that this is a conclusion being drawn from the recently reiterated premises.

(d) It does not lie outside them, surpassing neither knowledge in clarity (σαφηνεία) nor ignorance in unclarity (άσαφεία). **478c8-9**

(e) It is not darker (σκοτωδέστερον) than knowledge but lighter (φανότερον) than ignorance. **478c10-12**

(f) Opinion lies between (έντὸς κείται) these two. **478d1-2**

3/4. If something should appear as at once *being* and *not being*, such a thing would lie between *what purely is* and *what in no way is*, and neither knowledge nor ignorance would be set over it but, again, what appears as intermediate between ignorance and knowledge. **479d5-10**

17c. Opinion has appeared intermediate to these. **478d11-12**

VI: The Missing Link

3/4. So it would remain for us to find (εύρείν) that thing participating in both *being* and *non-being* (τὸ ἀμφοτέρων μετέχον), and not correctly called purely either one, so that if it should (ever) appear (ἐάν φανῆ), we would justly call it the opinable, setting the extremes over the extremes (ἀκρόα), and the intermediates (μεταξύ) over the intermediates. **478e1-6**

18. All the many beautiful things (πολλὰ τὰ καλά, τῶν πολλῶν καλῶν) also turn out (φαήσεται) ugly; all the many just things turn out unjust; all the many pious things impious; doubles turn out halves, great things small, light things heavy. In short, each of the many things (ἕκαστον τῶν πολλῶν) is no more that which we call it than its opposite, no more what someone says it is than its opposite. **478e7-479b10** (eunuch to 479c5)

19. Each of the many things is intermediate between being (οὐσίας) and non-being (τὸ μὴ εἶναι) because they cannot be darker (σκοτωδέστερα) than *what is not* by having any greater non-being, nor clearer (φανότερα) than *what is* by having more being (πρὸς τό μᾶλλον εἶναι) (premise 17b). **479c6-d2**

VII: *quod erat demonstratum*

20. Then (ἄρα) the conventions (νόμιμα) of the many about beauty and the others are rolling around somewhere between *what is not* and *what purely is*. **479d3-6**

3. If something of the sort should turn out (πανείη), it must be called what is opined but not known, the wandering intermediate grasped by the intermediate power. **479d7-10**

21. Then (ἄρα) necessarily those who believe in many beautiful things (πολλὰ καλλὰ) but not the beautiful itself, many just things (πολλὰ δίκαια) but not the just itself, opine all things but know nothing of those things they opine. **479e1-6**

22. Necessarily those beholding (θεωμένους) each of the things themselves being always such as they are in the same respects (ἀεί κατὰ ταῦτὰ ὡσαύτως ὄντα) know, but do not opine. **479e7-9**

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